

# An Ideological Analysis of Defamation in Selected YouTube Videos: A *Critical Discourse Analysis Study*

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## Abstract

The rapid growth of the Internet has an impact on many facets of daily life, including social communication. The prevalence of defamation on social media platforms is a significant component of this development. Through language, social groupings fight among themselves and promote their own views. Discourse indicates an ideology's influence based on this idea. This paper conducts a critical discourse analysis of defamation in selected YouTube videos. The study aims at examining the way a defamatory content published on YouTube affects the defamed person and detecting the hidden ideologies which motivate text producers to defame the target individual. In order to achieve the aims of this study, the researcher adopts a model for the sake of analysing the data from a critical discourse analysis perspective and analyses the data qualitatively to acquire a comprehensive critical understanding of the nature and traits of defamation in particular texts on YouTube. The collected texts are chosen from three defamatory videos published by Mr. Kevin J. Johnston. The researcher concludes that defamatory publications cover discrimination, prejudice, and racism; these ideologies are capable of motivating a person to defame and harm someone on social media platforms in general and on YouTube in particular.

**Keywords:** accusation, critical discourse analysis, defamation, ideology, YouTube

## 1. Introduction

This paper studies defamation in selected YouTube videos from a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective. The researcher attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the semantic and pragmatic strategies that enable an individual to defame someone on YouTube?
- 2) Which ideologies can be detected from analysing the semantic and pragmatic strategies employed to realise defamatory YouTube videos?

In accordance with the previous two questions, this study aims to:

- 1) Identify the semantic and pragmatic strategies that enable an individual to defame someone on YouTube.
- 2) Determine the ideologies that can be detected from analysing the semantic and pragmatic strategies employed to realise defamatory YouTube videos.

The research procedures involve the following steps:

- 1) Presenting a brief overview of the concept of defamation and the field of CDA.
- 2) Illustrating the Communication Model of Lasswell and the selected discursive strategies of Van Dijk.
- 3) Analysing three YouTube videos.
- 4) Drawing some conclusions based on the analysis.

This paper is limited to analysing three YouTube videos depending on Van Dijk's Ideological Discursive Strategies, namely semantic and pragmatic strategies available in the data. Lasswell's Model of Communication is used to describe the data contextually in order to achieve a comprehensive analysis.

Hopefully, the current research can provide an insight to those who are interested in studying online defamation linguistically. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that the conclusions of this paper raise students' language awareness so that they can detect hidden ideologies within text and talk.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 A Brief Survey of Critical Discourse Analysis

Van Dijk (2001, p. 97) defines CDA as the analysis of discourse through which researchers can study the enactment, reproduction, and

resistance of power and dominance as well as inequality. More specifically, CDA studies how these matters are done through “text and talk in social and political contexts.” Wodak and Forchtner (2018, p.147) mention that the initial goal of critical discourse analysts is to make people conscious of how dominant groups mislead, control, or even victimise the oppressed groups. Those analysts make an effort to question and oppose the actions of powerful organisations and people who put their ‘Own’ interests before those of ‘Others.’

As mentioned by Bloor and Bloor (2013, p. 19), CDA attempts to explain the origins and progression of a social problem, and to determine potential solutions to lessen its impacts. Van Dijk (2016, pp: 70-71) argues that CDA studies discourse so as to find answers to the following questions: why do specific discourses and social practices occur; why do some of them tend to be dominant; how do they lead the problem to escalate into a catastrophe; and how could they further contribute to social changes?

## 2.2 A Spotlight on Defamation

Defamation is the act of attacking an individual by the use of malicious language in order to damage his reputation in the eyes of his community (Garner, 2016, pp: 157-158). Similarly, Shy (2010, p. 10) contends that defamation happens when a person intentionally utters something that has the potential to lower the estimation of another which leads to deterring the society from interacting with him.

Defamation is of two types: slander and libel. Slander, as Butterfield (2015, p. 1396) puts it, is the spoken form of defamation; i.e. it includes saying untrue things about someone. Libel, on the other hand, means writing false claims that can ruin someone’s reputation; it is the written form of defamation. Both slander and libel mean manipulating language in a way that harms a person’s reputation and social image. Garner (1995, p. 127) distinguishes between these two terms; he elaborates that slander is defamation type made in fugitive form (e.g. by speaking or gestures), while libel is defamation type made in permanent form (writing, pictures, etc.). The following sub section summarises the meaning of libel since it is the main concern of this paper.

### 2.2.1 Libel

As mentioned above, libel is the type of defamation that includes manipulating language in order to damage someone’s reputation and lower his estimation in the community. Collin (2004, p. 287) illustrates that libel means publishing and sharing misleading information that causes people to perceive someone as being bad. Hill and Hill (2009, p. 251) note that a false statement about an individual that is published or broadcasted via the social media and harms the individual’s reputation or social standing is a libel. Thus, it is a tort and the individual who is harmed can file a suit against the defendant. A statement published on social media has the potential to reach a very large audience and can be permanent; for these reasons, Hill and Hill (2009, p. 395) regard such a statement as libel.

## 3. Methodology

This section provides a brief account of Van Dijk’s Socio- Cognitive Approach to CDA with an explanation of the pragmatic and semantic strategies available in the selected data. It also presents Lasswell’s Communication Model which will be utilised to describe the texts contextually.

### 3.1 Van Dijk’s Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis

Van Dijk (2016, p. 64) mentions that CDA is understood by the theoretical discourse- cognition- society triangle. His claim is based on the idea that the detailed structures, strategies, and functions of text and talk -including grammatical, pragmatic, interactional, stylistic, rhetorical, semiotic, narrative, or similar forms of verbal and paraverbal institution of communicative events - must be taken into account by CDA as a specific form and practice of discourse analysis, regardless of the other dimensions of discourse it addresses.

For Van Dijk (2001, p. 97; 2016, p. 64), a sociocognitive approach contends that these links are cognitively structured, although all methods of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) examine the relationships between discourse and society. Just one way to connect discourse structures with social structures is through “the mental representations of language users as social members.” The same cognitive link of mental models, information, beliefs, and ideologies, on the other hand, is the only way discourse may affect social interaction and social structures. It should be made clear that this paper studies discourse structures semantically and pragmatically so that the researcher can uncover the hidden ideologies built in text and talk. These discursive structures, or strategies, are explained below.

#### A. Semantic Strategies

The semantic strategies are among the most significant discursive strategies that are used to highlight and enhance an idea intended by the speaker/writer. The lexical meaning of a word can indicate the speaker’s ideologies about the thing being discussed (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 107). The present paper studies the semantic strategies of negative lexicalisation and derogation.

Negative lexicalisation means using negative terms in order to make a negative impact on the addressee. For Van Dijk (2005, p. 25), negative lexicalisation is predetermined by the ideologies of the participants and their social relations with each other and with other social groups. Therefore, the present study investigates the negative lexicalisations utilised in the research data. The focus on the negative lexicalisations stems from the fact that a defamatory speech has the tendency to assault the plaintiff verbally.

Derogation is a lexical strategy that provides a speaker/writer with the lexical items suitable for his communication intention. Van Dijk (1993, p. 84) points out that an individual from a certain social group may aim to derogate other group’s members by underestimating their actions or discrediting their identities. Racist practices, attitudes, and ideologies are the main source or motivation for derogating other ethnicities and races.

#### B. Pragmatic Strategies

According to Yule (1996, p. 3), pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning which entails determining what people mean in a given situation and how the context affects what they say. The pragmatic strategies of speech acts and presupposition are analysed in this paper.

Speech acts are those utterances which enable a speaker or writer to perform an action through using language (Yule, 1996, p. 47). Searle (1979, pp: 12-16) classifies the illocutionary speech acts into five general categories as follows: declarations, such as naming and sentencing; representatives, such as asserting and accusing; expressives, such as apologising and loving; directives, like ordering and requesting; and finally commissives, such as promising and threatening.

A presupposition, as stated by Yule (1996, p. 25), “is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance.” Brown and Miller (2013, p. 357) contend that a presupposition is a tenet that language producers “take for granted” while making allegations. Van Dijk (2008, p. 207) argues that speakers presuppose or assume previous knowledge of their addressees.

### 3.2 Lasswell's Communication Model

The contextual factors that surround a text need to be taken into consideration because without them, the analysis will never be complete. Thereby, Lasswell's Model of Communication is the basis upon which the selected texts are described before the analysis begins. This model was created by Lasswell with the intention of studying mass media. Five components constitute the contextual factors; each one has its own role within the production and comprehension of any text. As mentioned by Lasswell (1971, pp: 84-92), these factors include the communicator who produces and distributes a message (WHO?); the content of the communicated message (SAYS WHAT?); the media utilised to distribute the message (IN WHICH CHANNEL?); the addressee or the audience to whom the message is communicated (TO WHOM?); and the ‘result’ of the message in the communication process (WITH WHAT EFFECT). To recapitulate, Lasswell (1971, p. 84) summarises the aforementioned factors as follows: “Who says what through which channel to whom with what effect?”

## 4. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The present section consists of the application of the model to the selected data.

### 4.1 Data Collection

Three YouTube videos are taken from some publications made by Kevin J. Johnston, a public figure in Canada who publishes his beliefs on his YouTube channel. Mr. Johnston's videos address three different individuals who are described in the contextual factors below.

### 4.2 The Procedures of Analysis

Each one of the three texts is tackled through the following procedures:

- 1) The selected video is transcribed into a text form so as to be presented.
- 2) The contextual factors are described.
- 3) The text is analysed qualitatively depending on the ideological discursive strategies of Van Dijk, particularly the semantic strategies of negative lexicalisation and derogation in addition to the pragmatic strategies of speech acts and presupposition.

### 4.3 Data Analysis

#### I. Khalid v. Johnston

The Text

*“It sickens me that she holds a seat in Parliament Hill as a terrorist scumbag ... I believe that you are a terrorist. I believe that you are here to kill me, and kill my children, and kill the entire future of this entire nation... The only thing that your actions can do is cause a civil war within these borders... Because I can tell you this, there are a lot of gun nuts in this country, and you're pissing them off. You don't want to do that. There is a select kind of Canadian that even I'm afraid of. And those are not the guys you want to try and bring Sharia law to. But hey, if you think that is the right way to go, go ahead. I'm a journalist, and I'll be there to see you on the ground crying and complaining about the fact that someone shot you because they disagreed with Sharia law and the rape of children. And I'll be there with a big fat smile on my face, saying, “Heh, heh, Iqra Khalid gets shot by a Canadian patriot who didn't want to wrap his daughter up in a bandage, and who did not want to take on or adopt Sharia, where he has to pin his daughter down on the ground and cut her labia and clitoris off with a razor blade” (Gordon, 2017).*

#### A. Contextual Factors

##### 1) Who:

Mr. Johnston is an active public figure on YouTube. He was a mayoral candidate in Mississauga, 2014; yet he was not elected as the mayor since he did not get enough votes. Four years later, Mr. Johnston ran for the same election and got the second position with 13.5 per cent of the votes (Gordon, 2017).

In 2017, the defamer was charged by “the Peel Police with willfully promoting hatred toward the Peel Muslim community.” It seems that Mr. Johnston dedicated his platform to spread hate speech and Islamophobia (Marchildon, 2017; Oliphant, 2021).

Mr. Johnston is a social media performer; he frames himself as a journalist. He operates the ‘Kevin J. Johnston Show,’ Canada's best

podcast, which runs from Monday to Friday at 7PM to 9PM Mountain Time (Oliphant, 2021).

## 2) Says What:

Kevin J. Johnston used his social media platforms to express his beliefs about, among other things, Islam and Muslims. In a specific publication on YouTube, Mr. Johnston attacked the Liberal Member of Parliament (MP) Iqra Khalid. He described her as a 'little girl' with 'very little intelligence.' Mr. Johnston published a video that included the above mentioned speech (Marchildon, 2017).

## 3) In Which Channel:

On July 24, 2017, Mr. Johnston published the above-quoted Facebook video about Iqra Khalid on his YouTube channel and website freedomreport.ca (Marchildon, 2017).

## 4) To Whom:

The plaintiff is Ms. Iqra Khalid who was born in Pakistan in 1985; her family immigrated to Canada in 1998 and began a new life in Mississauga. She had a successful career as an MP in Mississauga. She is a fervent supporter of women's rights and a faithful partner in the fight for human rights. Ms. Khalid has represented Mississauga-Erin Mills's residents in her capacities as a chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, a member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Human Rights, and chair of the Women's Caucus (Gordon, 2017).

## 5) With What Effect:

The defamer spreads untrue information about Ms. Khalid; he attempts to instigate people against the plaintiff by damaging her reputation.

## B. Discursive Strategies

### 1) Semantic Strategies

- Negative Lexicalisation

Mr. Johnston depends heavily on the strategy of negative lexicalisation in order to harm the plaintiff. Thus, he frames Ms. Khalid as a 'terrorist' who belongs to the out-group. He addresses the plaintiff throughout his speech and tells her that there are 'gun nuts' in Canada who will get Ms. Khalid 'shot' because she is 'pissing them off.' The defamer states that "I believe that you are a terrorist. I believe that you are here to kill me, and kill my children, and kill the entire future of this entire nation."

This strategy assists Mr. Johnston to portray the plaintiff in a negative way. The defamer utilises several expressions which influence the way the third party views Islam. For instance, Ms. Khalid is described as 'a terrorist scumbag;' the defamer elaborates the meaning of this word by expressing how he views Ms. Khalid's actions. The expressions 'kill,' 'rape,' and 'cause a civil war' are used to describe what Ms. Khalid wants to do to the defamer's in-group members. Additionally, the defamer repeats 'Sharia law' more than once; he believes that this law brings damage to Canada because it makes people do savage things such as forcing fathers to 'wrap [their daughters] in bandage' and "pin [them] down to the ground and cut [their] labia and clitoris off with a razor blade." Apparently, the defamer holds an Islamophobic beliefs; he attacks the plaintiff because she is a Muslim. Racism, prejudice, and discrimination motivate Mr. Johnston to defame Ms. Khalid by publishing malicious and hateful speech about her.

### 2) Pragmatic Strategies

- Speech Acts

What the defamer endeavours to do is to make people perceive Ms. Khalid in a negative way. Mr. Johnston does so by employing the speech act of accusing. He accuses her of being 'a terrorist,' Mr. Johnston says that the only thing Ms. Khalid's actions can do 'is cause a civil war.' The defamer continues to employ the representative speech acts of accusing and asserting. He explicitly states that "I believe that you are a terrorist. I believe that you are here to kill me, and kill my children, and kill the entire future of this entire nation." Put differently, the defamer shares beliefs not mere opinions about the plaintiff.

Furthermore, Mr. Johnston utilises the commissive speech act of threatening; he threatens the plaintiff that his in-group members will hurt her because they do not want 'Sharia law' in their country. This is found in the utterances "there are a lot of gun nuts in this country, and you're pissing them off ... And those are not the guys you want to try and bring Sharia law to ... I'm a journalist, and I'll be there to see you on the ground crying and complaining about the fact that someone shot you ..."

- Presupposition

Mr. Johnston, by addressing Ms. Khalid, expresses his ideas and beliefs about Muslims. He tells the plaintiff that Canadians (in-group) do not want the Sharia law; the defamer states that "Iqra Khalid gets shot by a Canadian patriot." Mr. Johnston shares how he perceives Islam in his utterance "Canadian patriot who didn't want to wrap his daughter up in a bandage ... and who did not want ... to pin his daughter down to the ground and cut her labia and clitoris off with a razor blade." In other words, the defamer presupposes that Muslims, 'take on or adopt Sharia,' commit savage and illegal crimes; Mr. Johnston believes that all Muslims circumcise little girls.

Both of these strategies reveal the defamer's ideologies about Islam and Muslims. Mr. Johnston is driven by Islamophobic beliefs; i.e. he is prejudiced against Muslims that is why he attacks them by framing them as out-group members. The defamer, thus, mentions that other

Canadians (in-group members) discriminate the plaintiff. They and he as well, want to get rid of Ms. Khalid because they do not want her 'to try and bring Sharia law.'

## II. Fakh v. Johnston

### The Text

*"I can't for the life of me understand why a restaurant would be here unless the restaurant was up to something nefarious. You have to be Jihadist or have raped someone else's wife as a condition of entry to the Restaurant. Mr. Fakh is a racist restaurant owner and an economic terrorist. Mohammad Mr. Fakh wants to be part of giving money to convicted terrorists. Why do Muslim business men in Mississauga hate white Christian men so much? Paramount is little more than a front and this man was under investigation by CSIS and by the Canada Revenue Agency...they were trying to figure out where this man's money came from. The Pakistani spy agency ISI is giving him the money that he needs to utilize his stores as a front to bring more refugees/illegal aliens into the country, all whom, of course, are Muslim. Boycott Paramount Fine Foods until they come clean on terror involvement"* (Paramount v. Johnston, 2018)

### A. Contextual Factors

#### 1) Who:

In 2010, Mr. Johnston's website advertised him as 'a court process server.' After that, he seemed to have been a quasi-public figure in the city of Mississauga, Canada. In 2014, the defamer sent a photograph of himself, naked and in blackface, performing a Nazi salute (Paramount v. Johnston, 2018).

#### 2) Says What:

On July 23, 2017, Mr. Johnston published the above mentioned speech in a video talking about Mr. Fakh and his restaurant. The video under analysis shows Mr. Johnston with a microphone in hand making comments to the camera, talking to other people, and videoing what was taking place that day outside the Paramount restaurant (Paramount v. Johnston, 2018; Paramount v. Kevin J. Johnston, 2019).

#### 3) In Which Channel:

On July 23, 2017, Mr. Johnston published his video on YouTube. He also shared it on his Twitter and Facebook accounts so as to raise the number of viewers (Paramount v. Johnston, 2018).

#### 4) To Whom:

A businessman and philanthropist from Lebanon, Mohammad Fakh is also of Canadian descent. He is the founder of the Middle Eastern chain of halal restaurants known as Paramount Fine Foods (Paramount v. Johnston, 2018; Paramount v. Kevin J. Johnston, 2019)

#### 5) With What Effect:

Mr. Johnston, via his publication, attacks Mr. Fakh and makes untrue allegations about him. The defamer harms the plaintiff's reputation in the eyes of the YouTube community.

### B. Discursive Strategies

#### 1) Semantic Strategies

- Negative Lexicalisation

The defamer attacks Mr. Fakh so as to make people avoid him; this is achieved through negative lexicalisation. Mr. Johnston describes the plaintiff as a terrorist who wants to bring other terrorists to Canada. The defamer attempts to emphasise the negative perspective that he and his audience have about Islam. Hate speech used in the text allows Mr. Johnston to damage the plaintiff's reputation; thus, the sentence "boycott Paramount Fine Foods until they come clean on terror involvement," expresses the defamer's intentions to deter others from dealing with the plaintiff because "Mr. Fakh is a racist restaurant owner."

- Derogation

The extract under investigation is full of derogatory words that have ideological meanings. To start with, the defamer mentions that Mr. Fakh only allows a 'Jihadist' to enter the restaurant. For Mr. Johnston, those who enter the restaurant "have raped someone else's wife as a condition of entry." Furthermore, the defamer describes Mr. Fakh as an 'economic terrorist' who has been investigated "to figure out where this man's money came from." Mr. Johnston states that Mr. Fakh uses "his stores as a front to bring more refugees/illegal aliens into the country."

These two semantic strategies show that Mr. Johnston's speech involves racism, prejudice, and discrimination against Muslims and Islam in general. The defamer's main concern is to portray Muslims as the out-group members who have to be avoided by the in-group members, Mr. Johnston emphasises that Mr. Fakh is a terrorist and racist. These ideologies are based upon hate and malice which drive the defamer to harm the plaintiff's reputation in various ways.

#### 2) Pragmatic Strategies

- Speech Acts

Mr. Johnston utilises a variety of speech acts in order to achieve his goal of harming the plaintiff's reputation and deterring other people from dealing with him. The defamer, for the most part, accuses the plaintiff of being 'racist' and 'terrorist,' who wants to bring 'illegal aliens' to Canada. Additionally, Mr. Johnston states that Mr. Fakh's 'restaurant was up to something nefarious.' These accusations imply an insult; thus, the defamer employs the speech acts of insulting and accusing to harm the plaintiff's reputation.

Moreover, the defamer utilises the representative speech act of asserting; he asserts the information that he mentions about Mr. Fakh as being facts rather than mere personal opinion. Therefore, the assertion reflects the defamer's intention; i.e. Mr. Johnston deliberately attacks Mr. Fakh to damage his social image. Finally, Mr. Johnston finishes his speech by using an order, the defamer directs his audience to "boycott Paramount Fine Foods until they come clean on terror involvement." This is a directive speech act of ordering to deter the third party from having any contact or communication with the plaintiff.

- Presupposition

Mr. Johnston uses this strategy to presuppose that Muslims in general and Mr. Fakh in particular are out-group members who do not belong to a Western country like Canada. The main and obvious presupposition is found in the utterance "Why do Muslim business men in Mississauga hate white Christian men so much?" This question presupposes that all Muslims actually do hate 'white Christian men.' It also presupposes that Muslims are racists who discriminate Christians and whites. For the defamer, Muslims are 'aliens' and they bring destruction and terror to in-group communities.

Depending on the pragmatic analysis, it is clear that the defamer deliberately wants to harm the plaintiff's reputation by damaging his social face. Mr. Johnston appears to be racist and prejudiced against Muslims. He attacks the plaintiff just because Mr. Fakh is a Muslim; the defamer discriminates Muslims and believes that they are terrorists and out-group 'aliens' who have to be abandoned.

### III. Alberta Health Services v. Johnston

#### The Text

*"AHS has gone out of their way to commit the following crimes... criminal trespass, criminal harassment, extortion, intimidation, and terrorism... Obviously, we're going to put their names out in public... we're going to talk about them... We are going to be utilizing the law to bring these criminals who work for AHS to justice, and believe me, they are going to go to prison, these are people who have committed heinous crimes against the people of Calgary and I'm not going to quit until they are in jail.*

*Hey, AHS, repeating what I said this morning, we're going to arrest you for culpable homicide and then we're taking your houses and bank accounts, you're not getting them back. Those are going to be liquidated and spent on restoring Calgary business and fixing the lives you've ruined. You're just following orders? Didn't work for the Nazis either; isn't going to work for you. I have zero sympathy. We're going to have Nuremburg trials in Calgary folks that are what's happening. I've truly had enough and you know I'll be smiling the whole time I do it" (Alberta Health Services v Johnston, 2023).*

#### A. Contextual Factors

##### 1) Who:

At the time of this publication, Mr. Johnston was a resident of Calgary. He wanted to mitigate the pandemic of COVID-19, so Mr. Johnston was a self-appointed spokesperson to oppose public health measures in Alberta. Mr. Johnston was a creator of social media, candidate to be a mayor, and the host of an online show (Alberta Health Services v Johnston, 2023).

##### 2) Says What:

Mr. Johnston used his mayoralty campaign and his social media platforms to spread hate and misinformation about the Alberta Health Services, henceforth (AHS). On various occasions, the defamer expressed his beliefs about AHS and its inspectors. The aforementioned speech is one of these occasions. In his speeches, Mr. Johnston expressed his intentions to harm AHS by saying that "My goal is to bankrupt AHS members" (Alberta Health Services v Johnston, 2023).

##### 3) In Which Channel:

Mr. Johnston publishes his videos on his Website 'www.Freedom report.ca.' The following is an advertisement used by the defamer to propagate his show: "Kevin J. Johnston is CANADA'S MOST CENSORED MAN! Watch the Kevin J. Johnston Show LIVE Tuesdays 7PM MS.T / 9PM Eastern Time" (Toy, 2023).

##### 4) To Whom:

AHS is a regional health authority; it is the only provider of public health services in Alberta. Their employees are responsible for educating Albertans about and 'enforcing the mandate of the Public Health Act (henceforth PHA) and the orders of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, or CMOH.' This responsibility included enforcing CMOH orders concerning the COVID-19 pandemic (Toy, 2023)

##### 5) With What Effect:

The defamer attacks AHS to destroy its reputation in Calgary and the whole world. Since Mr. Johnston targets AHS, and since it is a public organisation that has several members working for it, AHS reputation is harmed as a consequence of the publication.

## B. Discursive Strategies

### 1) Semantic Strategies

- Negative Lexicalisation

Mr. Johnston attempts to intensify his defamation with the help of this strategy. For example, he mentions that AHS has committed ‘heinous’ crimes such as “*criminal trespass, criminal harassment, extortion, intimidation, and terrorism.*” These expressions obviously have a negative impact on the viewers of Mr. Johnston’s show. Additionally, the defamer attracts the viewers’ attention when he describes AHS workers as ‘Nazis’ because they have ‘ruined’ Calgarians’ lives and businesses.

AHS is represented by Mr. Johnston as a dangerous out-group member that has committed “*the following crimes... criminal trespass, criminal harassment, extortion, intimidation, and terrorism...*” Mr. Johnston goes on to portray the plaintiff as a criminal association against which he is going to fight by the law. The defamer, repeatedly, makes sure that AHS is viewed and perceived as an out-group member; he is going to destroy it by exposing its crimes and he will “*be smiling the whole time.*” This strategy exposes Mr. Johnston’s ideologies. He is prejudiced against AHS and this prejudice is motivated by his extreme opposition to the public health services that AHS enforces during the COVID–19 pandemic.

### 2) Pragmatic Strategies

- Speech Acts

The main speech act used by Mr. Johnston to accomplish defamation is accusing. Throughout his publication, the defamer accuses the plaintiff of ‘*criminal trespass, terrorism, harassment, extortion, and intimidation.*’ Mr. Johnston emphasises his belief that AHS workers are ‘*criminals*’ who commit ‘*heinous crimes against the people of Calgary.*’ He further accuses AHS of ‘*culpable homicide*’ and ruining Calgarians’ lives and businesses.

Another speech act found in Mr. Johnston’s publication is threatening. This commissive speech act assists the defamer to express his intentions of harming the plaintiff’s reputation and work. More than once, Mr. Johnston threatens AHS workers to ‘*arrest*’ them ‘*for culpable homicide,*’ and he threatens to take their ‘*houses and bank accounts.*’ He states that he is going ‘*to put [AHS workers] names out in public,*’ he also states that he is going to utilise “*the law to bring these criminals who work for AHS to justice.*” The defamer assures his viewers of his threats by saying that “*and believe me, [AHS workers] are going to go to prison, these are people who have committed heinous crimes against the people of Calgary and I’m not going to quit until they are in jail.*”

It is apparent that Mr. Johnston intends to harm the plaintiffs; the defamer explicitly shows his intentions without employing presuppositions. His prejudice drives him to discriminate AHS because he tries to mitigate the COVID–19 pandemic.

## 5. Conclusions

This section tackles the conclusions that are drawn from the analysis to answer the questions of the study.

Defamation is a social issue which has increased with the spread of the Internet in the last three decades. The researcher has analysed three videos published on YouTube to gain the following conclusions:

1) As far as the research data is concerned, negative lexicalisation and derogation are the semantic strategies utilised by the speaker. The pragmatic strategies of speech acts and presupposition are employed to defame the plaintiffs. The reasons that lead to such a conclusion are the elements that constitute defamation. Malicious language is a major factor to realise defamation. Additionally, the pragmatic strategies assist the defamer to accuse plaintiffs and insult them via language.

2) The critical analysis of the research data illustrates the ideologies that motivate an individual to defame someone on a social media platform such as YouTube. Prejudice, racism, and discrimination are the most prominent ideologies covered in the defamatory publications. Mr. Johnston’s three publications represent the impact of extremism on the person’s social behaviour.

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