



AN APPRAISAL-BASED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MUFTI MENK'S SERMON ON CONTROLLING ANGER IN RELIGIOUS SPEECH

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Abstract

This study analyzes how Mufti Menk employs language in his YouTube sermon “How to Control Anger from a Religious Perspective” to promote emotional regulation. Using Appraisal Theory by Martin and White (2005), the study focuses on attitude, graduation, and engagement within a critical discourse analysis framework. Findings reveal that Mufti Menk integrates affective and moral expressions, intensifying meaning through metaphors and evaluative language. His informal yet respectful tone fosters audience connection. The speech motivates emotional awareness and self-regulation, demonstrating the persuasive and educational potential of religious discourse on social media.

Keywords: *Anger Control, Appraisal Theory, Mufti Menk, Religious Speech.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital technology has profoundly transformed the way people interact, with online platforms such as YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram becoming dominant spaces for daily communication (Li et al., 2021). These platforms not only facilitate the sharing of ideas and emotions but also expose users to various forms of negative interaction, including hate speech, verbal aggression, and emotional outbursts. The prevalence of such behavior suggests a widespread difficulty in managing emotions, particularly anger. While these expressions may be triggered by stress, frustration, or a sense of being misunderstood, they often occur impulsively, without individuals fully realizing their emotional state. As a result, online anger can escalate into broader issues, including cyberbullying, broken relationships, anxiety, and even offline violence (Gross, 2015; Heilman, 2022).

This phenomenon underscores the importance of emotional regulation, particularly



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anger management, as a crucial skill in maintaining personal well-being and social harmony. Contemporary psychological and educational perspectives strongly advocate for anger control as part of a broader effort to foster emotional intelligence and resilience. However, the role of religion in this context remains highly relevant. For centuries, spiritual traditions have provided ethical frameworks for emotional discipline. Major world religions—Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and others—consistently promote values such as patience, compassion, self-restraint, and forgiveness. These virtues are not only foundational to moral development but also serve as mechanisms for mitigating emotional reactivity in interpersonal contexts.

In Islamic teachings, the control of anger is emphasized through numerous prophetic traditions. One well-known hadith states: “*Do not become angry.*” Although brief, this directive carries profound ethical and psychological implications. Rather than suppressing emotions, Islam encourages self-awareness and spiritual discipline as means of transforming negative impulses into constructive responses. Similar messages are echoed across other faith traditions, revealing a shared concern for emotional well-being rooted in moral-spiritual development.

In the digital age, religious figures have increasingly turned to online media to disseminate spiritual messages. YouTube, in particular, has become a popular platform for religious leaders to reach diverse global audiences (Hamdani, 2023). These digital sermons serve not only as vehicles of spiritual guidance but also as educational resources for developing character, moral judgment, and emotional resilience. One prominent figure in this space is Mufti Menk, an Islamic scholar from Zimbabwe known for his gentle speaking style, accessible language, and practical wisdom. His sermons, delivered in English, appeal to a broad demographic and often address contemporary moral and emotional challenges.

Mufti Menk’s video titled “*How to Control Anger from a Religious Perspective*” exemplifies this approach. As of May 1, 2025, the video has accumulated more than 312,375 views, indicating a strong public interest in religiously framed discussions of emotional regulation. The popularity of such content suggests that audiences are not only seeking spiritual comfort but also practical tools for managing everyday emotions. What distinguishes Mufti Menk’s delivery is not merely the message, but the manner in which it

is conveyed. He avoids authoritarian or didactic tones and instead uses calm, inclusive, and affirming language. He frequently employs repetition, gentle imperatives, metaphor, and narrative examples to strengthen the emotional appeal of his message. These linguistic strategies enhance the sermon's ability to resonate with listeners, making it more likely that the audience will internalize and act upon its content.

To understand how Mufti Menk achieves this rhetorical effectiveness, this study employs Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin and White (2005), as a framework for analyzing the evaluative language used in the sermon. Appraisal Theory focuses on the interpersonal meanings of language, particularly how speakers express attitudes, evaluate phenomena, and position themselves in relation to their audience. The theory comprises three main domains: Attitude (which includes *Affect*, *Judgment*, and *Appreciation*), Graduation (modifying the intensity or scope of evaluations), and Engagement (acknowledging or incorporating other voices and perspectives). This model allows researchers to move beyond surface-level content analysis and examine how emotional and moral meanings are constructed linguistically.

Prior studies have applied Appraisal Theory in various domains, such as political discourse, media texts, classroom interactions, and literary narratives (Coffin, 2006; Oteíza, 2017). However, its application in religious discourse, particularly in the context of online sermons delivered in English, remains relatively underexplored. While some scholars have examined the persuasive and rhetorical features of religious speech—such as the use of stories, repetition, and emotional appeals (Samuri & Hopkins, 2017; Abdulmajid, 2023)—few have systematically analyzed the evaluative language used to express emotion, judgment, and value alignment through an appraisal lens.

This study addresses that gap by conducting a discourse analysis of Mufti Menk's sermon through the lens of Appraisal Theory. The focus is on identifying how linguistic choices serve to construct interpersonal meaning, guide emotional responses, and promote ethical reflection. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the types of attitude resources (e.g., emotional expressions like “regret” or moral evaluations like “truly strong”), the graduation techniques used to intensify or soften meanings (e.g., “very few people can control their anger”), and the engagement strategies that incorporate or respond to alternative perspectives (e.g., “sometimes your anger is justified”).

The data for this study was drawn from the full transcript of Mufti Menk's video, accessed on May 1, 2025. The sermon is approximately 48 minutes in length, and the transcription was manually completed by the researcher, including attention to emphasis, pauses, and discourse markers to preserve communicative intent. The transcript was analyzed using NVivo 12 software, which facilitated the coding of appraisal features based on the theoretical categories of attitude, graduation, and engagement.

To ensure the credibility of the analysis, a process of investigator triangulation was employed. Two independent coders with expertise in discourse analysis reviewed the coded transcript. Inter-coder agreement was established through discussion and iterative refinement of the coding framework. Discrepancies were resolved collaboratively, enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

In summary, this study explores the interplay between language, emotion, and spirituality in digital religious discourse. By examining how Mufti Menk uses evaluative language to frame emotional self-control within a religious context, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital sermons can promote moral development and emotional well-being. The central research question guiding this inquiry is: How does Mufti Menk use attitude, graduation, and engagement in his speech "How to Control Anger from a Religious Perspective"? This investigation not only sheds light on the communicative power of religious language in online settings but also offers insights for educators, spiritual leaders, and discourse analysts interested in the intersection of faith, emotion, and linguistic practice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with critical discourse analysis as the primary method. The analysis is grounded in Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), which provides a framework for examining how speakers construct interpersonal meanings through three systems: attitude (emotions and value judgments), graduation (intensity or emphasis), and engagement (interaction with other voices or perspectives).

Data Collection

The data source is a publicly accessible YouTube sermon titled "*How to Control Anger from a Religious Perspective*" by Mufti Menk, accessed on March 1, 2025 from his

official channel. The video, approximately 48 minutes in duration, was selected due to its relevance to the topic of emotional regulation in religious discourse and its widespread audience engagement (over 312,000 views at the time of access).

The researcher manually transcribed the video into text, ensuring accuracy in capturing spoken words, intonation markers, and repetition. The transcript was then segmented into text units, generally consisting of one or two semantically complete clauses. These units were selected based on their relevance to Appraisal Theory categories, specifically expressions of attitude, graduation, and engagement.

Data Analysis

The analysis process involved several stages:

- a. Coding: Using NVivo 12, the transcript was systematically coded for appraisal features. Each instance of attitudinal expression (e.g., affect, judgment, appreciation), graduation (e.g., force, focus), and engagement (e.g., dialogic expansion/contraction) was tagged according to its function in the discourse.
- b. Categorization: The coded data were classified into subcategories following the Appraisal framework:
 - 1) *Attitude*: divided into effect (emotions), judgment (moral evaluation), and appreciation (aesthetic/value evaluation).
 - 2) *Graduation*: including amplification and softening of meaning.
 - 3) *Engagement*: analyzed based on inclusion of audience perspectives, rhetorical questions, or references to other viewpoints.
- c. Interpretation: Each identified unit was analyzed for its discursive function, particularly how Mufti Menk constructs emotional alignment, promotes moral reasoning, or strengthens audience identification. For instance, repetition such as “*Let it go, let it go*” was examined as a strategy to simplify moral directives and create affective resonance.

Data Validation

To enhance the reliability of the analysis, the study employed investigator triangulation. Two independent analysts reviewed the coded data. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion to ensure consistency and accuracy in interpretation. This process strengthened the validity of thematic categorization and minimized subjectivity in discourse labeling.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The analysis of Mufti Menk’s speech titled “*How to Control Anger from a Religious Perspective*” shows that all three major components of Appraisal Theory—Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement—are used in clear and strategic ways, as summarized in Table 1. Each of these components helps the speaker not only deliver his message but also build emotional connection, moral clarity, and audience engagement.

Table 1. Findings Based on Appraisal Components

Component	Sub-Category	Quotation	Explanation
Attitude	Affect	“You regret what you say in anger.”	Expresses a negative emotion (regret) after anger.
	Appreciation	“A powerful man is not he who can outwrestle the other...”	Appreciation of true strength in a spiritual sense.
		“Anger is from the devil.”	Negative evaluation of anger as something evil.
	Judgment	“It’s not worth it.”	Negative value judgment of anger as having no worth.
		“We need to learn to control our temper.”	A moral judgment about the importance of emotional control.
		“When you are angry, remain silent.”	Displays wisdom as a moral directive.
		“He is the one who can control himself when he is angry.”	Positive judgment about self-control.
		“...but how you react is what counts.”	Emphasizes moral responsibility in one’s reaction.
		“Do not become angry.”	Religious advice presented as a moral value.
	Graduation	Amplification	“Control it before it controls you.”
“Very few people can suppress their anger...”			Amplifies the rarity and value of the ability.
“It requires a great deal of discipline.”			Intensifies the importance of discipline.
Engagement	Dialogic Concession	“Shaytan creeps into your system...”	Metaphorical amplification of anger’s threat.
	Informal	“Sometimes your anger is justified...”	Acknowledges the diversity of viewpoints.
		“Let it go. Let it go.”	Casual tone that creates closeness with the audience.

1) Attitude

Attitude is the most dominant component in the sermon. This component has three subcategories: Affect, Appreciation, and Judgment.

a. Affect: Expressing Feelings

Affect refers to emotions or feelings, both positive and negative. In this speech, Mufti Menk uses affect to describe what people feel after getting angry. For example, in the sentence:

“You regret what you say in anger.”

This shows a common emotional experience. The word *regret* expresses a negative feeling that many people can relate to. It also serves as a warning—people often say things they later feel sorry for when they are angry. By using this affective expression, the speaker helps listeners recognize their own emotional responses and reflect on the consequences of anger.

b. Appreciation: Valuing Things or Ideas

Appreciation is used to express evaluation about things, concepts, or actions. Mufti Menk uses this to frame anger in a spiritual context. Consider the quote:

“Anger is from the devil.”

Here, anger is evaluated not just as a negative feeling but as something with a harmful and even evil origin. This creates a strong negative image of anger, encouraging the audience to avoid it.

In another example:

“A powerful man is not he who can outwrestle the other...”

The appreciation here is about redefining *strength*. Instead of seeing power as physical strength, the speaker values emotional control. This changes the listener’s perception, showing that controlling anger is not weakness, but a higher kind of strength.

A third example of appreciation is:

“It’s not worth it.”

This short sentence devalues anger. It tells the audience that getting angry is simply not beneficial. By lowering the value of anger, the speaker helps reduce its importance in daily responses.

c. Judgment: Evaluating Behavior

Judgment is the most frequent type of attitude in the speech. It refers to moral or ethical evaluations of behavior. Mufti Menk uses judgment to guide people toward good behavior and away from harmful actions.

For instance:

“We need to learn to control our temper.”

This sentence is a clear moral statement. The use of *need to learn* makes it a call to action and shows that anger control is not just helpful, but morally right.

Another strong moral directive is:

“When you are angry, remain silent.”

This sentence gives advice and implies that speaking while angry is wrong or dangerous. Silence, in contrast, is presented as a wise and ethical response.

He also says:

“He is the one who can control himself when he is angry.”

This judgment praises self-control and frames it as a sign of strength and righteousness. It connects good character with the ability to stay calm.

In the statement:

“...but how you react is what counts.”

The focus is not only on the feeling of anger, but on how one chooses to respond. The judgment here is about responsibility and self-awareness.

Other moral evaluations appear in:

“Do not become angry.”

“Control it before it controls you.”

These are strong, ethical messages. They frame anger as something that must be defeated for personal and spiritual health. The second quote even uses a reversal structure (*control it / it controls you*) to emphasize personal responsibility.

2) *Graduation*

Graduation helps to adjust the intensity or strength of expressions. It shows whether something is important, serious, rare, or small. In Mufti Menk’s speech, graduation is used mostly through amplification.

Amplification

This subcategory is used to increase the power of a statement. For example:

“Very few people can suppress their anger.”

The phrase *very few* highlights the rarity of such self-control. It tells the audience that the ability to manage anger is special and not easily found.

Another amplified statement is:

“It requires a great deal of discipline.”

The phrase *great deal* makes discipline sound like something heavy and important. It shows that anger control is not easy, but it is worth the effort.

A third example uses metaphorical amplification:

“Shaytan creeps into your system...”

This metaphor makes the danger of anger sound more serious. It suggests that anger is not just an emotion—it is a spiritual threat. The word *creeps* adds a sense of quiet danger, making the audience more alert to the risks.

Through these examples, the speaker increases the emotional and moral impact of his message. He helps listeners feel that controlling anger is not only valuable, but urgent and essential.

3) Engagement

Engagement is about how the speaker brings the audience into the message. It includes showing other perspectives or speaking in an informal, friendly way.

a. Dialogic Concession

This type of engagement shows that the speaker understands other viewpoints. For example:

“Sometimes your anger is justified...”

This sentence makes the message more balanced and respectful. Instead of telling people they are always wrong, Mufti Menk admits that sometimes anger can be valid. This makes the audience feel heard and respected.

b. Informal Style

Mufti Menk also uses informal, casual language to create closeness with the listeners. A good example is:

“Let it go. Let it go.”

The repetition and simple words make the advice easy to remember. It sounds like a friend giving calm, personal support. This approach builds trust and keeps the message soft and gentle, even when it deals with serious issues.

From the above analysis, it is clear that Mufti Menk uses Appraisal components in an effective and balanced way. His speech is rich with moral guidance (judgment), emotional appeals (affect), and strong value statements (appreciation). He uses graduation to strengthen his key messages, making them more impactful. Finally, his use of engagement—both by showing understanding and speaking in a friendly tone—helps him build a strong connection with the audience.

Together, these linguistic strategies create a speech that is not only educational but also emotionally powerful and spiritually uplifting. By using Appraisal Theory, we can better understand how Mufti Menk's words guide, comfort, and motivate his listeners.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore how Mufti Menk, a popular Islamic preacher, uses language to teach people about anger control. By using Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), this study found that Mufti Menk expresses attitude, strengthens his message through graduation, and builds engagement with his audience. In this discussion section, we will explain how these findings show that the speaker tries to persuade his listeners and compare the results with other studies on religious and persuasive speech.

1) Persuasion through Attitude: Emotion, Judgment, and Values

One of the most impactful linguistic resources in Mufti Menk's sermon is *attitude*, which consists of three subtypes: *affect* (emotions), *judgment* (moral evaluation), and *appreciation* (valuation of ideas or actions). Through these, the speaker doesn't merely convey messages but shapes emotional and ethical perspectives that invite internal reflection and behavioral change.

The use of *affect* can be seen in the statement, "You regret what you say in anger." Rather than simply warning against anger, Mufti Menk evokes a familiar emotional outcome—regret. This emotional appeal resonates with listeners' real-life experiences and creates a sense of shared humanity. Such strategies align with Amin's (2018) findings on religious speeches in Indonesian mosques, where emotional stories and relatable expressions are often used to foster closeness and trust between preacher and audience.

Moral judgment is also prominent. A line like, "He is the one who can control himself when he is angry," offers an implicit moral standard. It redefines strength not as physical

power but as emotional self-regulation. Listeners are subtly encouraged to view self-control as a sign of virtue and integrity. This technique echoes Samuri and Hopkins (2017), who identified that Friday sermons commonly employ moral evaluations to guide ethical conduct within Muslim communities. By presenting emotional control as an admirable quality, Mufti Menk reinforces broader religious and cultural values.

In addition, the use of *appreciation* in statements such as “Anger is from the devil” frames the issue of anger in deeply spiritual terms. This evaluative move intensifies the message’s significance, linking emotional behavior to one’s relationship with the divine. As Coffin (2006) observed in her study of educational religious texts, speakers often amplify the weight of their message by connecting personal behavior with spiritual or eschatological consequences. Mufti Menk adopts this strategy to encourage his audience to view anger not merely as a social or emotional issue, but as a spiritual threat.

In summary, Mufti Menk’s use of *attitude*—infused with emotional resonance, moral guidance, and spiritual valuation—demonstrates a deliberate and effective method of persuasion. His sermon exemplifies how religious discourse can mobilize linguistic tools to engage the audience cognitively, emotionally, and ethically.

2) *Persuasion through Graduation: Making the Message Stronger*

Mufti Menk also strategically employs the component of *graduation* to enhance the persuasive power of his message. Graduation involves adjusting the intensity of expressions, either amplifying or reducing their force. In this sermon, the speaker primarily utilizes *amplification* to heighten the impact of his ideas.

A key example is the phrase, “Very few people can suppress their anger.” The expression “very few” emphasizes the rarity of this ability, making it sound both valuable and difficult to achieve. By framing self-control as something scarce, Mufti Menk taps into a well-established persuasive strategy—when something is perceived as rare, people are naturally more inclined to desire it. This approach motivates the audience to view emotional control not only as a virtue but as a challenging goal worth striving for.

Another amplified statement appears when Mufti Menk says, “It requires a great deal of discipline.” The inclusion of “great deal” intensifies the notion of discipline, making it seem like a serious and demanding endeavor. This rhetorical strategy appeals to the idea that valuable outcomes often require significant effort. Oteíza (2017) noted that such strong emotional and evaluative language is common in political and religious speeches, as it

amplifies the speaker's message and captures the audience's attention. By framing emotional control as a difficult yet rewarding pursuit, Mufti Menk encourages his listeners to take the challenge seriously.

Moreover, Mufti Menk uses metaphorical amplification when he declares, “Shaytan creeps into your system...” By likening anger to a devil infiltrating the body, he transforms an emotional issue into a spiritual threat. This metaphor shifts the focus from a mere psychological reaction to a matter of spiritual health, urging the audience to avoid anger with a sense of urgency. In religious discourse, such metaphors often function to invoke caution or fear, while maintaining respect for the audience’s spiritual sensibilities.

In essence, Mufti Menk’s use of *graduation* not only strengthens the emotional appeal of his sermon but also enhances its moral weight. By amplifying the difficulty of controlling anger and the potential dangers of letting it take control, he effectively drives home the importance of emotional discipline in a way that is both impactful and motivating.

3) Persuasion through Engagement: Building a Relationship with the Audience

Engagement is a key strategy in how a speaker connects with the audience. It can be achieved by acknowledging different perspectives or using a friendly, informal tone. In this sermon, Mufti Menk effectively employs both approaches.

First, Mufti Menk demonstrates *dialogic concession*, which involves recognizing that there are multiple viewpoints. For instance, when he says, “Sometimes your anger is justified...,” he validates the audience's experience by acknowledging that anger can be natural and appropriate in certain situations. Rather than imposing an absolute stance, he opens the door for listeners to reflect on their feelings while guiding them toward a more thoughtful response. This strategy helps reduce resistance and creates a sense of understanding between the speaker and the audience. When a speaker shows empathy, listeners are more likely to be receptive to the message, as noted in Xu and Petty’s (2022) research on emotional language in social media. They found that messages that acknowledge emotions tend to generate more openness and trust.

In addition to dialogic concession, Mufti Menk uses an informal style to engage his audience. A clear example of this is his repetition of the phrase, “Let it go. Let it go.” The simplicity and casual nature of the expression make it sound like friendly advice from someone the listener can relate to, rather than a distant figure of authority. The repetition

also makes the message more memorable, while the informal tone invites the audience to feel more comfortable and at ease. This aligns with Rowland's (2023) findings that younger audiences often prefer relaxed, simple language in religious discussions. By speaking in a friendly manner, the speaker fosters a sense of closeness and trust, increasing the likelihood that the advice will be followed.

Furthermore, the use of informal language is a common feature in motivational speeches and TED Talks, where the aim is to create a connection with the audience (Bukina, 2023). In religious communication, this approach conveys humility, which enhances the speaker's credibility and strengthens the bond with the audience.

By combining dialogic concession with an informal style, Mufti Menk successfully bridges the gap between himself and his listeners, making his message not only more persuasive but also more accessible and relatable.

4) Comparison with Other Studies

Compared to other research, this study shows that Mufti Menk's style combines traditional religious values with modern persuasive strategies. While many earlier religious speakers focused mainly on *instruction* (telling people what to do), Mufti Menk adds emotional, spiritual, and relational layers to his message.

Bukina (2023) found that khutbahs in traditional settings often use formal, one-directional speech. The imam talks, and the people listen. In contrast, Mufti Menk uses more interactive language, even if the speech is recorded. He predicts the listener's thoughts and gently corrects them.

Coffin (2006) also discussed how religious texts often rely on authority. But in Mufti Menk's case, authority comes with empathy. He uses religious teachings, but he also speaks in a way that respects feelings, values kindness, and promotes inner reflection.

These differences make his speech feel more personal and motivational. This is especially effective in online settings, where people may be alone, watching from home, and looking for spiritual comfort.

To conclude, Mufti Menk's speech is persuasive because he carefully combines all three parts of Appraisal Theory: (1) Attitude makes the message emotional and morally clear, (2) Graduation makes the message strong and urgent, and (3) Engagement makes the audience feel respected and connected.

These language strategies are powerful because they touch both the heart and the mind. They show that religious speech can be warm, respectful, and persuasive, not just instructive or commanding.

Compared to previous studies, this analysis confirms that religious leaders today are adapting their speech styles to be more listener-friendly, using language that is emotional, ethical, and interactive. This helps make their message stronger and more relevant to people's real lives.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Mufti Menk's sermon "How to Control Anger from a Religious Perspective" reveals how linguistic resources such as *attitude*, *graduation*, and *engagement* are used to shape persuasive religious messages. The sermon demonstrates how emotional appeal, moral evaluation, and strategic audience involvement can encourage self-reflection and behavioral change, particularly in managing anger.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of religious discourse through the lens of Appraisal Theory, highlighting its relevance in analyzing spiritual communication in digital contexts. Practically, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of religious messages lies not only in their content but also in how they are delivered—using accessible, empathetic, and motivational language.

Future research could expand this approach by examining sermons from different cultural or religious backgrounds to explore how persuasive strategies vary across traditions. Such comparative studies may provide deeper insight into the role of language in shaping moral and emotional guidance within diverse spiritual communities.

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