Unmasking Digital Prejudice: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Racial, Gender and Ideological Violence in Memes Targeting Kamala Harris' Speeches

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This research aims to find instances of racial and gender prejudice in memes that portray Harris' speeches. This study analyzes the role of memes depicting the political speeches of Kamala Harris as instruments for propagating and legitimizingdestructive ideologies such as racial discrimination, gender bias, cultural stereotyping, and symbolic violence. The dataset consists of 9 internet memes that will be purposively sampled. This study employs a qualitative method, utilizing the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis(MCDA) framework byKress and Leeuwen (2006),toinvestigate how political memes shape gender and racial narratives about Kamala Harris. MCDA enables the examination of how combining text, images, typography, layout, and rhetorical techniques, including humour, pathos, and irony creates meaning. Between 2021 and 2024, 9 memes were carefully chosen from YouTube Reels, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, emphasizing material that alludes to Harris' political persona and public statements. The findings reveal that memes often destabilize Harris' political identity by mocking her authority, reinforcing stereotypes, and distorting her public image. These strategies also demonstrate how digital discourse can perpetuate exclusionary narratives about race, gender, and power. Future research should explore meme discourses, intersectional policy-making, and the effects of digital stereotyping. Educational systems should incorporate media literacy training, social media platforms should adopt ethical standards, culturally aware AI systems should be developed, and counter-narratives that empower meme creators should be promoted to foster a more inclusive digital media ecology.

*Keywords:*memes, multimodal critical discourse analysis, Harris speeches, racial and gender biases, irony, humour, pathos

Allthrough her career, Kamala Harris has broken boundaries based on her sexual orientation and origin. She has established a lengthy reputation as a political trailblazer during the last thirty years. In addition to being an arraigning attorney in San Francisco, California, she is the only African American woman who meets the qualifications to serve as the U.S. Representative for California.Her inauguration as the 44th president of the United States took place on 20 January 2021. Researchers have studied how the media have depicted Harris throughout her political career. They have often found that writers draw assumptions about her gender and ethnicity to paint her as unqualified for office.

Some have compared Harris to previous black women who have sought elective office, such as Peta Lindsay, Shirley Chisholm, and Carol Moseley Braun, in a study by (Lewyckyj, 2021). Although Harris received the same media attention as the other contenders, it was primarily negative. Dolan et al., (2021) compared women of various ethnic backgrounds, and black women are often associated with more grounded assumptions. Cassese et al., (2022) revealed that Harris was frequently identified by her race. Her race accounted for about one-third of the descriptive phrases used to describe her. Earlier in Harris' research, researchers examined the portrayal of women differently, including investigating intersectionality,sexual orientation bias, and women' activist theory. Additional research on intersectionality, political candidates, and

campaigns is still necessary. but thoughts serve as a critical benchmark for treating women. This analysis examines the use of memes and deceit on Facebook groups, which frequently post fake news out of context, to rectify this gap in the existing literature. Deception to mislead is known as disinformation (Gebel, 2021). The researcher chose Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and screenshots from YouTube Reels as the platforms for investigation since they are the biggest worldwide social systems with "2.8 billion monthly active users" from 2021 to 2024. According to a 2020 Pew Research Center study, approximately half of U.S. citizens regularly or occasionally access news on digital communication platforms, with Facebook being a primary medium for news (Shearer & Mitchell, 2021). It is essential to communicate and address media representations of all women to provide insights into patterns and arrangements. It, too, contributes to broader sexual orientation and race by exploring the generalizations experienced by Harris and how they are depicted in open talk. Moreover, it dives into web culture, examining how memes are made and spread on social systems and how these forms impact the audience's recognition and the political setting in Harris addresses. Concerning technology, the current digital era introduced memes as flexible cultural objects that express existing public utterances and mould their future direction. Mortensen and Neumayer (2021) studied that memes represent digital objects that move between alternative and mainstream sites, gather attention, and mold ideological patterns while fostering unified communities through joint humour engagement. Originally coined by Dawkins (1989) and later adapted by Shifman (2013), memes are understood as "structures that reproduce by imitation." The individualization of information sharing on social media has changed the way people engage with politics (Farkas & Bene, 2021; McGregor, 2019; Metz et al., 2020). Online memes provide anyone, even young people, with an easy way to engage with politics through amusing content (Kirner-Ludwig, 2020). The digital participatory environment includes memes that use words, images, and hashtag combinations to communicate civic action (Beskow et al., 2020).Through gender-andrace-dependent representation systems on Facebook, Instagram,YouTube Reels,and Twitter, this study explored how digital memes function as interactive communication tools to shape Kamala

Harris' public image. The research by Lin et al., (2024) showed that meme formats work to connect younger people with political figures, but they also preserve offensive stereotypes. During Harris' campaign period, Bland et al., (2024) discovered that memes propagated these historical racialstereotypes of "Jezebel" and "Tragic Mulatto." Cerja et al., (2024) created the "digital public woman"idea to demonstrate how humour and irony function in memes to hide misogynoir through media entertainment. Complex semiotic and ideological processes can be decoded by using the frameworks proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). By utilizing this approach, the researchers can thoroughly analyze how political memes use rhetorical components, including humour, irony, sarcasm, pathos, and exaggeration to deliver multiple cultural and political interpretations. Rezeki et al., (2024) examined how political memes function as ideological tools. The researchers used Leeuwen's social semiotic framework through symbolic elements like colour gestures in text for political identity. Tianli and Chen (2024) investigated the ways in which rhetorical humour, particularly sarcasm connected with hyperbole and metaphor, simplifies complex political criticism while intensifying emotional reactions. The findings revealed that memes are effective multimodal instruments for influencing public discourse due to their ability to change digital media platforms that provoke strong emotional reactions. Moreover, the study of political discourse via speeches can offer more information about how ideology and group dynamics are communicated to the wider community. For example,Kashif and Nusrat(2023)critically examined the speech madeby Imran Khan, the 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan, on September 27, 2019, during the United Nations General Assembly. This research used Van Dijk's (1997) Political Discourse Analysis. The findings revealed how Khan's speech created ideological stances and in-group-out-group divisions while addressing global issues like Islamophobia, climate change, and the Kashmir conflict by analysing both macro and micro discourse structures. The current study, therefore, builds on such discourse-oriented frameworks to investigate how memes that target Kamala Harris' political speeches normalise violence and prejudice against marginalised identities, especially women of colour, by utilising sarcasm, humour, pathos, and textual-visual aspects.

Based on that, the following research question was focused on:
How do memes targeting the political speeches ofKamala Harris engage irony, humor, and pathos to reveal

discriminatory or violent ideologies?

Literature Review

The studies reviewed focus on how memes, such as "coconut tree" memes, shape public perception and influence racial and gender stereotypes. Lin et al., (2024) examined how "coconut tree" memes influenced Kamala Harris' political image among younger audiences. It analyzed how humour and pop culture references influenced thepublic perceptionof Harris and theaudience's emotionalreactions.The results showed that meme culture often simplifies political characteristics, potentially maintaining racial and gender-based stereotypes. However, the study did not explore how humour, irony, or emotional appeal are interpreted within memes. Tianli and Chen (2024) expanded the examination of rhetorical techniques by comparing the rhetorical strategies that are used in Chinese and English talk shows. They aimed to discover how cultural factors and language barriers impact communicating humour and to understand audience commitment, frequency, and effectiveness of humour in different contexts. The study found that satire, exaggeration, ridicule, sarcasm, irony, and simile were used over 75% of thetime in both shows. The study also found that talk show humour can strengthen stereotypes, but did not investigate their impact on public perception or memes.

In another recent study, Gil-Torres et al., (2024) studied South African political memes during COVID-19 to understand their impact on political discourse on Twitter. They examined 351 memes and found that while political subjects were present, they used humorous techniques for entertainment rather than effectively delivering messages. The study did not address the interpretation of Harris' speeches through emotive techniques and humour in memes. In a more semiotic approach, Rezeki et al., (2024) studied the semiotic Framework used by political memes to develop and contest narratives on social media. They analyzed 47 memes, focusing on 11 effective techniques and their impact on political discourse. The study found that memes, through humour, irony, rationalization, and moral perspective, are powerful rhetorical tools for developing political ideology and controlling public debates. The researchers found that memes function beyond entertainment value, creating alternative methods to shape public understanding faster than established media channels. Memes aimed at Vice President Kamala Harris were examined for their misogyny and digital public woman concepts (Cerja et al., 2024). They looked at how the"publicwoman" stereotypehas evolvedand howithasbeen used politicallyby Black women. The study evaluated the rapid spread of digital media, which strengthened these stereotypes through humorous and ironic memes and targeted hashtags. Amjadand Rasul (2017) offered insight into how gendered identities are constructed in Pakistani news blogs. Through critical discourse analysis, thestudy demonstrates how linguistic choices frame working women's identities within a patriarchal social context. Such findings echo the ways visual and textual strategies in digital memes similarly reinforce or challenge gender norms, albeit in a different media environment. Steele (2023) explored howmemes contribute to identity formation, media distrust, and misinformation spread in right-wing digital spaces, especially during the January 6th U.S. Capitol insurrection. The research analyzed memes on Gab, revealing that they use humour, irony, and emotional messaging to hide their politics and reinforce political agendas. Memes function as ideological echochambers, reinforcing biases and preventingusers from encountering competing thoughts. The study did not explore how memes manipulate public opinion. Schmid et al., (2024) studied how humour in far-right memes on German Telegram Channels drove higher extremist political content engagement rates. They analyzed 1,200 memes from 2020 to 2021, focusing on how humour influenced the spread of memes and categorizing radical politics for mainstream public consumption. The study did not consider how humour frames Harris' statements in memeform. Hakoköngäs et al., (2020) studied how far-right political discourse in Finland uses memes to persuade audiences and build ideological frameworks.The study examined 426 Facebook memes originating from far-right organisations Finland First and Soldiers of Odin between 2015 and 2017. The research revealed that memes endorse extremist ideologies through humour and emotional appeals, serving as excellent simplifiers of political information and rendering it accessible and compelling to wider audiences. McVicker (2021) analysed 120 memes from the 2020 U.S. presidential election, highlighting their humour, manipulation to influence public opinion, and inaccuracies. The study analysed memes from both left- and right-leaning perspectives. Evidence indicates that humour was the predominant rhetorical device, fulfilling 75% of all propaganda criteria.

Over 70% of the memes utilised digital modification techniques, prioritising textual correctness over graphic presentation to evoke the most potent emotional response. This study addresses a knowledge gap about the mechanisms by which memes convey humour, pathos, and irony. Bland et al., (2024) explored the existence of social media memes, which defamed Kamala Harris during the presidential campaigns between 2020 and 2021.This research focuses on the stereotypes that propagate racial and sexual pride. The paper explored the positive and negative portrayals of Harris and showed the contributions of Facebook in spreading the lies. This research showed that memes frequently reproduced thelectures of Harrisby using humourand emotional appeal, and itdescribed the permanency ofcultural prejudices in electronic media. Fordjour (2023) analyzed how Kamala Harris conveys self-representations through social media, with particular attention to the memes and emotional stories that she exploited to create an almost automatic positive impression of her speeches and personal identity. The study examined 357official tweets during Harris' inaugural year as vice president, revealing that memes employed humour, irony, and sorrow to present an alternative viewpoint. Nevertheless, the study did not assess the employment of pathos and humour in memes that reinterpret Harris' words, underscoring the significance of comprehending Harris' self-branding strategies. Nee (2023) explored the use of humour, pathos, and ironic messages by the Twitter users to creater eductive profiles of Kamala Harris. The analysis showed that consumers have a tendency to associate Harris with hard-edged and dehumanising imagery, putting her in the combative and sluttish frame. The study also demonstrated that memes which conceal negative aspects have to be used in order to support the continuance of these stories.

Although the primary goal of the research was not addressed, it highlights the importance of combating gender and racial stereotypes in political narratives.

Method

The study is designed as an interpretive, qualitative analysis. This study examines how meaning is created and communicated through multimodal texts by concentrating on a limited but topically varied collection of political memes. The qualitative method facilitates a comprehensive examination of the discursive, semiotic, and ideological elements of memes disseminated on prominent social media platforms. Nine memes were selected through purposive sampling as a representative dataset for critical discourse analysis. The analytical unit under consideration is the meme, which is viewed in terms of its multimodal wholeness, regarding image, caption, font, design, colour, and composition. This approachis based on the multimodal analysis framework explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), which analyzed the memes with three dimensions of meaning, i.e., representational, interpersonal, and compositional. The aim of these dimensions is to produce a critical evaluation of such rhetorical and ideological methods underlying memes that renew Harris, specifically how such textual and visual cues interact to reinforce hierarchies in society, as well as to advance cultural stereotypes and propagate discrimination on the basis of identity.

Theoretical Framework
The current study uses Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) basedon Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) framework. In MCDA, researchers highlight three metafunctions of communication which are dependent on one another, i.e, representational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and compositional meaning through which ideology, power, and social identity are constructed and reproduced.

Representational Meaning
This dimension relates to how people, things, activities,and settings are depicted inside the picture. This analysis explores the visual portrayal of Kamala Harris in the memes, including herexpressions (e.g., serious, laughing, angry, bewildered), and the symbolic implications of these representations within broader discussions of race, gender, and authority. For example, memes of Harris with exaggerated expressions frequently convey stereotypes such as the "angry Black woman" or the "inept female leader."

Interpersonal Meaning

This metafunction emphasizes the connection between the image/text and the observer. This analysis examines how visual elements, including eye gazing, facial expressions, modality (reality versus exaggeration), and textual tone (irony, satire, pathos), influence the viewer's perception of Harris. It examines how memes influence emotional responses to undermine her authority or to ridicule her identity.

Compositional Meaning (Textual/Design)

This element pertains to the arrangement of components—layout, prominence, framing, color, and typography. It analyzes how design directs the viewer's focus and facilitates meaning construction. For instance, large bold typefaces may indicate violence or mocking, while dark filters or distorted proportions can evoke discomfort, so promoting the demonization or trivialization of Harris' public image.

Through the integration of these three meta functions, MCDA elucidates that memes serve not just as entertainment butalso as constructs ofideological narratives, specifically perpetuatingrace- and gender- based biases while normalizing symbolic violence against women of color in positions of political authority.

Data Collection

The dataset comprises nine memes that were selected through purposive sampling from social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube Reels, between 2021 and 2024. The selection of these memes was determined not by quantitative metrics (such as likes or shares) but by their discursive significance, specifically, their illustrative employment of irony, humor, pathos, racialized visual tropes, and gendered symbolic elements that correspond with the study's aim to elucidate how these memes perpetuate violence and discrimination against marginalized groups, especially women of color. Despite the absence of frequency percentage analysis, this selective sample facilitated a critical discourse analysis that highlights the ideological substance and communicativeeffect of the memes, rather than their popularity metrics. The selection aimed to illustrate various prejudices, multimodal tactics, and thematic concerns, such as questioning Kamala Harris' genuineness, distorting her racial identity, and ridiculing her political positions on economic and gender justice.

The selection of these platforms was based on their high meme circulation rates in the digital realm.Nine memes were chosen in order to guarantee a manageable sample that faithfully captures the wide range of gender and ethnic representations connected to Kamala Harris' political remarks. This example makes it possible for a thorough analysis of numerous patterns, such as how Harris' facial expressions, like smiling, smirking, and skepticism, are framed to fit racial stereotypes, such as the "sassy Black woman," making her feelings seem exaggerated, unprofessional, or unimportant. However, the multimodal approach remains consistent and focused. The selection procedure was guided by the following inclusion criteria:

Each meme explicitly references Kamala Harris' political speeches, policy statements, or public persona. Multimodal analysis was appropriate for memes that contained both textual and visual components. To be relevant and consistent, hashtags such as #Kamala Harris, #Political Memes, #Harris Speech, # RacialSatire, and #Gender Bias were used toidentify memesthat specifically addressed Harris' political character.

Political memes about Kamala Harris that were created through 2021-2024 via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram,and YouTube Reelsplatforms were chosen.The study uses amultimodal analytical approach through a strategic-ideological approach to explore concepts of temporal relevance, multimodal performance, intersectionality representation, satirical approach, comic purpose, ironic language, racialization and media production. The quotations that are provided by Harris himself in the political speeches are also used to contextualize the discourse.

Purposive sampling is used in this study to collect nine memes that present key view points on leadership assessment, authenticity discussions, and stereotyping. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis(MCDA) will be used to examine the selected memes and compare them to news reports from the

mainstream media. The study focused on political discussions, visual memes, and reaction videos while examining memes gathered from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Representational Meaning

The researcher represented the positions that were attributed to Kamala Harris, such as leader, jest, menace, marionette, orcaricature, and examined how herportrayaleli cited cultural, racial, and gender prejudices. Particular emphasis was placed on emblematic gestures or expressions (e.g., smirking, pointing, exaggerated facial contortions) that reflected recurring archetypes such as "untrustworthy," "sassy," or "over-emotional."

InterpersonalMeaning

The analysis of viewer orientation involved the gaze direction (demand/offer), camera angle (power dynamics), and engagement methods. The tonal features of the text (sarcasm, irony, emotive exaggeration) were examined to see how audiences are prompted to ridicule, fear, distrust, or dismiss Harris. Rhetorical strategies such as irony, humor, ridicule, euphemism, and hyperbole were analyzed and interpreted concerning gender and racial ideology.

Compositional Meaning

Design elements were assessed for salience, informational value (left-right, top-bottom arrangement), framing (distinction or association between image and text), color application, and typographic selections. The study analyzed how these selections increase the ideological function of the meme; for example, the use of bold block characters in all caps may signify yelling, panic, or sarcasm.

Results

AnalysisofMeme1

Figure1.WitchCackle Meme

This meme originates from X. Twitter, as indicated by the tweet from the user "@MrJohn "at the top of theimage; thememe's posting dateis 29September2024. This meme features Kamala Harris mid-laugh, with exaggerated facial features captured in a candid moment. The overlaying text reads: *"Imagine a career of so few accomplishments that you will lie about working at McDonald's." At the same time,* the tweetaboveadds:*"She is feigningaver age American nesstosecurevotes, as she is unpopular and disingenuous."* The meme deploys humor, sarcasm, and visual framing to delegitimize Harris' political identity.

Representational Meaning

The image captures Harris laughing, an act typically associated with positivity or confidence. However, recontextualized beneath the sarcastic caption, the meaning shifts. Her expressionis reframed to suggest arrogance, deception, or unearned confidence. The meme constructs a binary opposition: Harris, the elitist manipulator, vs. the honest "average American." Her identity as a Black and South Asian woman is portrayed as performative and fraudulent, reinforcing racial and gendered mistrust.

Interpersonal Meaning

The sarcastic tone positions the viewer as someone who should ridicule Harris. Phrases like *"so few accomplishments"*and *"lieabout working at McDonald's"* are emotionally charged and patronizing. The viewer is invited to laugh at Harris, not with her, establishing a superiority dynamic. The use of emojis (e.g., "cap") and social metrics(likes/retweets) fosters group validation, encouraging further ridicule and viral spread.

Compositional Meaning

The meme follows a conventional structure: image above, sarcastic caption below. The centered crop exaggerates Harris' open-mouthed laugh, while the bold, white-on-black font adds visual intensity. The layout creates a visual hierarchy, first the face, then the text that guides the viewers to interpret the laughter as absurd. The tweet above strengthens the meme's legitimacy by adding a timestamp and user interaction, simulating public consensus.

Findings

Racial Stereotype Reinforced: Uses the"sassy Black woman"trope by mocking Harris' laughter.
Gender Bias: Presents female confidenceas arroganceor inauthenticity.
Use of Irony and Sarcasm: Satirical text undermines her achievements and authenticity. **Delegitimization of Political Identity:** Suggests Harris fabricates working-classties for political gain. **Visual-Textual Framing:** Strategic design exaggerates expressions to provoke ridicule.
Viewer Positioning: Aligns the audience against Harris usingridicule, emojis,and viral cues.

Analysis of Meme2.

Figure2.Coconut Tree Meme

It was used humorously and criticallyon Twitter(nowX), particularly inlight of Vice President Kamala Harris' central role in the Democratic campaign following President Biden's resignation after July 2024. Through its composition, visual display, and written text, this meme presents multiple political dimensions of Kamala Harris by applying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Multimodal Critical Discourse.

Representational Meaning

The meme features Kamala Harris in mid-speech, wearing a blue blazer and gesturing energetically during an interview, set against a dark background. The meme quotes her line, *"You think you just fell out of a coconut tree?"* a phrase removed from its original context. Without the surrounding dialogue, the expression

becomes ambiguous and open to interpretation. This visual-textual representation invites viewers to infer absurdity, disconnection, or theatricality,which depend on their political stance.The portrait of Kamala Harris in the meme under consideration puts her within the framework of the Democratic organizational allegiance, which is inaugurated by the blue jacket she wears; also, the close-up format brings about the foreground of an excited, affective presentation. The meme transforms the context of the communication of Harris since by removing the context of the spoken quote, it has redefined how Harris speaks publicly and transformed her speech into an object of humour,satire,orpart of a controlled political speech. The line can be interpreted (depending on the interpretative framework of the viewer) as a clear statement of conviction or as some kind of ambiguous half-truth, subjected to purposeful contextual elision. This way, contextualization can be treated as an ideological filter that allows the readers to reconstruct the words of Harris in either a critical or celebratory register.

Interpersonal Meaning

With the help of humour, drama, and irony, this meme in question works to form the affective stance of the viewer towards Harris. By carefully applying the technique of cropping and design, she makes her "loudlaughter"louder, aneffect that is produced ina performance ortheater.Sucha reactionisespecially dismissed by critical observers, thus reaffirming notions of emotional flimsiness or lesser dedication to political seriousness. On the other hand, religious people associate the behaviour with charisma and sociability. People who are already inclined to distrust Harris would interpret the meme as proof of his flippancy or incapacity. On the other hand, supporters can see it as a powerful woman who expresses herself freely. Political discourse is characterized by this polysemic effect, in which meaning is contingent upon the viewpoint of the spectator.

Compositional Meaning

The composition of the meme increases its persuasive power. The quoted statement is immediately readable and emotionally charged due to the stark contrast between the brilliant white serif type and the dark background. The statement is positioned on the left, and Harris' moving face takes up most of the right side, leading the viewer's eye through a visual route that resembles reading from left to right. By removing interpretive signals and isolating Harris from any surrounding factors, the cropped image highlights her emotional outburst. The meme issimple tospread, copy, and reinterpret in digital settings because of its dual design, i.e, bright, humorous text and a clear image. As a result, it invites users to encode their ideological meanings and serves as both a political critique and a template for memes.

Findings

Contextual Ambiguity as a Weapon:A decontextualized speech quote turns a potentially rhetorical phrase into a subject of derision or sarcasm.

Visual Stresson Expressiveness: It highlights the intensity of emotions in away that could be regarded as either sensible or absurd.

Irony and Pathos: By employing irony and gently ridiculing material,the meme plays on the audience's preconceived biases.

Multivocal Viewer Interpretation: The polysemic aspect of the meme ishighlighted by the multivocal viewer interpretation, which permits both positive and negative readings based on ideological affinity.

Gender Perception of Authority: The dramatic tone and expressive body language have the potential to reinforce unfavourable stereotypes about women, especially Black women, as being unduly sentimental.

Design-Driven Message Control: Carefully chosen typeface, contrast, layout, and framing create a polished, palatable meme that blends in seamlessly with online political discourse.

Meme Virality and Social Interpretation: Memes are designed to be shared, retweeted, and repurposed, thereby increasing their ideological impact across various online platforms. This is knownas meme virality and social interpretation.
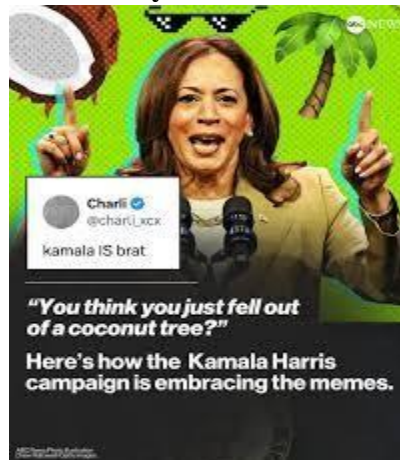
Analysis of Meme3

Figure3.Kamala isbrat

The above meme, taken from Facebook and uploaded on 22 July 2024, employs irony, humour, and pathos. According to Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (2006), this meme reveals how the artist alters public reception of Kamala Harris' speech.

Representational Meaning
This meme digitally manipulates Kamala Harris' image by placing her in an absurdscene with **pixelated sunglasses**, a **cartoonish backdrop of coconut trees**, and a distorted layout that mimics internet humor templates. At the center, there is Harris' quoted phrase, *"You think you just fell out of a coconut tree?"*, which is lifted from its original political speech and repurposed in this humorous visual format.

The serious intent of Harris' statement, which is likely referencing personal responsibility or social justice,is lost entirely in this recontextualized image. As a result, sheloses some ofher depth and authority, and a political figure is reduced to a silly meme-worthy figure. The overlay text "Kamala IS brat" further skews her by using a degrading and infantilising term and associating her with immaturity or emotional impulsivity labels that have historically been used to disrepute women in leadership roles.

Interpersonal Meaning
The humour, irony, and pathos are used to create distance between the audience and the intended rhetorical message. The use of humorous graphics and pejorative language promotes the attitudes of people, ridiculing them instead of questioning the speaker. As a result, the notion of a recipient is established as a digital spectator who takes political aspects as a subject of humour making but not as a knowledgeable analyst. This reformation of the communicative environment makes the serious political argument turn into a meaningless joke. The fact that meme reduces women (who exude confidence) to descriptors of being too emotional or fake is in line with the current online discourse that diminishes the power of women.

The meme operates as a **performative rejection of Harris' legitimacy**, relying on exaggerated visuals and humorous irony to degrade her public persona.

Compositional Meaning
The meme's layout contributes to its undermining effect. Harris face is visually altered with pixelglasses (a common internet trope implying "mock confidence" or "not to be taken seriously"), and the background includes coconut trees, turning a metaphorical expression into a literal, juvenile joke. The text **"Kamala IS brat"** is positioned boldly across the meme in stylized font, making it the most attention-grabbing feature. This draws the viewer's eye before any interpretation of the original quotecan occur. The **clashing visual elements** (pixelation, tropical imagery, meme-style font) disconnect the meme from political

seriousness and instead package it as viral content. By rearranging the visual and verbal elements, the meme not only trivializes the speaker's message but actively **reverses her rhetorical intent**, turning an assertive political point into a punchline. This format, familiar and easily shareable, contributes to how quickly the meme circulates, spreading political mockery while detaching from facts or context.

Findings

Decontextualization and Mockery: The memes trips Harris'quote of its original meaning and repackages it for humour, robbing it for its rhetorical significance.

Infantilization and Gender Bias: The phrase "KamalaI Sabrat" infantilizes Harris, echoingsexist portrayals that depict women leaders as emotionally immature.

Visual Humor to Undermine Authority: Pixelated sunglasses and tropical scenery convert a seriousfigure into a meme character, degrading her political credibility.

Irony and Share ability: The meme uses irony and visual exaggeration to increase entertainment value, inviting audiences to ridicule rather than engage.

Public Opinion Shaping via Aesthetics: Layout and visual-textual arrangement prioritize humour over substance, influencing how audiences interpret Harris' identity and legitimacy.

Cultural Meme Tropes: In corporates popular internet memea esthetics(sunglasses,distortedfonts, cartoon background) to appeal to younger or cynical online audiences while trivializing political speech.

AnalysisofMeme4.

Figure4.You Tube Reels, clipfrom CNNcoverageofKamalaHarris'Guatemala visit,June2021

Representational Meaning

The meme features a real clip of Kamala Harris during her 2021 visit to Guatemala, saying, *"Do not come"* to migrants considering that they cross the U.S. border illegally. The original context, i.e, a formal political statement on immigration, is visually extracted and **reframed in a satirical format**, juxtaposed with a Trump-era meme or humorous video that mocks her seriousness.

The added overlay, *"I regret my decision,"* is not part of Harris' original speech. It serves as a fabricated error, suggesting Harris is now ashamed of her previous stance. This altered the pairing that **creates a contradiction between the visual gravitas of her face and the unexpected regretful tone**, implying insincerity or failure. By portraying her as a confused or repentant individual rather than as a legislator, the representational content ultimately undermines her power.

Interpersonal Meaning

The meme allows both intra-individual laughter and the verbalization of group disapproval through the use of sarcasm and visual mockery. The theme of Kamala Harris and her expressive face,which has always been interpreted as being of serious political interests, is transformed into either melodramatic or insincere in the world of memetics. It is therefore open to the audience to become part of the mockery, identifying that the image was just an inane reversal of the serious Harris official skin.

Those who are already skeptical of her position on immigration would naturally take the meme as a confirmation of their pre-existing gut feelings that she was either ideologically reactive or a phony. The tone of emotion, where the portraits of Harris as overwhelmed or fragile are projected in spite of the apparent satire in the projections, could be interpreted as setting a tone of tragedy. Therefore, the meme not only subverts the reputational capital of Harris but also creates a pretentious intimacy that endears the audience to it.

Compositional Meaning

A solemn occasion is indicated by Harris' formal attire, professional lighting, and visual centering in the frame. However, by combining the clip with sarcastic music, altered sentences, and fragmented cuts from irrelevant video content (such as Trump videos or meme sounds), its solemnity is undermined. For immediate effect, thewords "I regret my decision"are super imposed in a bold type face,usually inredor white. The meme's hilarity is enhanced by this visual-verbal dissonance, which transforms a political statement into a joke. The overlay text initially captures the viewer's attention and frames the interpretation of the video clip. The meme's ideological impact in online political discourse is facilitated by its viral replication design, which makes it simple to spread, remix, and meme further.

Findings

Misrepresentation through Decontextualization: The meme reinterprets the phrase "Do not come" to imply weakness or inconsistency by taking it out of its political context and adding a fake sorrow.

Delegitimizationof Leadership: The meme calls into question the Harris'political integrity and decision-making by suggesting that she regrets her position.

Visual-Ironic Contrast: Combines formal visuals with exaggerated edits and satirical text to ridiculethe speaker.

Gendered Double Standard: Suggests emotional instability or indecision, traits of tenunfairly assigned to women leaders, especially women of color.

Emotional and Comedic Appeal: Engages pathos and humor to provoke viewer reactions, positioning Harris as both laughable and untrustworthy.

Participatory Mockery: Encourages viewers to engage with the meme as a political joke, reinforcing ideological narratives through virality and satire.

Analysis of Meme5.

Figure5."Office Promotion"Meme.Facebook, postedon August 31,2024.

The above meme was taken from Facebook and posted on 31 August 2024.Under Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (2006), the meme showing Kamala Harris with the caption "That one employee who has not done anything for 3 years, but thinks they have earned a promotion" shows digital political communication via irony, humour, and pathos.

RepresentationalMeaning

According to this meme, Kamala Harris appears to give a speech while standing tall and confident in front of an American flag while dressed professionally. The background, which represents institutional legitimacy and national authority, conveys a sense of strength, leadership, and patriotism. The satirical text that is superimposed, however, severely undermines this visual seriousness: "That one employee who has not done anything for three years, but thinks they have earned a promotion."

By equating political leadership with poor performance in a corporate setting, this contrast reframes Harris image from one of a respectable leader to one of an inefficient employee. The meme makes the political message approachable and easy to understand by using a culturally recognizable office metaphor, especially for viewers who are fed up with what they perceive to be passivity on the part of the government or symbolic representation that yields no consequences.

InterpersonalMeaning

The meme uses pathos and irony to change how people view Harris' achievements. The caption's caustic and insulting tone presents the spectator as superior to the subject interms of knowledge, competence, or deservingness. By implying that Harris is unworthy of her position and unaware of her inefficiency, this rhetorical framing evokes feelings of superiority and suspicion in the audience.

The meme turns political discontent into collective laughter by inciting criticism through humour. It appeals to emotions such as **resentment, disillusionment, andridicule**,inviting viewers to question the merit of Harris' leadership. Her competence is framed as **symbolic rather than substantive**, thereby reinforcing gendered and racialized skepticism surrounding women of color in power.

Compositional Meaning

Visually, the meme contrasts two modes: a **professional photographic composition** (flags, lighting, pose) and a **casual meme aesthetic** (bold text, social-media style font). The overlay text is placed at the top or bottom of the image, in all-caps or bold white font, consistent with standard meme design for visibility and immediacy.

This **visual-textual dissonance** (formal image vs. mocking text) intensifies the irony and directs the viewer's interpretation. The traditional symbols of power (the flag, podium, confident pose) arehollowed out by the text's implication: Harris may look the part, but has not earned her place. The compositionencourages viewers tolaugh, share, and perpetuate the narrative of **unearned promotion**, a trope that echoes deeper prejudices about affirmative action, tokenism, and race/gender politics.

Findings

Irony and Workplace Analogy: Makes use of the "lazy employee" cliché to downplay Harris' contribution to public service and undermine her achievements.

Visual-Textual Contrast: Uses snarky meme text to undermine the authority conveyed by theAmerican flag and podium.

Racialised and gendered stereotyping: Strengthens the idea that women of colour in leadership roles are appointed symbolically rather than meritoriously.

Humor viewer alignment: By positioning Harris as out of touch, the filmmakers set the audience as having more normalcy than the official in question and use humorous ridicule to unite the audience around a collective disappointment in political authority.

Emotionally Manipulative Framing: The video plays on the tropes of incompetence and pride as symbolizing Harris to elicit corps discontent with power structures.

Cultural Accessibility: Metaphorical meme-economy deployments at the workplace make a political critique more accessible and transferable, thereby boosting meme relatability and shareability.

Public Delegitimisation: Politicising their derision into further scorn of institutions. In the case of political imagery, turning ridicule into a perfect norm weakens the perceived legitimacy of their political institutions and exposes social-media ridicule.

AnalysisofMeme6.

Figure6.*"Foghorn Leghorn Accent"***Meme**

Thismeme was taken from Facebook and posted on3 September 2024. Through irony, humorous tones, and emotional appeal, the meme presents Kamala Harris' speech delivery to the viewers by linking it to Foghorn Leghorn. The Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis framework by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explains how textual and visual components create the primary message of a text.

Representational Meaning

This meme depicts that Kamala Harris is delivering a public speech side-by-side with a well-known cartoon character, **Foghorn Leghorn**, a Looney Tunes rooster known for his exaggerated Southern drawl. The meme references an actual moment when Harris was accused of using an unnatural accent during a campaign rally. Still, it distorts the moment by visually aligning her with a caricature of artificiality and buffoonery.

It is a purposeful visual assault to pair a cartoon farm animal with a professional politician. Foghorn Leghorn is used in the meme to imply that Harris' speech is performative, phony, and cartoonish. This makes fun of her genuineness, especially when it comes to her ability to relate to Southern Black or working-class audiences. "Kamala not so much," the following text confirms this portrayal by raising questions about her likability and speech pattern. By comparing her to a mythical rooster, she symbolically loses her political leadership status.

Interpersonal Meaning

Three important elements of the meme's interpersonal function are satire, partisanship, and cultural familiarity. Viewers are positioned as observers who are asked to laugh with Harris rather than join in. The image is clearly framed in the context of a political conflict, with the tagline "KAMALA HARRIS TROLLED FOR 'FAKE ACCENT' BY TRUMP SUPPORTERS"at the bottom, prompting

viewers to take a partisan stance. Because of this, the meme stops being a simple form of mockery and starts to be used as a tool for political polarisation.

The humorous aspect of the comparison is its incongruity, i.e, a cartoon rooster and a vice president. However, the impact is more than just amusing. Viewers who question Harris' authenticity, especially those who believe that she speaks differently or uses her Blackness for political ends, find emotional appeal in the meme. This speaks to the racialised and gendered discourses that women of colour often face when their voices or tones deviate from norms.

Compositional Meaning

By horizontally aligning Kamala Harris and Foghorn Leghorn, the meme visually places them on the same level and highlights equivalence. The cartoon image and Harris' face are positioned in a way that encourages direct visual comparison. This composition method supports the rhetorical idea that Harris' public speaking is as exaggerated and unrealistic as that of a cartoon character.

The form of the typical typographic hierarchy of an illustrated news panel is a repeat of the tabloid headline. The huge, capital caption at the bottom centre places the visual image within an immediate discourse of spectacle. It also makes Harris the subject of columnist mocking as it positions her as the center of the scene and highlights the disputed dialogue between her and Trump. Font, placement, and image contrast are all aesthetic choices meant to increase emotional impact and encourage rapid online engagement through likes, shares, and jeers.

Findings

Delegitimisation by Cartoon Comparison: When Harris is likened to alegendary rooster, herauthority and gravity are undermined.

Attacks on Harris' Accent and Authenticity: These charges perpetuate racialised stereotypes about code-switching or performative identity by characterising Harris' speech patterns as fake, dishonest, or manipulative.

Partisan Framing: The title clearly links the meme to Trump supporters, situating it inside a contentious political debate.

Mockery of Public Speech: By dismissing Harris' formal speech as absurd, itturnsacampaign moment into a widely circulated joke.

Race and Gender: Intersectionality undercuts a woman of color's leadership by mocking her voiceand communication style, which are common cliches used to denigrate women in politics.

Components of Design Make the Message Stronger:A horizon tallayout and sensational language reinforce the desired emotional provocation and mockery while increasing viewer impact.

AnalysisofMeme7.

Figure7.*"Ukraine/Do You Understand?"Meme*

This meme was taken from clips thatwere uploaded to YouTube on 3 March 2022. Kamala Harris' 2022 remarksabout Ukraine serve as apotentexampleof ameme thatshowshow digital mediaplat forms use pathos and ironic humor in political discourse. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) used Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) to examine how visual elements in texts create significant ideological constructions that alter audience comprehension.

Representational Meaning

Kamala Harris' 2022 remarks regarding Ukraine, which were initially included in a policy commentary during the Russia-Ukraine war, are reframed in this meme. Because the meme's satirical images and subtitles contrast with her words, her remarks come across as basic, clumsy, or unimportant. Her real-life remark is stripped of its diplomatic context in order to show her as unfit for international affairs, context and

paired with absurd or excessive visuals, including confused face expressions or inappropriate video combinations. By condensing complicated foreign policy in to a single statement and putting it into a humorous meme template, Harris positions himself as a caricature of political incompetence, particularly that of someone who is racially and ideologically "unfit," rather than as an informed policymaker.

Interpersonal Meaning

Through pathos, the meme appeals to the viewer's feelings, which are frequently uncertainty, guilt, or discontent. Rather than promoting interaction with Harris' message, it makes her speech into an internet joke. Her fans can feel that her authority is unfairly mocked, while those who are already critical of her are in a position to feel validated. Because Harris' public character is understood through mockery rather than thoughtful criticism, this strategy contributes to a delegitimizing interpersonal effect. By promoting ridicule-based rejection rather than dialogue and strengthening ideological divisions, it fosters togetherness through mocking.

Compositional Meaning

Thelayouttypicallyfollowsaviralmemeformat:Harris'photoiseditedintoawkwardposturesorpaired with humorous background clips. Fonts are bold, emojis may be used for exaggeration, and captions misrepresent quotes to reinforce the absurd tone. The **clash between visual cues (e.g., official setting)** and **textual trivialization** (jokes, sarcasm) disorients the viewer, pushing them to see the speaker as comically out of depth.

Findings

Recontextualized Mockery: Serious political commentary is trivialized for entertainment.
**Undermines Credibility:** Replacesd iplomaticintent with exaggerated incompetence.
Visual-Textual Irony: Distortsmeaning by pairing formal visuals with comedic captions
Genderedand Racialized Stereotyping: Implies Harris is not intellectually orprofessionally capable.
Audience Manipulation: Uses humorto provoke mistrust and dismissiveness
Viralityover Veracity: For matsare designed for engagement, not accuracy

Figure8._"Word Salad"Meme_
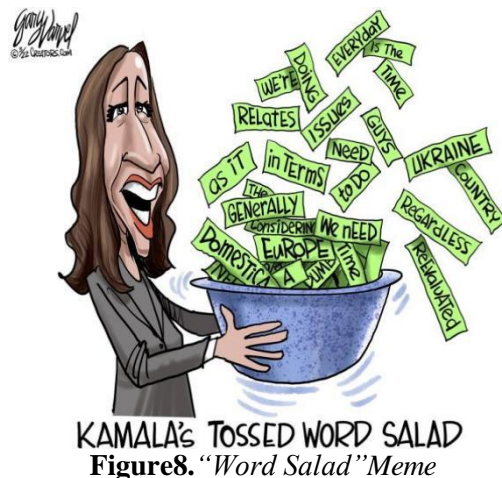
Six months ago, the meme was posted on Facebook. The meme depicts that Kamala Harris is assessing her language responses by tossing around word salad, a collection of random word fragments with an ironic and pathological twist. By applying Kress and van Leeuwen's MCDA framework, which incorporates visual and textual data, create shared meanings that bring attention to Harris.

RepresentationalMeaning

This meme visualizes Kamala Harris' 2022 speech by using the metaphor of a **literal tossed salad** to represent fragmented and disorganized speech. Key words like "Ukraine," "considering," and "issues" are separated and scattered like salad ingredients, emphasizing perceived incoherence. Harris is shown mid-

speech, often gesturing expressively, which visually mimics the confusion of the "word salad" metaphor. By connecting Harris' verbal delivery to meaningless fragments, the meme strips her of rhetorical competence, aligning her with confusion rather than leadership.

Interpersonal Meaning

The meme uses **sarcasm and visual exaggeration** to position the viewer as intellectually superior. The viewer is encouraged tosee Harris not as a stateswoman, but as someonewhose words lack coherence or value. Emotional appeal is embedded in the mockery—pathos emerges from the **audience's shared frustration or embarrassment** at seeing a national leader portrayed as incoherent. This humor works interpersonally to delegitimize Harris, especially among viewers who alreadyquestion her qualifications, encouraging disbelief in her communication ability and broader leadership.

Compositional Meaning

The meme includes **green text strips** (visually mimicking salad toppings), a disorganized layout, and font variations to amplify the joke. The salad metaphor is executed through both **visual pun** and **symbolicattack**, with Harris' speech contents treated as chopped and tossed fragments.The composition favors emotional and comedic impact over factual or political engagement.

Findings

SpeechI ncompetence Stereotyping: Depicts Harris as unable to articulate policy coherently.
SarcasmThrough Visual Metaphor: The"Wordsalad"metaphor renders the communication nonsensical.
Delegitimization via Humor: Encourages mistrust in Harris' leadership through ridicule.
Gendered Visual Devaluation: Frames assertiveness as chaotic and disordered.
Emotional Manipulation(Pathos): Engages frustration and distrust, discrediting political messages.
Meme Logic Reinforces Dismissal: Make scritical speech moments fodder for comedy.

AnalysisofMeme9.

Figure9.*"VennDiagram"Meme*

Taken from Facebook and posted on 6 October 2022. Using irony, humour, and pathos, the meme with Kamala Harris inside a Venn diagram framework generates a multimodal critique consistent with the ideas of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA).

Representational Meaning

This meme features Kamala Harris placedinside a **Venn diagram**, wheretwo overlapping circles arelabeled:
"People who should not be any where near the levers of power." "People who love Venn diagrams"
Harris is shown at the center of the overlap, directly associating her comment about liking Venn diagrams with political incompetence. This representation **ridicules her intellectual capacity and communication**

choices, trivializing her leadership by linking a harmless academic reference to mockery and failure.

Interpersonal Meaning

The meme positions the spectator to regard Harris as both absurd and unworthy by attacking her character with empathy and sarcasm. It capitalizes on the conflict between a personal quirkiness and the public's expectation of political seriousness. Although she is tasked with important duties, the audience is urged to mock her for taking pleasure in little matters. This personal framing raises questions aboutthe significance of her political presence while evoking both laughter and disdain.

Compositional Meaning

The meme makes fun of the Venn diagram structure, which is typically used for logical analysis or instruction. Harris' positioning at the intersection graphically emphasizes the concept that she fits into both of the unwanted groups. The fonts are bold, clean, and meme-standard, with an emphasis on contrast and clarity. Ironically, the academic structure exacerbates the insult by suggesting that even her reasoning is flawed.

Findings

Trivialising PoliticalI dentity: The concept of political identity is also trivialized when infirmityis converted to appear harmless objectives.

Irony between words and images: The reis a habitual irony of language or image ryopposed to personalised commending that regularly makes personalised statements a political liability.

Personality and Style Mockery: In parallel,stylisticand personality-oriented criticis mare based on the idea that a lack of skill is visible in aggressive communication decisions.

Using a woman's character as evidence: Likewise,the use of the character traits of women as evidence is gendered and disqualifying.

Framing structurally: Lastly, framing in the context of diagrammatic logics upposedly bases assertions on assumed objectivity, and the memetic aspect deepens such assertions with a merging of personal attack and didactic aesthetics.

Results

In this research, the researcher examines nine political memes that criticize Kamala Harris' public discourse by using multimodal critical discourse analysis. The memes were chosen on a heterogeneous modal structure and ideological numbering. Every meme is questioned through a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) model that follows Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) framework and focuses on representational, interpersonal, and compositional aspects. These memetic texts, which arouse suchan analysis, should not be seen only as a humorous commentary but as a more strategic object that circulates the polarizing ideological discourse. They humiliate the speech, identity, and credibility of Harris by using irony, manipulating visual images, and even cultural stereotypes such as racial and gendered stereotypes. The general findings that follow summarize the results of the nine memes.

Witch Cackle Meme (Twitter, 29 September 2024): Uses a cropped image of Harris laughing along with caustic wording to mock her line of work. It recasts her self-assurance as dishonest and inept, supporting the Stereotype that Black women in positions of authority are performative or unworthy.

Coconut Tree Meme (Facebook, 22July2024): Takes Harris' quote "You think you just fellou to fa coconut tree?" out of context and digitally distortsit.The meme infantilizes her and depicts her as nonsensical, using irony and humor to trivialize political discourse and mock Black cultural expression. **Coconut Tree – Brat Meme** (Facebook, 31 August 2024): Shows Harris making a rhetorical remark but over lays a cartoonish back drop and the phrase "KamalaIS brat."This meme reduces her to an emotional, childish figure, playing on stereotypes that women of color are irrational or aggressive.

Do Not Come Meme (You Tube Reels, June2021):Extracts Harris' immigration warning ("Donot come") from a CNN interview and inserts it into a comic mashup with Trump commentary. The meme portrays her as hypocritical and weak, undermining her stance on immigration with emotional sarcasm.

Office Promotion Meme (Facebook, 31 August 2024): Juxtaposes Harris before an American flag with

thecaption"That one employee who has done nothing for 3 years…"The meme framesheras symbolically promoted rather than earned, feeding narratives about tokenism and racialized professional doubt.

Foghorn Leghorn Meme (Facebook, 3 September 2024): Pairs Harris' public speech with Looney Tunes' Foghorn Leghorn, mocking her speaking style and accent. It implies that her speech is unnatural or exaggerated, drawing on racialized perceptions of inauthenticity and performative Blackness.

Ukraine/Do You Understand? Meme (You Tube Reels, 3 March 2022): Extracts a serious diplomatic comment about the Ukraine war and layers it with humorous clips, implying she lacks international awareness. It trivializes foreign policy and rebrands Harris' rhetoric as clueless and incoherent.

Word Salad Meme (Facebook,early2024): imagines an actual salad bowl full of word fragments with green tints, such as "Ukraine" and "considering." The meme delegitimises Harris' intelligence and policy expression by making fun of her speech patterns and portraying them as meaningless gibberish.

Venn Diagram Meme (Facebook, 6 October 2022): Harris serves to represent not only one whoshouldnotbeinapositionofpower, butalso onewho wouldprovetohave anunreasonableattractionto Venn diagrams. In general, such a dual designation would be interpreted as evidence of a lack of sufficiently adequate leadership capacity and as a target of pedagogically inclined quirks. It can be considered, then, that the Venn diagram used in this work is a tool of both political commentary and academic parody.

Table1
FrequencyofDiscursiveThemesAcross KamalaHarris Memes

DiscursiveThemes	NumberofMemes(outof 9)
Delegitimizationof Authority	9
Sarcasm& Irony	9
Visual-TextualDistortion	9
EmotionalManipulation (Pathos)	8
RacialStereotyping	7
Gender Stereotyping	6
Mockery of Speech	6
Trivializationof Identity	5
PoliticalPolarization	4

An in-depth analysis of recurring discursive motifsin the nine memes about Kamala Harris on a theme of politics illustrates thatirony, delegitimization, andvisual- textual distortion were frequently and strategically deployed (Table 1), all of which serve to undermine her legitimacy and leadership. Eight of the memes also use pathos, which is emotional manipulation in this case, used in order to influence the attitudes of the viewers through the use of sarcasm and mockery. We even see the racial and gender stereotypes defining Harris as a woman of colour, which once again testifies to the nature of her identity as being intersectional. Examples like partisanship, the parody of speech, and the trivialization of identity further demonstrate that memes are tools of ideological contest, mixing symbolic violence with laughter, to achieve influence over the popular mindset.

Discussion

The analysis of nine political memes addressed to Kamala Harris produced an idea of recurrent rhetorical manoeuvres that confirm the previous studies of digital discourse and multimodal satire. The results support the idea of memes being used outside the sphere of entertainment and being used for ideological polarisation, racial and gender profiling, and political demonisation.

Demonisation of authority

The memes continually portray Harris as incompetent, lying, or just a figurehead as opposed to genuine, thus lowering her perceived credibility and competence. Illustrating that it is common to have Harris diminished to undeserving custodianship of governmental power employed through ale code and oblique mockery, (Nee, 2023; & Bland et al., 2024) have adequately insisted on it. This paper substantiates those findings.The memes, like "Kamala IS brat and That one employee who has not done anything... seem to have coded cultural cliches questioning her authority.

Gender-basedandracially-based stereotypes

The amount of racial stereotypes invoked by seven memes notably includes: "sassy Black woman" and "Jezebel." There are also six memes perpetuating gendered tropes: emotional instability and infantilisation. These patterns align with Cassese et al., (2022), who demonstrated that the media presentations focus on the race of Harris, and Cerja et al.,(2024), who introduced the idea of a digital public woman as a way to perform the delegitimisation of Black women through humour and irony.

These tropes were evident in memes like the "Witch Cackle" and "Foghorn Leghorn" comparisons, which symbolically challenge Harris authority through emotive caricature.

Employing Humour, Irony, and Pathosas Manipulation Strategies

Every meme used exaggeration, parody, and sarcasm to provoke emotions such as disdain, laughter, or disbelief. This is consistent with Tianli and Chen (2024), who noted that rhetorical comedy in political situations commonly uses exaggeration, irony, and metaphor to demystify difficult ideas and elicit powerful audience responses.

Visual-Text Distortion

Through the use of cropping, facial exaggeration, and typography (bold caps, emoji, filters), memes purposefully change meaning and give emotional interpretation precedence over rational analysis. Rezeki et al., (2024) claimed that the colour schemes and patterns of memes are used to support ideologicalnarratives. These design elements were evidentin thevisuallayout of memeslike the"Word Salad" and "Coconut Tree" forms, which promote ridicule rather than reflection. An excellent illustration of how visual metaphor and layout can transform political discourse into a joke is the meme's positioning of Harris next to cartoon characters or salad ingredients.

Audience Engagement and Political Polarization

Using comedy to foster unity against Harris, memes frequently encourage partisan cohesion. This tendency is similar to that of Steele (2023) and Schmid et al.,(2024), who discovered that far-right meme comedy serves as a political echo chamber and encourages exclusionary beliefs. Furthermore, Lin et al., (2024) showed how participatory media culture can be used to perpetuate objectionable stereotypes through meme virality. These memes' use of ambiguous sarcasm and sarcastic detachment makes them "safe" to spread, even when they include highly coded meanings, which broadens their ideological appeal. By clearly connecting meme aesthetics to rhetorical violence and illustrating how irony and emotional distortion combine to delegitimize marginalized political leaders, our findings build on previous research. This analysis offers a more longitudinal and intersectional perspective than more general meme studies (e.g., McVicker, 2021) since it concentrates on particular speech distortions and multimodal framing of Harris' identity between 2021 and 2024.

Conclusion

Using Vice President Kamala Harris as a case study, this work has critically analyzed how political memes serve as instruments of digital discourse that sustain racial, gender, and ideological violence against disadvantaged political actors. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), the study found that memes' textual and visual components consistently misrepresent Harris' original speech acts and public persona in ways that undermine her authority and promote negative stereotypes.

Sarcasm and satire are employed as tools of symbolic exclusion in the modern meme landscape, being used to illustrate the complex power structures within the texts. Through framing Kamala Harrisas incompetent, inauthentic, or otherwise unqualified to lead (or, in particular, to highlight that she is a woman of colour), visualirony, quotationout of context and gendered caricature are employed to discredit her legitimacy. This rhetorical maneuver renders salient political issues and makes them sticky and iconic through parodies that sneak along resonant ideological constructs like anti-Blackness, misogyny, and partisan polarization. These memes are, therefore, used to belittle serious political arguments, illustrating that the

medium lacks the neutrality of ideology. They often operate as digitally mediated acts of rhetorical violence, shaping public perception not only of political figures but also of race,gender, and authority itself. In doing so, they risk normalizing discrimination and symbolic erasure, particularly when they target individuals from historically marginalized communities.

Future Recommendations:

- Investigate how diverse audiences interpret and emotionally respond to suchmemes (reception studies).
- Compare meme depictions of male and female politicians across raciallines.
- Explore the legal and ethical boundaries between satire and hate speech in digital communication.
- Integrate quantitative methods (e.g., engagement metrics) to measure how widely harmful meme content is circulated and consumed.
- Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing recognition that digital satire, especially in theform of memes, is not harmless entertainment ; it is a potent ideological force that can reinforce inequality, marginalize voices, and challenge the democratic integrity of public discourse.

Limitations

- Small Sample Size:Only nine memes were analyzed, limiting generaliza bility to broader meme cultures.
- Plat form Restriction: Memes were collected from a few platforms (Facebook,Twitter/X/X, Instagram, and YouTube), excluding others like TikTok or Reddit.
- No Audience Reception Analysis: The study does not include how viewers interpret or emotionally respond to the memes.
- Single Subject Focus: Concentrates solely on Kamala Harris, without comparing representations of other political figures.
- Contextual Interpretation Bias:Meme meanings depend on cultural context; interpretations may vary and are subject to researcher bias.
- English-Language Limitation: All memes were in English and U.S.-centric, excluding multilingual or international meme discourse.

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