Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Newspaper Articles Addressing the Chapel Hill Shooting Incident

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The present study critically investigates the single case media reporting of the Chapel Hill shooting incident in North Carolina, USA. Eight newspaper reports, including BBC, Fox News, Independent, The *Telegraph*, The *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, and among which two from CNN were assessed, using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. At the explanation level, a social analysis was conducted to the order of discourse, which was connected to a specific social order to produce the final texts of the report. The findings of the study revealed that the reports were not objective. They were found to be linguistically biased as the incident was portrayed as an un-Islamophobic crime. These results also confirmed the revelations in other studies regarding the representation of Muslims by the Western media and the 'elite racism' ideology, which was followed in the production of reports.

Keywords: Agency, Chapel Hill, critical discourse analysis, ideology, modality, racism

The interest and involvement in 'classical rhetoric' or speaking well go back over 2000 years. The study of language and the pursuit of speaking and writing skills extended to comprise different methods, tasks, perspectives, and purposes (Van Dijk, 1985). In the 20th century, the study of language was extended to more refined studies such as computational linguistics and neurolinguistics.

The intensity of the language perception increases when considered in the concept of a religion based public image, particularly at a mass media level. The role of mass media is even more significant regarding the image of American Muslim, which is often mitigated as rigid and unresponsive to the changes taking place (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). It has been reported that media possess the ability to construct the discourses of the anti-Muslims, which drives their unequal representation in the Western minds, particularly, for the Americans (Briskman & Latham, 2017).

Likewise, the Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR) (2013) reported several themes that portray Islam into simplistic and unsupported notions. The intermittent form of violence has impacted Muslims and non-Muslims in a similar way following the incident of 9/11, which sustained visibility of Islam as an important topic for American media. This has consistently served to increase awareness where Islam is portrayed as a threat to the Western World. Kolmer and Schatz (2014) added that the consequences had given rise to negative attitudes and hostile acts against Muslims. This is evident from the increased reporting of the Muslim attacks on the United States, rising by 14% annually (Samari, 2016). In the same context, the case of the Chapel Hill shooting in North Carolina has

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drawn the attention of various researches, which found the incident as a reflection of the toxic hate and consequence of Islamophobia (Colson, 2015; Samari, 2016). Several researches have reflected the predominant role of the media narrative where it acts as an assertive force for constructing an inherently violent image of Islam and its followers (Petersen, 2016)

Reflecting upon the language and the narrative used, the field of the critical study of language provides Discourse Analysis (DA), where the language is investigated and evaluated about specific contexts. Every genre of discourse comes with its social functions and linguistic characteristics. It can be broadly defined as a framework with different approaches that attempt to explore the use of language in different social domains (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Fowler (1985) introduced critical discourse analysis as a field of study by constructing on ideology and language. It is further described as a way to safeguard oneself from getting morally, physically, socially, or culturally hurt by the world. Gee (2004) stated that language holds meaning only through social contexts and social practices, as happened in the case of 9/11 that created a negative image of Muslims (Gee, 2004).

The effectiveness of the critical discourse analysis (CDA) is based on its ability to challenge writers' position where the investigation is centered on his ability to perceive things when the same text could have been represented in some other way. This common sense of the writer is viewed as the sum of the individual's social experience, which varies from culture to culture (Qianbo, 2016). With this, one of the primary theorists in CDA is Norman Fairclough. The CDA framework provided by Fairclough infuses two primary discourse structures, i.e., internal and external relations (Qianbo, 2016).

According to Teo (2000), "CDA unlock the ideologies and recover the social meanings expressed in discourse" (p. 11). He used the term discourse to refer it as 'a language in use, where discourse is an action conducted by social agents, and at other times as different discourses employed in different settings such as medical discourse, media discourse, and others' (Jorgensen & Phillips , 2002). Furthermore, this term also refers to a bigger term, including different types of discourses such as liberal discourse, racist discourse, etc. Factors affecting the use of language include; motivation, capabilities, given data, and the intention of the individual. The text alone cannot explain the ideological effects and the power relations possessed by the discourse (Fairclough, 2003).

In addition to the usual modals like 'should' and 'must,' other verbs such as 'think' and 'believe' had to be analyzed too. The word 'belief' conveys a stronger stance than the modal 'thinks' (Badran, 2002). The voices can be interpreted by the readers according to either a previous experience with the utterance or any knowledge of the utterance, which might have been gained more recently (Bakhtin, 2010). Similarly, voices are either the identity of particular individuals or collective agents (Fairclough, 2009).

The language used by media affects our understanding and knowledge of the world. However, this language is not necessarily authentic and factual. This is because it is designed by specific ideologies and perspectives. It is done by keeping the readership in mind and what they think is the most appropriate for their clientele (Bell, 1995). Previous studies have highlighted the significance of the Discourse-Cognition-Society triangle concerning CDA (Van Dijk, 2014). Specifically, social interactions and discourse act as a means through which text may be influenced. This may also affect individual perceptions, ideologies, and attitudes regarding an issue (Van Dijk, 2016). The present study highlighted the relevance of this triangle about discussions of racist discourse that may create further propaganda. The role of linguistics in deviating from the issue at hand was discussed in

studies that highlighted the example of the recent 'All Lives Matter' hashtag, which effectively diverted the attention from the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign (Gallagher, Andrew, Christopher, & Peter 2018).

Therefore, it is important to conduct further CDA studies to highlight the role of media for promoting hate crimes such as the Chapel Hill shooting (Mir, 2015; Elmasry, 2015). The present study aims to conduct a critical discourse analysis of eight newspaper articles that covered the Chapel Hill shooting, which occurred in 2015. This helps in analyzing the role of language in developing certain ideologies in society.

Research Questions

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the possible discourses underlying the chosen reports?

RQ2: How are those ideologies represented linguistically?

RQ3: To what extent is reporting these killing incidents objective/ subjective?

Literature Review

The American Muslim community has gained tremendous attention across the world, which sets the opportunity parameter for individuals to publicly condemn a terrorist act when a terrorist attack occurs, given its association with the Muslims (Silva, 2017). The public visibility of Islam paved the way for the discourse where American Muslims are perceived as un-American and unpatriotic towards the country. This discourse is due to the imbalanced images of violent incidents, which circulate the mass media and fail to counterbalance the non-violent activities of the Muslims on a daily basis (Schwartz, 2010). This has given rise to a twisted and distorted view of the real picture, which promotes the narrative nurturance of the Muslims as a threat to America. The concept of Islamophobia and its related media association has driven researchers to investigate the role of Western media in reporting Islam with a negative perspective (Akbarzadeh & Smith, 2005), whereas the exposure to these images depicted by the media is found to be in strong correlation with a broader portion of the society where the negative perception of Muslims is endorsed (Jones, Cox, Galston, & Dionne, 2011).

The studies related to CDA highlighted the role of social media in portraying Muslims as "a homogeneous outgroup that is embroiled in conflict, violence, and extremism" (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). Other studies analyzed the third-party reporting of hate crimes in the UK, which was based on religious or ethnic grounds (Clayton, Donovan & Macdonald, 2016). Indeed, an extensive array of literature was dedicated to using CDA as a means through which the role of language in instigating and abetting hate crimes may be explored (Hodges, 2015; Asquith, 2017). Recent studies have examined the role of social media in instigating social tensions by promoting hate speeches and stereotypical notions of a communal group (Adisa, Mohammed, & Ahmad, 2015; Rasaq, Udende, & Ibrahim, 2017; Ben-David & Matamoros-Fernandez, 2016). Therefore, it is clear that the linguistic approach utilized by populist media when conducting a discourse on targeted communities needs to be carefully monitored to lower the incidence of hate crimes against those minorities.

Hill (2018) analyzed the role of black twitter as a digital counter-public. This digital event followed after the Fergusson incident, which hurt the sentiments of the black population across the United States. The role of twitter was thus assessed in both material and symbolic characteristics of resistance to anti-black violence in the United States. In the same way,

the study examined the representation of Black Twitter in promoting awareness, critical pedagogy and education, and political organizing. It was revealed that social media could positively contribute to addressing the apprehensions of the marginalized groups, which were dealt unfairly by the State, the mass media, and people in general (Hill, 2018).

Fairclough (2014) investigated the importance of 'critical language awareness' (CLA) in affecting changes within societal attitudes and behavior. The study suggested the presence of a close association between language practices, social relationships, and identities. Therefore, it is clear that language plays a highly nuanced role within the context of hate speech. CDA, in this regard, can play a role in effect changes within the social and cultural climate.

The social approach of language reiterated and emphasized by Fairclough is closely associated with the idea of 'order of discourse' that has been introduced by Foucault, which emphasizes the overwhelming power of specific individuals and institutions in controlling a discourse (Foucault, 1971). For instance, the doctor controls the order of the discourse by asking only relevant questions about the medical condition of the patient. Also, the doctor can restrict the conversation and does not permit his subject to intervene.

In another study, Cole and Harper (2017) analyzed statements that were issued by college presidents after an occurrence of a racial incident on their college campus. The research evaluated 18 statements issued by college presidents. Each of the statements was in response to a racial incident that occurred during 2012-2015. Since news of untoward racial occurrences spreads very quickly and is widely shared, the reality of the incidents cannot be concealed. The senior-level administrators of colleges and universities, in most instances, released statements about racial incidents after an institution had received widespread negative publicity.

Findings of the study also revealed that the official statements of college presidents regularly addressed the group or individuals who committed the racist act, but usually did not concede the systemic or institutional issues that nurtured racial hostility on college and university campuses. Moreover, the responses by the authorities and official statements must take into consideration the sensitivities involved in racial issues and thus release statements, accordingly. Furthermore, the timing must be taken into account, and the statements must be released before the racial incidents are highly publicized and discussed and debated on various media platforms (Cole & Harper, 2017).

Alter, Stern, Granot & Balcetics (2016) analyzed news articles concerning a "bad is black" heuristic in social judgment and assumed that immoral acts were committed by people with darker skin tones. Taking this further, the researchers made assumptions regardless of the racial background of those so-called immoral actors. This implicit and selective prejudice and bias against the black community was also observed in pictures that were published along with articles on Black and White celebrities in popular culture magazines.

Similarly, American politicians were also targeted in these selective judgments against the darker skin. The more complementary the story, the lighter the skin of the pictures printed with the articles. It was found that shade-based and race-based connections between darkness and badness determined that the bad is the black outcome while examining surveillance footage, participants associated immoral acts with darker-skinned people. The study concluded that these perceptions hurt society in general and showed an underlying bias and racism (Alter et al., 2016).

Media is served as the machinery of strategic communication because its importance cannot be neglected or ignored. It helps to create awareness about various security issues. In relation to this, Nelson, Amodu, Jedge, Adesina, and Martins (2019)

focused on the role of digital journalism to highlight insecurity and terrorist attacks. Content analysis revealed that digital media platforms should be used by the global media outlets to render awareness and security related information regarding the nature and practices of terrorist organizations. In Europe and Middle East, a media agenda is led by global media organization to counter the growing influence of terrorist group (Nelson et al., 2019). The audience is influenced by discourse of Islamic state in its peak periods because of accurate understanding of nature of visual images. However, flexibility and adaptability are shown to pass media discourse at verge of its collapse. Al Ibrahim and Shi (2019) observed the ability of ISIS to conceive during the rise and dispersion periods, when there is lack of power. The results showed significant difference in the ISIS discourse during the rise and fall periods. It showed that understanding Islam through expertness and technological power would be best to combat this group (Al-Ibrahim & Shi, 2019).

The role of social media images to convey the meaning of empowerment and power against violence was investigated in depth by Alsaqer (2019). The results depicted that social media adverts may enhance the traditional stereotype of weak women although, these adverts fight against domestic violence. At times, these adverts fail to address the concept of empowerment by emphasizing stereotypical images of powerless women. Therefore, new social media communication is required for the establishment of new transformative image of Arab women in the cultural context by utilizing the opportunities provided by social media. Another study conducted by Hussain (2018) drew definite inferences regarding the interpretation of national and regional press by focusing on three conflict-induced violent events by four frontline English dailies. The results provided increased perceptibility to the policy makers as well as the national audience regarding the issues taking place within a country in the corridors of power in the national capital. The engagement of respective media institutions with journalism promoting conflict resolution strategies, supplying credible information, encouraging diversity of opinions, and acting as guardian of transparent politics is important because national and regional media play an important role in establishing peace and harmony in conflict-riddled societies (Hussain, 2018).

Methodology

This study carried out a qualitative analysis of the linguistic techniques that were used when reporting the event. The study considered eight reports: One was the *Telegraph* newspaper article titled as 'Chapel Hill shooting: Three American Muslims killed', and the other two were reports by the CNN titled, 'Chapel Hill shooting: When is a hate crime a 'hate crime'?' and '3 students shot to death in an apartment near UNC-Chapel Hill'. The study also included other articles from *Huffington Post* labelled as 'Why the Chapel Hill Shooting Was More Hate Crime Than Parking Dispute', *Independent Post* titled as "Chapel Hill shooting: Father of two victims labels incident 'a hate crime'", BBC News entitled "Thousands mourn Chapel Hill shooting victims", and NYC News labeled as, In Chapel Hill Shooting of 3 Muslims, a Question of Motive, and last by Fox News titles as 'Suspect in Muslim college students' killings faces victims' relatives in court'. These reports were taken from the official websites of these agencies. Additionally, these reports were carefully chosen while considering their ideological orientation. Apart from this, their stance and their point of view were also given substantial focus in this study.

The significance of the Chapel Hill shooting is based on its association with the Muslims as victims. It is also significant as it is related to the concept of religious pluralism. In a similar context, the religious pluralism related to America sets the base for investigating

the Muslim place in the American public space. The relevancy of the study from the Islamophobia context and the reported media perspective is that media serves as the apparatus for the ideological state as a non-repressive institution, which requires making a critical discourses study that defines and draws the Muslim identity contours rather than inspecting the other frameworks irrespective of them being institutional or legal.

These news reports addressed the shooting incident in Chapel Hill. Three young Muslims, a man, his wife, and his wife's sister, were shot to death by their American neighbor. There was a huge controversy about the purpose of the crime. It was due to the scrutiny of the Facebook page of the offender that showed a consistent history of hatred towards Islam. Contrary to this, there were arguments that attempted to disprove the accusations of racism and diffuse the claim as a hate crime.

Espousing Fairclough's three-dimensional method to CDA, the different linguistic framework and specifications included nominalization, agency, transitivity, modality, voice, passivation, argumentation strategies, quotations, and reported speech. The second step in the analysis was called interpretation in which an assessment of the extended discourse practices was made, and that resulted in the production of the reports. It also included the identification of situations of discourse production and consumption of the reports. Discursive practices that led to the production of the reports were investigated and included identification of circumstances of discourse production and consumption. Processes through which the texts were created (produced) and received and interpreted (consumed) were evaluated. The third level of the study was known as the explanation level in which a social analysis was conducted concerning the order of discourse. Also, its relationship to the specific social order was analyzed to produce the final text of the report. This social analysis was conducted to determine the type of texts in reports, their social and discourse order, for the production of final texts.

Justification for Targeted News Reports

An earlier version of this paper relied on a limited number of reports taken from three newspaper reports, one report was published by The *Telegraph*, and the other two were published by CNN. The findings were not generalizable due to the small data size. For this, the researchers tried to expand data sources to include the other five reports, which were *Huffington Post*, *Independent Post*, BBC News, NYC News, and Fox News, to test the hypothesis.

The channels have shown an inclination towards cases involving Muslims, Islam, and other news featuring Sharia, terrorism, Al-Qaida, ISIL (ISIS), Bin Laden, Jihad, etc. Moreover, exposure to some of these sources has led to false information on certain issues, which led to the public endorsement of the divergent views about Muslims and Islam as a whole.

Analysis Tools

The discourse analysis in this study was conducted using Fairclough's three-dimensional approach, where the three interrelated domains of text, discourse practice, and social practice were investigated (Fairclough, 2013). In this study, the text has been taken from different articles that covered the Chapel Hill shooting. Five linguistic tools were analyzed for their linguistic properties. The first tool was 'agency,' which was investigated through the passivation and nominalization factors. Furthermore, argumentative strategies and modality were chosen and assessed in the text of the reports.

Results

Elements of the Three Dimensions

The study aimed at specifying the elements of critical discourse analysis; the role of transitivity was particularly highlighted (Sharififar & Rahimi, 2015). The study indicated that transitivity consisted of six main processes, which were: existential, material processes, behavioral processes, verbal processes, relational processes, and mental processes.

Existential processes referred to "processes of existing by an empty therein subject position" (Sharififar & Rahimi, 2015). Material processes stood as a representation of external real-world activity. Regarding behavioral processes, the study highlighted its equivalence with hybrid processes. Verbal processes stood as a broad generalization of communicative processes, and relational processes represented properties such as attributes and possession. Lastly, mental processes represented individual perceptions and cognition about the issues of consideration (Sharififar & Rahimi, 2015).

Material processes may be divided into three primary factors of interest. These are the actors, processes, and goals (Sharififar & Rahimi, 2015). Therefore, in the context of this study and as discussed within the eight chosen newspaper articles, the actor was the individual who carried out the Chapel Hill shooting. The process referred to the shooting itself, and the goal referred to the three individuals who were shot. For instance, one article stated: "The victims — a newly wed couple and the bride's younger sister — were shot in the head" (Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015) or "the shooting was based on religion and culture of the victims" (Gander, 2015) and "The victims were shot inside an apartment" (Katz & Pérez-Peña, 2015). Nowhere in these sentences can the presence of the actor, or more specifically, the shooter, be noted. This pattern may similarly be seen in the headline of the second article, which is: "Chapel Hill shooting: Three American Muslims killed" (Akkoc & Foster, 2015), in addition to the headline of the first article: "3 students shot to death in apartment near UNC-Chapel Hill" (Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015), BBC "Thousands mourn Chapel Hill shooting victims", and that of Fox News "Suspect in Muslim college students' killings faces victims' relatives in court" (Garnier, 2017; BBC, 2015).

The similar pattern was found in the remaining reports of the *New York Times* "In Chapel Hill Shooting of 3 Muslims, a Question of Motive", the Independent "Chapel Hill shooting: Father of two victims labels incident 'a hate crime'", the *Huffington Post* "Why the Chapel Hill Shooting Was More Hate Crime Than 'Parking Dispute'" (Katz & Pérez-Peña, 2015; Gander, 2015). Through this, it can be noticed that the use of language has played a significant role in influencing the perceptions and ideologies of the readers subjected to it. Additionally, the use of passive voice rather than active voice may be observed. For example, two newspaper articles stated that the "the victims had been shot in the head" and "victims were shot in the head" (Katz & Pérez-Peña, 2015; Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015) rather than saying "a gunman shot the victims in the head." The utilization of passive voice over the use of active voice serves the purpose of shifting the focus away from the shooter to the ones who were shot. Therefore, it is essential that journalists use the active voice in their articles so that attention may be focused on where it should be. This was similarly examined by studies about discussions of active and passive noise, which stated that passive noise "suggests the avoidance of responsibility" (Bada & Ulum, 2018).

The use of verbs such as 'was,' 'is,' 'am,' and 'were' may be noted (Halliday, Matthiessen & Halliday, 2014). Attributive relational processes are used to denote the attributes or properties that are attached to the entity under consideration (Halliday, Matthiessen & Halliday, 2014). For instance, identifying relational processes within the articles that were mentioned as: "the victims—a newly wed couple and the bride's younger sister—were shot in the head" (Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015) and that "Deah Shaddy Barakat (23), his new wife Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha (21), and her sister Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha (19) were shot in the head near the University of North Carolina campus" (Gander, 2015). As may be seen, the relationship between individuals and the occurrence was identified by highlighting that the individuals were victims, and the occurrence was a shooting attack. However, the attributive relational processes are less clear. For instance, instead of attributing the occurrence as being propelled by hate, the articles suggested disputes over parking spaces such as "dispute over parking" or "there was a parking space dispute" to be the factors to which the shooting might be attributed (Gander, 2015; BBC News, 2015; Blumfield, 2015).

Mental processes incorporate the use of verbs that convey "perception, cognition, affection, and desire" (Sharififar & Rahimi, 2015). These verbs are inclusive of verbs such as 'think,' 'feel,' 'like' and 'hate.' For instance, one article stated that: "Their families say the gunman had threatened the victims before, and they believe the shootings were a hate crime" (Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015), while another reported "The father of two of the three Muslim students who were shot dead in Chapel Hill yesterday has labeled the tragic incident a "hate crime" (Gander, 2015). In this regard, therefore, the family of the victims represents the 'sensors' that are perceiving the occurrence to be thought about. The perceptions of the victims' family were thus brought into light by indicating that they 'believed' the crime was fuelled by hate. "He believed the shooting was based on religion and culture of the victims" (Gander, 2015) or, "She said she believes that Hicks killed them because they were the only Muslims in the apartment complex" (Ose, 2015).

Studies maintained that discourses consist of two models. These are namely, situation and context models (Van Dijk, 2016). The former is used to refer to what the occurrence under consideration is, and the latter refers to the linguistic patterns to describe this occurrence under consideration. Therefore, within the context of this study, the situation model was represented by the Chapel Hill shooting, whereas, the context model stands as a representation of the causal factors due to which the shooting occurred, its roots in linguistic origins, and the use of quotations to enable a better understanding of the subject matter.

Lastly, the final element of the CDA was in the form of the social context. This context stands as a representation of the attitudes, ideologies, and knowledge of individuals involved. In this context, the social attitudes and ideologies of the media were addressed. These ideologies and attitudes were reflected in the linguistic patterns employed by the journalists who covered the Chapel Hill shooting, as discussed earlier. It was shown that the CNN articles demonstrated a greater degree of bias as compared to the *Telegraph* article. The reasons for these have been rooted in the social origins of attitudes, thoughts, and ideologies that support bigotry and intolerance (Holt, Ellithorpe, & Ralston, 2017; Payne & Dal Cin, 2015; Samson & Bobo, 2014). Therefore, the role of language in demonstrating the thoughts and perceptions of the writers is extremely significant both within and outside the scope of this study. The role of several linguistic techniques in interpreting the news reports was investigated, and how these tools were used to produce certain ideologies through the materials that the reporters used.

Agency

Nominalization

The most obvious use of nominalization is in the title of a report by CNN, which stated, 'Chapel Hill shooting: When is a crime a 'hate crime'?' (Blumfield, 2015). This implicitly attributes the incident as not a 'hate crime' event, as shown in this statement, "Labelling something a 'hate crime' can make the law come down much harder on a defendant. It adds a new serious charge that can come with a heavy additional sentence". The verb 'label' was nominalized as 'labeling.' In this instance, it is inferred that the agents are people who will read the report, and the writer has addressed his audience. He directly instructed the audience on what to conclude and what not to do. The use of nominalization is ideological when it distracts and diverts attention from the agent to the action. In subtly manipulating the readers, the writer completely ignored the true agents in the discourse that were involved in labeling. However, the use of the words 'heavy additional' strengthens the role of people in the trial of the offender.

Passivization

Passivization is used not only for stylistic reasons but is chiefly used to discover the intentions of the producer. It was used to emphasize or to omit specific agents in reporting incidents. For instance, in the first CNN report, the writer stated that "To qualify as a hate crime, all that matters are that the crime was motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias." The passive voice construction gives the least emphasis on the 'offender's bias" about the motivation of the crime. A robust attempt was made by the writer to disprove the argument of considering the Chapel Hill incident as a crime driven by hate.

Argumentative Strategies

In the other two reports, '3 students shot to death in an apartment near UNC-Chapel Hill' (Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015) and 'Chapel Hill shooting: Three American Muslims killed' (Akkoc & Foster, 2015), there were arguments that supported the claim that it was not a hate-motivated crime. Moreover, these arguments were presented by different authorities such as the FBI, police, and Mayor of Chapel Hill. One argument from the *Telegraph* was, "A US official later said that the shootings were 'not part of a targeted campaign against Muslims in North Carolina" another from the BBC news, "But Mr. Hicks' wife Karen said the incident had nothing to do with religion and her husband treated everyone equally" and a third from the *New York Times* "The United States attorney for the region, said the shooting appeared to have been "an isolated incident" and "not part of a targeted campaign against Muslims." Another example was from the second CNN report, in which it was stated that "Chapel Hill is a safe place for Muslims and people of all faiths, the official said" and one from the Independent report "Chapel Hill is a place for everyone, a place where Muslim lives matter." These arguments reiterate that hate was not the motive behind the act.

Modality

The modality analysis was made to evaluate the ideological aspects of the discourse. This analysis gave a clear picture of the writer's ideological orientation during production. For example, in the CNN report, it was stated that 'It's 'one piece of evidence that suggests that he had a hatred or dislike for the Muslim community potentially,' implying that the crime was not a hate crime by using the modal verb 'suggests.' Modality also comprises of mental verbs, and when used in clauses, it reflects mental processes of different degrees of

certainty. For instance, in the second CNN report, the author wrote, 'Their families say the gunman had threatened the victims before, and they believe the shootings were a hate crime.' In this sentence, the mental verb 'believe' was used by the victim's families to express their commitment to the claim that it was a crime that was driven by hate. The integration of the voices was analyzed by incorporating the reported speech and quotations. The circumstances of discourse production and consumption were very sensitive. It was due to the global scenario after the September 11 attacks and the perception of the Muslims globally after the attacks.

Discussion

The results of the study demonstrated that language had played a key role in influencing the social, cultural, and ideological perceptions of those individuals that have been subjected to it. Several linguistic elements that pointed to the biases of reporters were highlighted through the evaluation of different newspaper articles. The role of different forms of media in promoting hate crime through the use of language was previously highlighted in several studies (Mondal, Silva, & Benevenuto, 2017; ElSherief et al., 2018).

In this regard, two articles from CNN and one article from the *Telegraph*, Fox News, Independent, BBC, *Huffington Post*, and *New York Times* were incorporated in the study. As suggested by the results of the investigation, the *Telegraph*, *New York Times*, and *Huffington Post* article showed a lesser degree of biasedness as compared to CNN, Fox News, Independent, and BBC report. The reporting bias presented on CNN, BBC News, and Fox News articles were examined in recent studies (Damanhoury & Saleh, 2017; Lin & Zhao, 2016; Ferguson, 2016; Boulahnane, 2018; Leetaru, 2010). This bias may likewise be noted in the CNN articles that addressed the Chapel Hill shooting, whereby the possibility of the crime being inspired by hate-related motives was toned down to a very great extent (Ahmed & Shoichet, 2015; Akkoc & Foster, 2015). While reflecting upon the *New York Times*, the writer viewed Hick as forward-thinking man who advocated the liberation of gay and women's rights, which implies that he is a renaissance individual who cannot be perceived as a white supremacist killer (Carter Centre, 2018). It also directs the reader towards empathy with the shooter and drives them away from perceiving him as an Islamophobic killer.

There are limitations to the conventions and the resolutions of journalism in general that make journalists present the truth in a relatively objective manner. This type of discourse, in particular, was employed in the context of social order. Nevertheless, studies demonstrated that there was a significant degree of reporting biases against Muslims, as present in the news articles in the *Telegraph* (Hassan & Omar, 2017).

Within the context of this study, a few linguistic elements were strongly observed. For instance, the use of passive voice reporting was observed in the eight newspaper articles, which diverted the attention away from the perpetrator of the crime and instead focused on the victims. The role of media in promoting their political agendas through linguistic tactics has been tackled in recent studies (Graber & Dunaway, 2017). Therefore, language is considered as a powerful tool for invoking or influencing the perceptions, ideologies, beliefs, values, and thoughts of those individuals who are subjected to it. Therefore, it is necessary that populist media exercise caution with regard to the material they spread since biasedness with regard to hate crimes is an indirect way of disregarding those crimes. Since the crimes are being reported in a way that tones down their severity, the perception of the readers being subjected to such articles will be influenced. These perceptions may be inclusive of intolerance and bigotry against the targeted minorities

and communities. The employment of argumentative discourse in all the reports was ideologically motivated as a means to convince the audience in an indirect way that the crime was motivated by rage and anger. Also, racism was denied and hidden in all the reports (Galadari, 2018). This further elucidates the reason for employing such a discourse (social order).

Results thus indicated that free speech is a myth and power relations control the conventions of various discourses. The writers need to make an earnest attempt to be logical, balanced, and objective in their reporting of events, and not be subjective and biased. It is recommended to conduct more research with added tools of analysis, broadcasting agencies and forms of discourses to provide further information.

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Information for the Contributors

The **A**merican **P**sychological **A**ssociation reference style uses the Author-Date format. *To cite information directly or indirectly, there are two ways to acknowledge citations*: (i) *Make it a part of a sentence **or** (ii) put it in parentheses at the end of the sentence.*

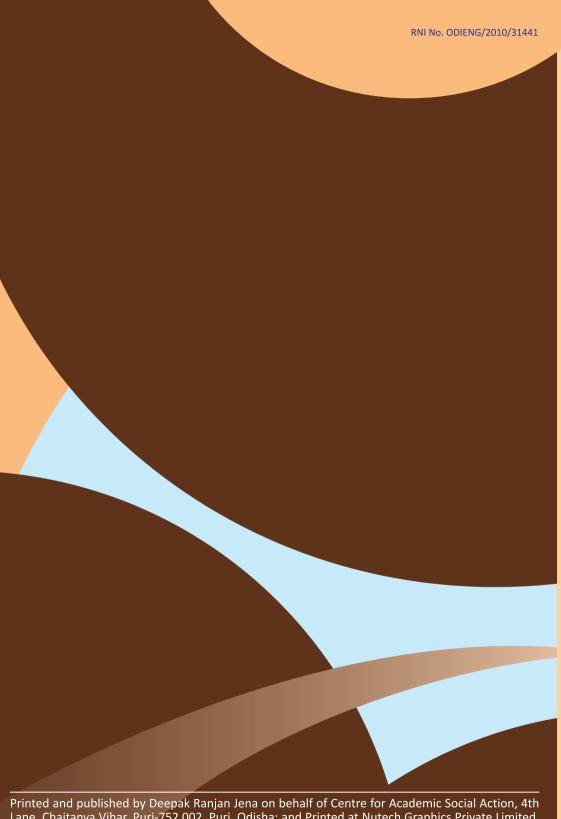Direct quotation—*use quotation marks around the quote and include page numbers*

(i)   Cohen and Lotan (2014) argue that "many different kinds of abilities are essential for any profession" (p.151).

(ii)   "Many different kinds of abilities are essential for any profession" (Cohen & Lotan, 2014, p.151).

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(i)   Professional knowledge alone does not make someone a very capable professional (Cohen & Lotan, 2014).

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Citations from a secondary source

(i)   Gould's (1981) research "raises fundamental doubts as to whether we can continue to think of intelligence as unidimensional" (as cited in Cohen & Lotan, 2014, pp. 151-152).

(ii)   Intelligence cannot be believed to consist of one single entity any more (Gould, 1981, as cited in Cohen & Lotan, 2014).

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Webpage: New Zealand Trade and Enterprise. (n.d.). *Agribusiness*. Retrieved from https://www.nzte.govt.nz/en/export/market-research/agribusiness/ *N.B. (n.d.) = no date. The basic format is: (1) Author (could be organisation). (2) Date (either date of publication or latest update). (3) Title. (4) URL.*	(New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, n.d., para. 1) *For direct quote, cite the paragraph number in text*