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**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Bridging the 'Us' and 'Them' Divide through Discursive Strategies:  
Muslim Scholars' Religious Discourse for Peace and Conflict  
Resolution Aligned with UN SDG-16**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the unconventional discursive strategies used by selected Muslim scholars to bridge the boundaries between "Us" and "Them," fostering a positive and moderate discourse for peace and conflict resolution among religiously diverse communities. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzes speeches delivered in English through the framework of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), a sub-field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The speeches, collected through purposive sampling from YouTube, serve as secondary data. Findings reveal that the scholars employ inclusive and peace-oriented strategies such as positive lexical choices, inclusive pronouns, syntactic structures, rhetorical equalizers, metaphors of unity, and references to shared Abrahamic traditions. These strategies promote the positive representation of others and help soften rigid intergroup boundaries. By highlighting discourse that encourages non-violence, inclusivity, and mutual respect, the study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16, which advocates peaceful and inclusive societies. The analysis underscores the role of moderate religious discourse in supporting social cohesion and conflict prevention.

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**KEYWORDS**

CDA, Peace and Conflict Resolution, UN SDG-16

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**Introduction**

In an era marked by rising religious polarization and global tensions, the role of discourse in shaping intergroup relations has become increasingly critical. Religious scholars, in particular, hold significant influence in guiding communal attitudes toward peace, coexistence, and mutual understanding. While much research within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has focused on uncovering negative or exclusionary ideologies, there is a growing scholarly interest in examining constructive and inclusive forms of discourse that actively promote harmony. Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), as a complementary approach to CDA, provides a useful framework for exploring such hopeful and transformative narratives. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates how selected Muslim scholars employ unconventional discursive strategies to transcend the traditional boundaries between "Us" and "Them," presenting inclusive, moderate, and peace-oriented messages. By analyzing their speeches, this research highlights the potential of moderate religious discourse to contribute meaningfully to peace, conflict resolution and interfaith harmony.

The significance of this study extends beyond academic inquiry, as it directly relates to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16, which emphasizes the promotion of peaceful, inclusive, and just societies. By examining how Muslim scholars employ discursive strategies to bridge the boundaries between "Us" and "Them," this research highlights practical ways in which language can foster social cohesion, mutual

respect, and conflict prevention. Moderate and inclusive religious discourse, as demonstrated in the analyzed speeches, encourages non-violence, counters polarization, and strengthens interfaith understanding, thereby supporting broader peace-building initiatives. In this context, the study not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) but also provides insights that can inform policymakers, peace organizations, and media platforms in designing interventions that advance SDG-16 by promoting harmony and reducing religiously motivated tensions.

Religion is as an important social institution that produces and controls religious discourse. Presently, religious discourse is being analyzed objectively at different levels like other discourses but the religious scholars are not satisfied with this analysis. Wijzen (2009) gives his argument that there has been dissatisfaction among religious scholars with objective definitions and methods of studying religion. Wijzen (2009) expects that critical discourse analysis (CDA) can close this gap as it is the combination of sociological analysis and linguistic analysis. Critical discourse analysis, sometimes known as CDA, is a subfield of discourse analysis that was researched and developed in the late 1980s by a number of linguists, notably Fairclough and Van Dijk.

A possible interpretation of CDA is that it represents a pushback against the dominant uncritical paradigms in language theory. It is necessary to use a multidisciplinary approach in addition to having a grasp of the many connections that exist between written text, spoken language, social cognition, political authority, and cultural norms and values. Many researches have been carried out in last four decades in CDA where the discourse has only been analyzed to create and highlight boundaries between self and other. In these studies the discourse has not been analyzed to investigate socio-political conflicts and ways to solve them for creating harmony and peace and making this worth a worth living place. This is how the new approach within CDA has been emerged from the name of positive discourse analysis, PDA (Khurshid and Janjua, 2022).

## **Literature Review**

This sections explores the previous researches that are carried out to analyze the religious discourse of Muslim scholars. There are different studies of different natures regarding the religious discourse of Muslim scholars. Rubab et al. (2021) think that Islamic sermons not only persuade the audience for the desired position or action but also give true understanding of life in form of a complete set of guidelines for humanity. Their study analyzes the Islamic sermons from the perspective of positive self-representation and negative other-representation but the study does not reveal how reformative the discourse of Islamic sermons is. This is where the researcher feels the void and he wants to fill this gap by analyzing the Islamic sermons from reformative and positive perspective highlighting the ideological moderation in Muslim Scholars' religious discourse in form of sermons and speeches. Errihani (2011) has the opinion that moderate discourse is a discourse that mainly focuses religious and social matters that promote inter-faith harmony and global peace, not radicalization. He concludes in his research study that the religious scholars in Morocco use persuasive strategies to persuade the congregation and move them to action but the check of Moroccan state on the religious practices of its subjects keeps the religious discourse of sermons moderate. He is of the view that the efforts of Moroccan state in controlling and managing the religious discourse of sermons has been successful. Now the state controlled sermons are moderate and less controversial being grounded in moderate religious discourse, not in politics. These sermons focus on the salvation of the audience putting stress on moral

conduct and fear of God. Before the involvement of Moroccan state in religious practices, the sermons were advocating the political militancy and pleading the establishment of an Islamic State based on their own understanding of Islam.

Wani, Abdullah, and Chang (2015) are of the opinion that religious peace can be promoted and interfaith harmony can be achieved in religiously diverse societies by highlighting the commonalities among the religions. They are in favor of interreligious dialogue. They prefer religious diversity to identity. They support the concept of religious diversity from the verses of holy Quran at general level. Zaduqisti, Mashuri, Zuhri, Haryati, and Ula (2020) conclude in their study that the Islamic moderateness is one of the key factors that promote peace in Islamic societies where the religious minorities can live peacefully and fearlessly.

Al-nuaimy (2018) concludes that it is the need of time to bring moderation in religious discourse. He suggests that the Islamic religious discourse should be given under the responsibility of specialized religious institutions. In this way, the Islamic religious discourse can be moderate and mature. He further emphasizes the distancing of the religion from politics. Akbar and Yaseen (2020) give their opinion that the promotion inter-faith harmony is the need of time for peaceful living in Pakistani society. They assert that the Islamic scholars through their discourse can promote interfaith harmony. This will ensure the peaceful co-existence of all religions in Pakistan.

Mehfooz (2021) reveals in his research article that Pakistan is a religiously diverse state. Both the Islam and the constitution of Pakistan ensure the religious freedom. But, unfortunately, some Muslim clerics oppose religious pluralism which contradicts to the basic principles of Islam that indicate religious diversity. In my opinion, government of Pakistan can ensure the peaceful co-existence of all religions formulating some tangible policies concerning the Islamic religious discourse being produced in Pakistan. Sajjad, Christie, and Taylor (2017) reveal in their study that Pakistani youth is overwhelmingly in favor of modern and moderate approach towards religion. Pakistani youth is a supporter of inclusive Islam that emphasizes religious freedom and harmony among different religions. Al-Otaibi (2020) concludes in his study that the government of Saudi Arabia is striving to eliminate the extremist narrative from religious education and religious discourse. The government emphasizes the moderate religious interpretation. This is the part of the reformation of education for vision 2030 of the KSA.

Ismail and Mujani (2012) demonstrate in their study that Malaysia needs improved and credible inter-faith platforms to strengthen the inter-faith harmony for cohesive society and national integration. In my view, the role of religious discourse is very vital in this regard. Only the moderate religious discourse can bring the long-lasting inter-faith harmony whichever the state is, whichever the society is. Zulkarnain and Samsuri (2018) have the viewpoint that the religious leaders play a vital role in creating and maintaining interfaith harmony and religious tolerance in Indonesian society. They are of the view that the religious conflict will trigger more likely if the social actors don't recognize and play their positive and constructive role.

Kayaoglu (2015) argues in his study that the Islamic actors both at the state and societal level, in most of the Islamic countries, started inter-faith dialogue because they want to show their moderate stance to powerful others who are concerned about the religious conflicts and peace of the world. Al-nuaimy (2018) is of the view that moderate religious discourse is a discourse that preaches morality, adheres to objectivity in preaching, and avoids extremism. He further states that the Islamic religious discourse

should be under the control and responsibility of specialized religious institutions so that the discourse may become mature and moderate.

Eldin (2014) concludes in his paper that Amr Khalid, an Egyptian preacher, used certain specific ideological modes such as narrativization, unification, standardization and symbolization in his Islamic sermons to convey his ideology strongly. He uses rationalization, universalization and strategy of pathos for persuading his audience. He has analyzed the sermons of Amr Khalid with special focus on ideology, modality and persuasion.

There are some studies that conclude that the rhetoric is going on and narrative is being built about Islamic terrorism, radicalism, and extremism both at local level in Muslim states and at global level (Mamdani 2005). Younas, M., & Maqbool, S. (2025) highlight the peace and harmony in their research. They did positive discourse analysis of Muslim Scholars' religious discourse and concluded that Muslim scholars' religious discourse has power to unite the plural societies by creating harmony and fostering peace.

Extremist Muslims are said to have burnt Christian churches and pork butcheries in Tanzania (Wijsen 2009). Extremist Muslims are said to have bombed hotels in Bali and Jakarta (Wijsen 2009). The researcher believes that such rhetoric and discourse give an impression that radicalization is inherently connected to Islam. The religious discourse of Muslim scholars needs to be analyzed from a positive angle using PDA as a complementary approach to CDA and research methodology. This is why the researcher intends to analyze the religious discourse of Muslim scholars from a positive perspective.

### **Material and Methods**

In this study, PDA as an approach within CDA has been employed to analyze and identify the ideological moderation in the religious discourse of the Muslim scholars from a positive standpoint. PDA is a complementary approach to CDA. PDA, according to its pioneer Jim Martin (2004) highlights the positive, productive and progressive role of discourse to contribute to society positively instead of focusing on the power dynamics in the discourse. Likewise, Bartlett (2017) is of the view that PDA is a complementary approach to CDA which focusses on investigating discourse to highlight the strategies of unification to advance and achieve collective goals such as cohesion, reconciliation, and peace. According to him, PDA looks at the discourse from the lens to investigate the socio-political conflicts and solve them to create harmony in the world. Macgilchrist, F. (2007) believes that PDA describes what texts 'do well' and 'get right' in our eyes.

The study population is the Muslim scholars whose discourse is directly addressed to their audience in English as well as being moderate in nature. The study has a purposive sampling design which is more common in qualitative researches. When the purposive strategy is used in qualitative research, a predetermined number of participants are selected who, in the judgment of the researcher, are most likely to provide the information required for the study. (Kumar, 2018). In this study, Muslim scholars and their speeches/discourses are selected purposively and they are those whose religious discourses are moderate in nature having themes such as interfaith harmony, religious tolerance, morality, and peace as per the judgment of the researcher and their moderate discourse positively contributes to society being away from the binaries of US vs THEM. These speeches have been analyzed using PDA, which is the complementary approach to CDA, as a methodology. The names of the scholars are Dr.

Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Mufti Ismail ibn Musa Menk, Omar Suleiman, and Dr. Bilal Philips. Al-nuaimy (2018) is of the view that moderate religious discourse is a discourse that preaches morality, adheres to objectivity in preaching, and avoids extremism.

## Results and Discussion

### Merging Boundaries of 'Us' and 'Them' through Positive Representation of Others in Religious Discourse

In the contemporary socio-religious context, it is not uncommon to encounter discourses that sharply delineate the boundary between in-groups and out-groups. However, the selected speeches of Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Mufti Menk, and Omar Suleiman present a departure from such polarization. Instead, these scholars consciously utilize their platforms to build bridges rather than walls for fostering empathy, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence.

In one of his speeches, Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri affirms, "*The Muslim is supposed to establish peace. The Muslim is the promoter and protector of peace.*" Rather than anchoring Muslim identity in exclusionary terms, this statement constructs Muslims as agents of societal wellbeing. The consistent use of the definite noun "*the Muslim*" in positive roles sets a clear tone of self-representation grounded in responsibility, kindness, and ethical duty.

Moving beyond self-description, Tahir-ul-Qadri extends his theological interpretation to universal values, stating, "*Islam directs to be loving and caring for all of mankind.*" The expression "*all of mankind*" functions as a rhetorical equalizer which offers an inclusive alternative to binary thinking. Here, religious teachings are presented not as doctrinal constraints but as moral instructions that apply universally to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The syntax of universality and the choice of values such as *modesty, unity, dignity, and benevolence* reflect a discourse designed to embrace the 'Others'.

This approach is also resonates in Mufti Menk's compelling appeal: "*We should never look at the non-Muslims as our enemies because each non-Muslim is a potential Muslim.*" Although grounded in missionary theology, this statement avoids derogatory positioning. The phrase "*potential Muslim*" reframes non-Muslims as spiritually proximate rather than antagonistic. In addition, his use of second-person address such as "*Be fair to the people. Be fair no matter who they are.*" speaks directly to the listener with moral urgency, dissolving boundaries through ethical command rather than ideological defensiveness.

A particularly inclusive theological gesture is found in Omar Suleiman's assertion: "*The oneness of God is the oneness of humanity.*" This profound linkage between divinity and human unity is both metaphysical and symbolic. By tying tawhid (Islamic monotheism) to the concept of global human unity, Suleiman artfully merges religious identity with universal brotherhood. His language refrains from differentiation and leans into interfaith convergence especially when he references the "*fullness of the Abrahamic tradition*", invoking a shared theological heritage.

Tahir-ul-Qadri's discussion of the State of Medina offers a historical argument for multiculturalism. By stating, "*There were the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims. They all were one nation,*" he invokes a foundational Islamic moment to support present-day pluralism. The phrase "*one nation*" is employed not metaphorically but factually, reinforcing that Islamic history does not necessitate religious exclusivity.

Syntactically, these speeches avoid the usual antagonistic pronoun constructions. Instead of positioning “we” against “they”, the pronouns are inclusive: “we,” “our,” “all of mankind,” “fellow humans.” There is a noticeable absence of the word “them” used in opposition. Even when addressing misconceptions about Islam, such as in “Islam is one of the misunderstood religions around the world among our western brothers,” the word “our” precedes “western brothers,” indicating a shared identity and sense of fraternity.

These examples illustrate a linguistic strategy of merger as a deliberate move to blur the boundaries that often divide faith communities. Whether through positive adjectives (*peaceful, caring, generous*), or inclusive references to humanity, the discourse avoids confrontation and instead prioritizes coexistence and shared values.

This rhetorical style aligns with Positive Discourse Analysis by not merely avoiding negative portrayal of the others, but by actively constructing positive representations of those typically cast outside the speaker’s in-group. The scholars use their religious platforms not to assert theological superiority, but to promote messages that have the potential to heal, unify, and guide religiously diverse communities toward mutual respect and peaceful co-existence.

### **Positive Self- and Other-Representation**

These following extracts clearly demonstrate how Muslim scholars construct a moderated ideological discourse by simultaneously representing Muslims and non-Muslims positively, thereby blurring the binary of Us versus Them. The discourse is imbued with strategic lexical, syntactic, and pronominal choices that serve the goals of ideological reconciliation and interfaith harmony.

#### **Positive Self-Representation of Muslims as Peace builders and Moral Agents**

“The Muslim is supposed to establish peace. The Muslim is a promoter and protector of peace.” (Extract 1 – Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri)

In this extract, lexical choices such as *establish, promote, and protect* are positively charged and attribute agency and moral responsibility to Muslims. The use of definite noun phrases like “*The Muslim*” conveys an archetypal identity, framing Muslims as the bearers of peace rather than aggression. This directly challenges negative stereotypes while reinforcing a moderated self-image. This positive self-representation is not at the cost of portraying others negatively. This can be considered as an indirect strategy to portray others positively.

#### **Inclusive Representation of Humanity as a Shared Moral Community**

“Islam... directs to be loving and caring for all of mankind.” (Extract 3 – Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri)

“Be fair to the people... mercy for humanity...not referring to the Muslims alone.” (Extract 8 – Mufti Menk)

These statements use inclusive syntactic structures and universal terms (*mankind, humanity, all*) that go beyond Muslim-centric discourse. The phrase “*not referring to the Muslims alone*” is a counter-discursive move which is a clear attempt to dismantle in-group favouritism by portraying out-group by equal positivity.

### Positive Other-Representation through Empathy and Acknowledgment

"The philosophies and concepts of Islam are misunderstood among our western brothers." (Extract 4 – Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri)

"We should never look at the non-Muslims as our enemies... each non-Muslim is a potential Muslim." (Extract 6 – Mufti Menk)

Use of the positive phrase "*our western brothers*" is a positive pronominal shift. Using *our* to refer to a typically "othered" group (*Westerners*), and calling them *brothers* reflects fraternal empathy. Likewise, Mufti Menk challenges the ideological separation by denying enemy status to non-Muslims and instead assigning them spiritual potential. Others have been portrayed explicitly positive by the delicate use of positive phrases beyond the binaries of US vs THEM proposed by the ideological square of Van Dijk.

### Historical and Theological Evidences for Unity

"The state and society of Medina was not exclusively for the Muslims...they all were one nation." (Extract 5 – Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri)

This extract uses historical evidence (State of Medina) to present a precedent of religious pluralism. The phrase "*one nation*" linguistically merges distinct religious identities into a unified socio-political entity. The syntax of coordination (Jews, Christians, Muslims) followed by the conclusion "*all lived together as a single entity*" reinforces discursive de-polarization. The strategy of discursive de-polarization has been used to give equal positive representation to both in-group and out-group.

### Unity through Shared Abrahamic Tradition

"The oneness of God is the oneness of humanity...the fullness of Abrahamic tradition." (Extract 10 – Omar Suleiman)

Here, the scholar creates a symbolic ties between Islamic monotheism and universal human unity. The repetition of *oneness* as a semantic anchor dissolves religious boundaries. The phrase "*fullness of Abrahamic tradition*" further draws on shared theological heritage to foster interfaith solidarity between Muslims, Jews, and Christians. To focus shared theological heritage is a narrative technique to portray others positively with positive self-presentation.

### Syntactic Structures and Lexical Patterns of Positivity

The Muslim scholars have used the syntactic structures of their discourses as a linguistic strategy for inclusiveness and positive representation of others by using imperative structures such as "Be fair" and "Be loving". Modal verbs have been used very carefully to indicate obligation, possibility and prohibition for in-group to portray out-group positively. The other lexical choices in form of nouns such as "mankind", "humanity", "people" and "all" are the patterns of inclusivity and positivity about others.

In this section, the discursive strategies used in the religious discourse of Muslim scholars clearly oppose the polarizing tendencies that Van Dijk Ideological square proposes. These choices make the discourse moderate and positive to represent the others positively. It can be summed up that Positive Self- and positive other-

Representation goes side by side beyond the binaries of “US” vs “THEM.” This section concludes that the Muslim scholars’ strategic and unconventional use of discourse enabled them to play a major role for creating peaceful co-existence among the people who belong to religiously different groups.

### **Positive Self-Representation and Positive Other-Representation to Merge ‘Us’ and ‘Them’**

The religious discourse of Muslim scholars in this study not only portrays the Muslims as peaceful, just, and kind but also extend the positive representation to non-Muslims by presenting them as respectful, dignified, and compassionate individuals. Mufti Menk, for instance, views every non-Muslim as a potential ally rather than an opponent. Similarly Omar Suleiman and Nouman Ali Khan emphasize that the Muslims, Jews, and Christians have some shared human values rooted in Abrahamic traditions. They further reiterate that the sense of unity can be created based on these shared Abrahamic values. Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri stresses the inclusiveness of the society as per the vision of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which always welcomes religiously diversified communities to form a unified nation. In this study, the researcher has highlighted that the strategies used in the religious discourse of Muslim scholars are contrary to the conventional strategies. These unconventional strategies have been employed in the discourse by the Muslim scholars to break the boundaries between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ based upon in-group and out-group. In the religious discourse of Muslim scholars, the ‘merger of dichotomies’ in terms of pronouns, positive other’s representation, mitigation through passivation, and replacement of positive words with the words having negative connotations. The purpose of their positive discourse was to promote inter-religious tolerance and interfaith harmony among the religiously divided groups locally and globally for inclusiveness.

### **Evidence from Text of Speeches**

- **Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri:**

*“Islam introduced the whole mankind with modesty, unity and the dignity of mankind.”*  
(Speech: Giving of Peace and Tolerance)

- **Mufti Menk:**

*“Each non-Muslim out there is a potential Muslim. Never look at them as enemies.”*  
(Speech: Interfaith Relations)

- **Omar Suleiman:**

*“If you cannot find reason to forgive them for them, then forgive them for yourself, allowing us the chance to find that peace within ourselves.”* (Speech: Make Peace and Move On)

- **Nouman Ali Khan:**

*“You are not forgiving because they want it. You are forgiving because you want to release resentment and anger.”* (Speech: Forgiveness and Tolerance in Islam)

### **Linguistic Strategies to Merge ‘Us’ and ‘Them’**



In religious discourse of the study, strategic linguistic techniques have been used by the Muslim scholars in their religious discourse to bridge the division of "Us" versus "Them," to make the discourse more inclusive and reconciliatory in nature. The Muslim scholars emphasize on human values like mercy, love, kindness, justice and empathy to create inclusiveness across religiously different groups. Omar Suleiman uses inclusive metaphors when he uses image of faith as a tree providing shade to all the humanity. It evokes a sense of shared spiritual refuge. Scriptural reinterpretations are given to emphasize peaceful coexistence grounded in long standing traditions of Islamic pluralism and religious harmony for healing and kindness. The Muslim scholars have dissolved the ideological binaries by challenging the polarization in ideological discourse and promoting reconciliation unity and peaceful coexistence.

#### **Evidence from Text of Speeches:**

- **Omar Suleiman:**

*"Faith is like a tree; its roots are firm and its branches are high in the sky providing shade to humanity."* (Speech: Relationship between Faith and Humanity)

- **Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri:**

*"You are kind to every human being, generous to everyone, loving and caring for all of mankind."* (Speech: Bangalore Address on Interfaith Harmony)

- **Mufti Menk:**

*"From the very first revelation 'Iqra' (read), we understand how important seeking knowledge is, especially for understanding others."* (Speech: Interfaith Relations)

- **Nouman Ali Khan:**

*"You forgive not because they deserve it but because you deserve peace."* (Speech: Forgiveness and Tolerance)

#### **Use of Metaphors as discursive Strategy to Merge 'Us' and 'Them'**

Muslim scholars use metaphors, stories and analogies in their religious discourse to make the abstract concepts of Islam concrete, understandable and emotionally resonant. They present the concepts such as faith, peace and kindness through vivid imagery putting faith into comparison with a tree that gives shade and shelter. They also compare faith and peace with the light that guides you and shows you the way. Through their impressive story telling technique in their discourse, they dismantle the ideological barriers between Muslims and non-Muslims. They motivate the audience to see the common humanity in all the human beings. Through Islamic teachings, they cultivate empathy, religious tolerance and kindness among all their audiences.

#### **Evidence from Text of Speeches:**

- **Omar Suleiman:**

*"Faith is like a tree. It is in constant production of fruit providing shade to humanity."* (Speech: Relationship between Faith and Humanity)

- **Nouman Ali Khan:**

*"Forgiveness is for your own liberation. It releases resentment and anger." (Speech: Forgiveness and Tolerance)*

## Conclusion

This paper addressed the critical research problem of religious discourse of Muslim scholars. It is generally believed that the religious discourse of Muslim scholars is radical in nature posing a great threat to peace both at local and global level since they are usually based upon the binaries of 'Us' and 'Them'. This creates division, not cohesion. The primary objective of this study was to highlight the unconventional discursive strategies that make the discourse moderate and positive and foster peace.

Key findings indicate that there are some Muslim scholars whose discourses are always moderate and reformative. They always persuade their audiences for positive and reformative actions such as peace, inclusive societies, inclusive institutions and justice. Their moderate discourse has considerable positive implications for peace and conflict resolution, particularly at global level. Their discourse is moderate and positive because they use unconventional discursive strategies to bridge the division of 'Us' and 'Them'. They use syntactic structures and lexical patterns of positivity, inclusive syntactic strategies, and rhetorical equalizers, inclusive pronouns, positive adjectives, inclusive metaphors, and unity through shared Abrahamic traditions for the positive representation of others. This is how the boundaries of 'Us' and 'Them' are merged and religious discourses contribute to peace, inclusive societies, inclusive institutions and justice.

Additionally, the research underscores that all the religious discourses are not radical in nature. The analysis also revealed that the religious discourse of Muslim scholars focuses on positive self and other representation at the same time. The implications of these findings are profound. They underline the urgent need for the Muslim states to control the religious institution as religion is as an important social institution that produces and controls religious discourse so that the religious discourse may align with the development peace, inclusive societies, inclusive institutions and justice.

Moreover, the study contributes to existing literature by highlighting the positive and reformative content from the religious discourse of Muslim scholars. This research acknowledges some limitations. The limited data has been analyzed in this paper. Additionally, the analysis has qualitative methods that are not as reliable as the quantitative methods are. Future research studies should focus on refining the research regarding religious discourse of Muslims scholars using bigger data sets and mixed method approaches for more reliable, insightful and empirical findings. These investigations would enrich the current understanding of religious discourse and significantly contribute to policy formation for peace and interfaith harmony on the planet. In conclusion, the dismantling of binary opposition between "Us" (Muslims) and "Them" (non-Muslims), which are usually reinforced by ideological discourses, can serve as a bridge rather than a boundary. Bridging boundaries of 'Us' and 'Them' through unconventional discursive strategies such as syntactic structures and lexical patterns of positivity, inclusive syntactic strategies, and rhetorical equalizers, inclusive pronouns, positive adjectives, inclusive metaphors, and unity through shared Abrahamic traditions. This is how the boundaries of 'Us' and 'Them' are merged. Unconventional strategies such as syntactic structures and lexical patterns of positivity, inclusive syntactic strategies, and rhetorical equalizers, inclusive pronouns, positive adjectives,

inclusive metaphors, and unity through shared Abrahamic traditions can dissolve polarization to make the inter-religious relations better and foster peace through conflict resolution in multi-faith societies.

Moreover, the findings of this study strongly resonate with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16, which emphasizes the promotion of peaceful, inclusive, and just societies. By demonstrating how moderate religious discourse can reduce intergroup tensions and encourage constructive engagement, this research highlights the critical role of language in sustaining social cohesion. Encouraging such peace-oriented discourse can therefore become an effective communicative tool for supporting SDG 16's broader agenda of conflict prevention and harmonious coexistence.

### **Recommendations**

Finally on the basis of results, certain recommendations are made in relation to moderate religious discourse of Muslim Scholars. This discourse has been made moderate and positive through the unconventional use of discursive strategies that bridge the boundaries of 'Us' and 'Them'. These recommendations may be valuable for the peace-building and conflict resolution through interfaith harmony and interfaith dialogue. Such discourse can be cause of cohesion instead of division among the religiously diverse communities. The study recommends that these moderate discourses can be used by peace organizations that work for interfaith harmony and peace-building. It is also recommended that such moderate discourses should be encouraged and promoted by the governments. These moderate discourses should also be highlighted by media houses so that religious extremism and radicalization may be discouraged.

In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16, it is recommended that governments, peace organizations, and educational institutions actively promote such moderate and inclusive religious discourse to strengthen peaceful and inclusive societies. Encouraging these communicative practices can help prevent conflict, reduce polarization, and foster trust among religiously diverse communities. Integrating peace-oriented discourse into public communication strategies can therefore serve as an effective tool for advancing SDG 16's vision of sustainable peace and social cohesion.

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