LEXICAL AND PHRASAL AMBIGUITIES IN THE TRANSGENDER PROTECTION BILL 2018 THROUGH A DIALECTICAL RELATIONAL APPROACH (DRA)

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Abstract

Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) has emerged as a leading analytical paradigm in Critical Discourse Studies for examining social issues that are already materially present and discursively observable. Unlike descriptive models that merely map textual features, DRA begins with the identification of an existing social wrong and proceeds through a four-stage analytical trajectory that interrogates its discursive construction, the obstacles to its resolution, the social order that sustains it, and the possibilities for transformation (Fairclough, 2006, 2016). Responding to academic critiques that research should "discover" rather than "assume" problems, this study clarifies that DRA is premised on the recognition that social wrongs are historically produced, institutionally embedded, and linguistically manifested; thus, the task of analysis is not to invent a problem but to critically examine how it operates, persists, and may be remedied.Using Fairclough's DRA—while also fulfilling the descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory requirements of his three-dimensional model—this study critically analyzes the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 of Pakistan as an illustrative case. The bill is examined not as a neutral legal instrument but as a discursive site where language actively shapes identity, legitimacy, and social inclusion. The analysis identifies two interrelated social wrongs: lexical ambiguity at the word level (e.g., transgender, inter-gender) and phrasal ambiguity at the level of extended constructions (e.g., gender identity, gender expression). These ambiguities, while framed as inclusive, generate interpretive uncertainty, cultural dislocation, and legal indeterminacy—particularly through the erasure of indigenous identity categories such as khawaja sira and khusra. The findings demonstrate that these ambiguities are sustained by sociocultural taboos, institutional silences, and the uncritical borrowing of globalized legal terminology, which collectively hinder meaningful public deliberation and policy clarity. By tracing how these linguistic choices function within broader power structures, the study advances context-sensitive recommendations for discursive reform, emphasizing culturally grounded terminology and precise legal articulation. Overall, the study underscores the ethical and analytical strength of DRA as a transformative framework, showing that without linguistic precision and social contextualization, even progressive legislation risks reproducing the very marginalization it seeks to address.

*Keywords***:** *Dialectical Relational Approach, Fairclough, legal discourse, social wrongs, lexical ambiguity, phrasal ambiguity, transgender legislation, Pakistan, khawaja sira*
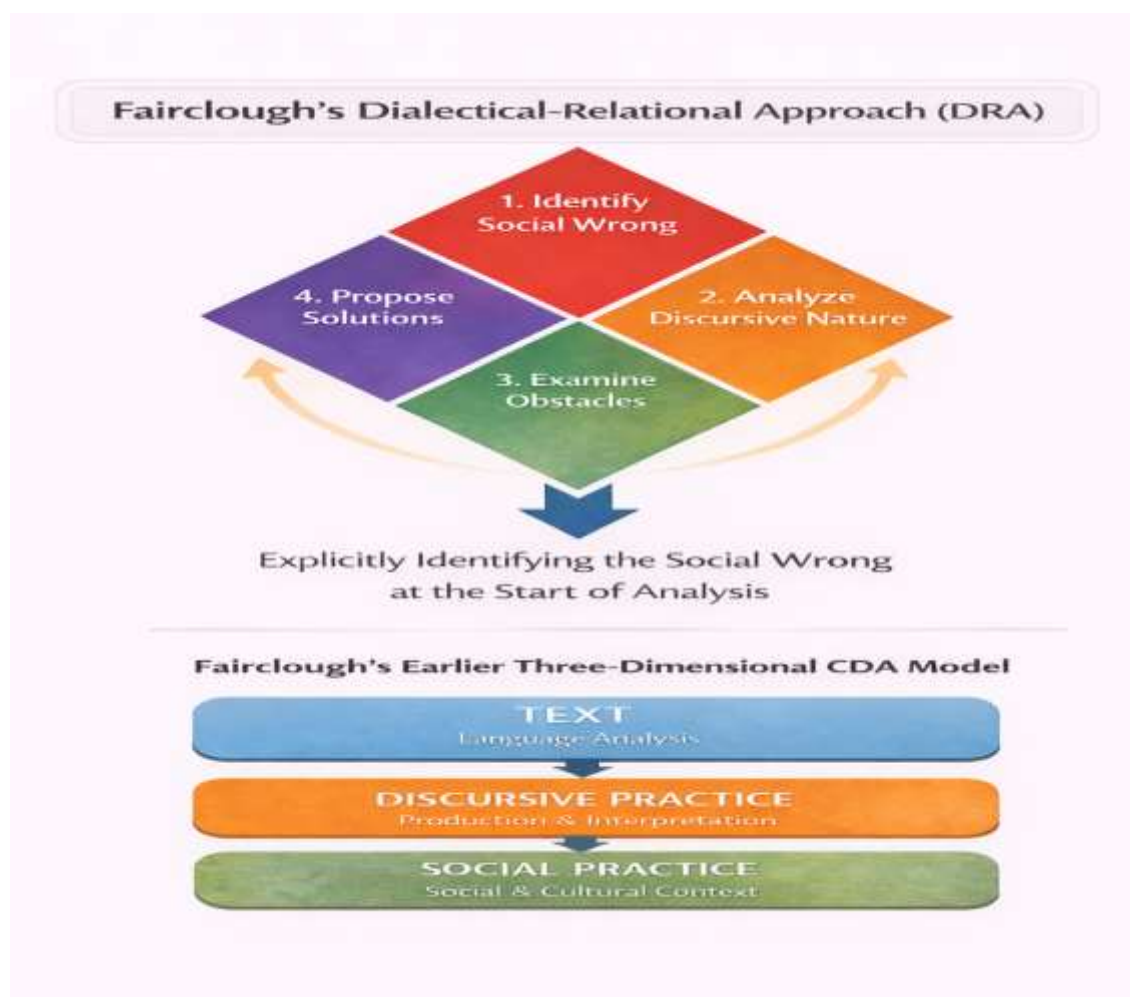
1. INTRODUCTION

In response to academic critique that "research should discover the problem rather than assume it," this study clarifies that DRA-based analysis begins with a visible, document-embedded problem, and focuses on how it is discursively constructed, resisted, and transformed.

The following figure expresses Fairclough's Dialectical–Relational Approach (DRA), adapted and extended from his Three-Dimensional (3D) CDA model (Fairclough, 1995, 2001),

foregrounds the identification of a social wrong as the primary analytical step. Building on Fairclough's critical framework and subsequent developments in Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), the DRA moves from problem identification to discursive explanation, structural critique, and transformative intervention. This makes the model particularly effective for analyzing contemporary policy texts, legal discourse, and social media language.

Figure1.1

Fairclough's Dialectical–Relational Approach (DRA), adapted from his Three-Dimensional CDA model (Fairclough, 1995, 2001) and later developments in CDA (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), foregrounds the identification of social wrongs as the starting point of critical analysis.

Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)

1. Identify Social Wrong
2. Analyze Discursive Nature
3. Examine Obstacles
4. Propose Solutions

Explicitly Identifying the Social Wrong at the Start of Analysis

Fairclough's Earlier Three-Dimensional CDA Model

TEXT
Language Analysis

DISCURSIVE PRACTICE
Production & Interpretation

SOCIAL PRACTICE
Social & Cultural Context

Note. Fairclough's Dialectical–Relational Approach (DRA), which is a critical extension of his Three-Dimensional (3D) CDA Framework (Fairclough, 1995, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The DRA model begins with the explicit identification of a social wrong before moving into discursive and systemic analysis, making it particularly effective for analyzing contemporary policy, legal discourse, and social media language.

Adapted and expanded from Fairclough (2001) and Wodak & Meyer (2009).

1.1 What is Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)?

This study presents the *first known application* of Fairclough's *latest model extension*—the Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)—to the analysis of controversial legal discourse. The DRA model (Fairclough, 2009, 2015) is a critical expansion of his earlier Three-Dimensional (3D) CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992), which focused on **Textual Analysis*, Discursive Practice, and* Social Practice**.

Unlike the 3D model, DRA explicitly begins by identifying a **social wrong** and then examining the *discursive processes, obstacles to change, and potential solutions.* This makes it especially suitable for analyzing policy texts such as the ***Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (TPRA) 2018***, where power, identity, and institutional discourse intersect. *(Adapted from Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).*

1. Social Wrong as the Entry Point. At the core of DRA is the identification of a social wrong — a visible problem or injustice embedded in public discourse or legislation. In this research, the TPRA Bill is selected not because of theoretical assumption but because it visibly encapsulates multiple societal contradictions, such as gender identity recognition, religious resistance, linguistic framing, and legal ambiguity (Lev, 2004; APA, 2009a; Zimman, 2017).
This visible problem becomes the starting point of the DRA analysis, countering the critique that "research should discover the problem rather than assume it." Here, the problem is already public, textual, and controversial — the DRA merely unfolds its discursive construction and social embeddedness.

2. Discursive Construction. As shown in the figure, once the social wrong is identified, the DRA framework moves towards analyzing how this problem is discursively produced and sustained. In this step, the bill's language, clause structure, semantic choices, and exclusionary phrases are deconstructed to show how gender identities are linguistically legitimized or delegitimized — often through binary, medical, or religious discourse lenses (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

3. Structural Hindrances. Next, the model investigates how the transformation of the social wrong is hindered by institutional, legal, or ideological forces. In the case of the TPRA, institutionalized religious interpretations, state control over gender certification, and linguistic ambivalence are shown to be key structural resistances (Solan, 2010). This aligns with Fairclough's assertion that discourse is not merely text but is deeply embedded in power structures that prevent resolution (Fairclough, 2015).

4. Discursive & Non-Discursive Transformation. Finally, the framework evaluates the possibilities of transformative action — both through language (discursive) and policy/social change (non-discursive). This includes suggestions for inclusive terminologies, policy amendments, and media re-framings that can dismantle the structural resistance and contribute to social justice — aligning with the DRA's aim of "not just analysis, but action."

Link to 3D Framework

While the DRA provides the critical motivation and macro-structure for this research, it retains core elements of Furlough's 3D model:

Table 1.1

*The table below acts as a bridge between the two frameworks, retaining the **layered depth of 3D analysis** while moving toward problem-solving orientation of DRA.*

3D Component	DRA Element Reflected in the Study
Textual Analysis	Micro-analysis of the TPRA Bill's legal and semantic structure
Discursive Practice	Analysis of how bill discourse interacts with media, public debate, and gender communities
Social Practice	Evaluation of how dominant ideologies shape and resist inclusive gender identities

Language in legal discourse is never neutral—it is imbued with ideology, identity, and power (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In legislative texts, particularly those dealing with gender and human rights, even a single term can influence societal perception and institutional policy for generations (Solan, 2010; Lev, 2004). This study investigates the lexical and phrasal ambiguities embedded in Pakistan's *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018*, focusing on how language in the bill shapes, sustains, or challenges transgender and inter-gender identities.

The bill includes terminology such as "transgender," "inter-gender," "gender identity," and "gender expression," which appear inclusive but in fact carry discursive vagueness, cultural dislocation, and legal ambiguity (Zimman, 2017; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). The omission of localized terms such as *khawaja sira* and *khusra* contributes to a disconnect between globalized legal language and indigenous identities. These ambiguities, if left unaddressed, risk affecting key areas of life including access to education, legal recognition, and familial rights (American Psychological Association [APA], 2009a; Lev, 2004).

This research employs Fairclough's (2013) Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) as its analytical framework. DRA allows researchers to begin with a visible social wrong—in this case, linguistic ambiguity—and analyze its construction, sustainment, and possible transformation. In response to academic critique that research should discover rather than assume the problem, this study clarifies that DRA-based analysis begins with a visible, document-embedded issue, and focuses on how it is discursively constructed, resisted, and transformed within specific socio-legal contexts (Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 2006). This chapter introduces the research background, outlines the legal and linguistic definitions relevant to the bill, presents the significance of the study, and defines key terminology.

1.2 Background of the Study. In the contemporary era, words are more powerful than weapons—they shape identities, negotiate meaning, and influence governance (Quyyum et al., 2020; Wodak & Chilton, 2005). The choice of words in official documents is never arbitrary. Rather, every communicative act is discursively loaded—whether verbal or non-verbal. Discourse constructs realities, and in legal discourse, it constructs identities, entitlements, and exclusions (Gee, 2014; Fairclough, 2015).

In Pakistan, the *Transgender Protection Bill 2018* was celebrated as a landmark step toward inclusion. However, the language of the bill reflects international influence without cultural grounding. Imported terminologies lack the nuance to represent Pakistan's indigenous gender spectrum. As a result, ambiguities arise not from absence of intent—but from a failure to linguistically recognize the lived realities of those affected (Zimman, 2017; Quyyum, 2023).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) allows us to deconstruct such texts. More specifically, Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) enables the researcher to not only analyze discourse but to intervene—by identifying social wrongs, analyzing discursive obstacles, examining the sustaining social order, and suggesting reform (Fairclough, 2013; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000).

1.3 Statement of the Problem. The Transgender Protection Bill 2018 introduces terms and definitions that, although intended to support inclusivity, are lexically and phrasally ambiguous, resulting in semantic confusion and ideological distortion. Phrases such as "gender identity" and "inter-gender" are defined in legally vague and culturally unanchored ways. These expressions lack clarity in distinguishing between biological conditions, gender transition, and culturally embedded third-gender identities like khawaja sira or khusra.

Such ambiguities are not merely linguistic—they have tangible social consequences. If left unaddressed, they may lead to policy misapplication, social misunderstanding, and the institutionalization of misconceptions that affect key societal structures such as family, education, healthcare, and civil rights.

This study identifies these discursive ambiguities as visible social wrongs and interrogates their construction using Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA). By tracing how these terms are linguistically framed, socially resisted, and potentially transformable, the research aims to uncover the deeper implications of legal language on identity politics in Pakistan. In doing so, it responds critically to the ideological gaps present in the bill and highlights the need for culturally contextualized, legally precise language in gender-related policymaking.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To identify lexical and phrasal ambiguities in the Transgender Protection Bill 2018 that contributes to social misrepresentation.
2. To explore the social wrongs resulting from these ambiguities.
3. To examine the societal and cultural obstacles that hinder open discussions of such social wrongs in Pakistani society.
4. To investigate how social structures may sustain or resist these wrongs.
5. To suggest possible linguistic and policy-level remedies for minimizing the identified social harms.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How do lexical and phrasal choices in the Transgender Protection Bill 2018 create or reinforce social wrongs?
2. Why are some social orders inclined to normalize certain social wrongs while others reject them?
3. What cultural and institutional barriers prevent open discourse about such social wrongs in Pakistani society?

4. What strategies can be proposed to mitigate or transform these social wrongs through discourse and policy revision?

   1.6 Significance of the Study. This research is significant in multiple ways:

- It explores a **highly sensitive issue** with **direct societal impact**.
- It adopts **DRA**, a framework rarely applied to South Asian legislative texts.
- It highlights how **language choices in law** can either empower or marginalize.
- It contributes to **critical legal discourse studies**, promoting clarity and cultural relevance in legal language.
- It supports **indigenous identity representation**, aligning legal language with lived realities.

   *1.7 Theoretical Framework: Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA).*The theoretical lens for this research is **Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach**, which differs from CDA's earlier 3D model. DRA focuses on how discourse:

1. **Constructs visible social wrongs**,
2. Is limited by **discursive obstacles**,
3. Is maintained by **social structures**, and
4. Can be **transformed through critical reflection** (Fairclough, 2013).

DRA is particularly suited for this study because it acknowledges the **existence of the problem from the outset**—unlike inductive approaches where the problem "emerges" from data. This makes DRA ideal for analyzing legal language that already carries real-world consequences.

   1.8 Definitions Provided in the Transgender Protection Bill (2018). To critically assess the ideological ambiguity embedded within the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018*, it is essential to scrutinize the definitions provided in the bill itself. These lexical choices serve as sites for contesting meaning and, according to Fairclough (2010), play a crucial role in constructing social identities and legitimizing specific ideologies through legal discourse.

a. *Transgender Person***: The bill defines a transgender person as**: "Intersex, inter-gender, eunuch assigned male at birth but who go through genital removal or castration; a transgender man, transgender woman, khawaja sira, or any person…" (Transgender Persons Act, 2018, p. 2).This definition exhibits lexical bundling of biomedical, psychological, and socio-cultural identities without adequate separation. It conflates anatomical variation (e.g., intersex) with identity (e.g., transgender man or woman), and cultural terms (e.g., khawaja sira), reinforcing what Zimman (2017) terms a *discursive slippage* between identity and embodiment. Moreover, such conflation may reinforce essentialist notions of gender within legal frameworks (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

b. *Inter-gender,(Hijra/Khusra):*The term "inter-gender," often used interchangeably with *intersex*, is framed in the bill as a biological condition. However, in local cultural settings, terms like *hijra* or *khusra* also encompass spiritual roles, kinship networks, and performative traditions (Haider & Bukhari, 2020). The bill's biologized framing neglects these cultural dimensions, leading to *conceptual oversimplification* (Butler, 2004).

c. *Gender Identity, Defined as:"A person's innermost and individual sense of self as male, female, or a blend of both or neither" (Transgender Persons Act, 2018, p. 3).*This definition aligns with global standards (APA, 2009a) but lacks contextual anchoring in Pakistan's socio-religious and legal landscape, where gender identity is often externally

ascribed (Lev, 2004). The subjective framing also opens legal questions on verification, recognition, and administrative documentation (Solan, 2010).

d. ***Gender Expression:*** The bill further defines gender expression as:*"The external exhibition of gender identity, or how one is perceived by others."* While this reflects international terminologies (e.g., WHO, 2020), it remains *functionally isolated* from legal or institutional guarantees of protection. The lack of linkage between expression and protection mechanisms renders this definition discursively hollow (Fairclough, 2013; Zimman, 2017).

Note. These definitions blur critical distinctions between *biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression*, failing to account for the *local cultural lexicon* and indigenous identities. As Fairclough (2010) argues, legal definitions can naturalize ideological positions under the guise of objectivity. In this case, the bill's language constructs a hybridized legal subject—neither medically precise nor culturally inclusive—thus introducing interpretational ambiguity that can affect legal rights, access, and representation.

Table 1.2

Conceptual Ambiguity in the Definitions of the Transgender Bill (2018) (Lexical and Identity Overlap Across Biological, Psychological, and Cultural Domains).

Term in the Bill	Defined As	Actual Domain	Misclassification?	Excluded from LGBTQ?
Transgender Person	Intersex, transgender, Khawaja Sira, eunuch, trans man, trans woman, etc.	Mix of biological, cultural, and gender identity	Yes – lumped definitions	❌ Not strictly LGBTQ
Inter-gender (Hijra/Khusra)	Used interchangeably with intersex and transgender	*Biological Sex Variant + Cultural Identity*	Yes – conflation of identity & sex	❌ Outside LGBTQ
Gender Identity	Internal sense of being male/female/both/neither	Psychological/Self-perception	❌ (aligned with global "T")	✅ Matches LGBTQ-T
Gender Expression	External display of gender	Sociocultural	❌ (accurately defined but contextually misplaced)	✅ Matches LGBTQ scope
LGBTQ Scope	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer identities	Sexual orientation + gender identity	Mostly *Sexuality* + "T" for identity	✅ Clearly distinct
Actual Focus of the Bill	Inter-gender (Hijra/Khusra),	Cultural/Religious/Social Identities	✅ Problematic use of	❌ Not a LGBTQ

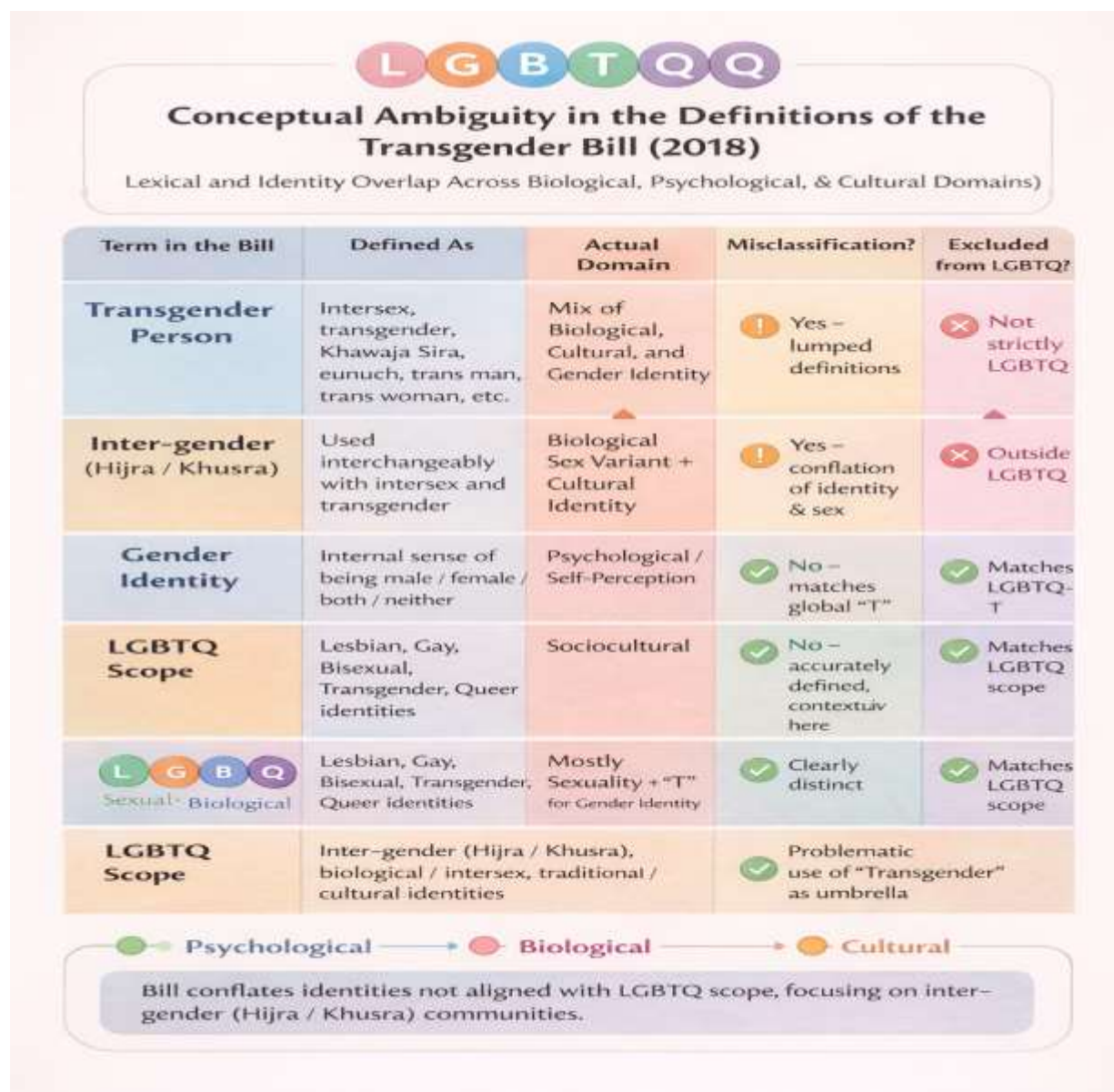| Term in the Bill	Defined As	Actual Domain	Misclassification?	Excluded from LGBTQ?
	biological/intersex, traditional/cultural identities		"Transgender" as umbrella	Bill

Note. This figure visually highlights the ***lexical and conceptual ambiguity*** embedded within the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2018). While the bill presents itself as a protection act for transgender individuals, its definitional core revolves around **inter-gender identities** rooted in South Asian socio-cultural constructs such as *Hijra* and *Khusra*. This *misclassification of biological differences, gender identity, and cultural roles*—under the singular term "transgender"—blurs international conceptual boundaries, especially those defined within the LGBTQ framework (Zimman, 2017; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

As the DRA model by *Fairclough (2015, 2021)* asserts, a *social wrong* is not only discursively constructed but *materially embedded* in policy and legal discourse. In this case, the *choice of terminology* has serious implications—*excluding those it claims to protect*, and *misleading legal and medical stakeholders*. The figure supports the researcher's use of the *DRA lens*, showing that this problem is not assumed but *visibly present* in the foundational definitions of the bill itself (APA, 2009a; Lev, 2004).

Figure1.2

Conceptual Ambiguity in the Definitions of the Transgender Bill (2018)
This infographic compares how key terms within Pakistan's Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2018) are defined in the bill versus how they align with actual biological, psychological, sociocultural, or identity-based domains. It further highlights misclassifications, exclusion from LGBTQ+ categories, and conceptual overlaps across categories such as "Hijra/Khusra," "Transgender," and "Gender Identity."

Conceptual Ambiguity in the Definitions of the Transgender Bill (2018)

Lexical and Identity Overlap Across Biological, Psychological, & Cultural Domains)

Term in the Bill	Defined As	Actual Domain	Misclassification?	Excluded from LGBTQ?
Transgender Person	Intersex, transgender, Khawaja Sira, eunuch, trans man, trans woman, etc.	Mix of Biological, Cultural, and Gender Identity	Yes – lumped definitions	Not strictly LGBTQ
Inter-gender (Hijra / Khusra)	Used interchangeably with intersex and transgender	Biological Sex Variant + Cultural Identity	Yes – conflation of identity & sex	Outside LGBTQ
Gender Identity	Internal sense of being male / female / both / neither	Psychological / Self-Perception	No – matches global "T"	Matches LGBTQ-T
LGBTQ Scope	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer identities	Sociocultural	No – accurately defined, contextuiv here	Matches LGBTQ scope
LGBTQ Scope (L G B Q Sexual · Biological)	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer identities	Mostly Sexuality + "T" for Gender Identity	Clearly distinct	Matches LGBTQ scope
LGBTQ Scope	Inter-gender (Hijra / Khusra), biological / intersex, traditional / cultural identities		Problematic use of "Transgender" as umbrella	

● → Psychological → ● Biological → ● Cultural

Bill conflates identities not aligned with LGBTQ scope, focusing on inter-gender (Hijra / Khusra) communities.

Note. The bill conflates culturally embedded identities such as *Hijra* and *Khusra* with global LGBTQ+ terminologies, resulting in definitional inconsistencies. Terms like *transgender person* are applied as umbrella categories, creating confusion between gender identity, biological sex, and sociocultural roles. The figure visually clarifies where these categories overlap, diverge, or misalign in terms of global and indigenous identity frameworks.

1.8. Gender Identity and Ideology Construction. The concept of gender identity emerged in the mid-20th century to describe one's internal sense of belonging to a gender category (Money, 1994). Over time, the term expanded to include individuals whose identities diverge from biological sex (Lev, 2004). Today, transgender has become an umbrella term, encompassing multiple identities regardless of surgical transition or biological condition (APA, 2009a; Serano, 2007).

Yet, reality is socially constructed—powerful institutions create, circulate, and normalize ideas through discourse (Barnes & Noble, 2020; Elsharkawy, 2016). What begins as belief often becomes perceived truth, especially when embedded in law. This is why analyzing language in legal texts is crucial. As Quyyum et al. (2020) argue, "weapons can kill individuals, but words can destroy generations."

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the discourse surrounding gender, identity, and legislative protections has become increasingly layered and contested. As scholars such as Zimman (2017) and Livia (2001) argue, gender is not simply a biological or social category—it is also a deeply discursive construction shaped by language, law, and public narrative. Within this evolving terrain, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, emerges as a pivotal document in the South Asian context. However, it is precisely within such legal texts that ambiguities—lexical, semantic, and pragmatic—tend to surface, often reflecting larger societal struggles around recognition, categorization, and power (Solan, 2010; Ainsworth, 2016).

Moreover, critical discourse scholars have long maintained that language choices in legal and policy discourse are far from neutral; rather, they are imbued with ideological investments that reinforce dominant social hierarchies (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 2012; Wodak, 2009). These ambiguities are not merely linguistic oversights; they are social acts with real-world consequences—especially for marginalized communities whose recognition within law hinges on specific terms and categories (Ehrlich & Freed, 2020; Ahmed, 2006). In Pakistan, where cultural, religious, and legal narratives intersect with deep-rooted binaries of gender, such ambiguities may not just distort meaning but actively perpetuate systemic exclusion. This review traces existing debates and scholarly interventions to establish why a close linguistic and critical examination of the 2018 Act is both necessary and urgent.

2.1 Importance of the Issue. In this section, we establish why your focus—lexical and phrasal ambiguities in gender-rights law—matters, by drawing from multiple theoretical and empirical perspectives.

2.1.1 Language as Ideology and Power. Language enacts ideology. Words and phrases are not neutral vehicles but sites where belief systems are embedded and contested (Van Dijk, 2005; Yang, 2023). When legal documents adopt vague or generalized terms, they risk embedding dominant ideologies unobtrusively. In discourse studies, ideology is often hidden in choices of modality, transitivity, classification, and lexical alternatives (Yang, 2023). This makes it essential to scrutinize how transgender, inter-gender, gender identity, and gender expression are conceptualized in legislation.

2.1.2 Media, Gender Identity, and Representation. Media discourse plays a powerful role in normalizing or contesting gender identities. The way gender is represented in media (traditional and digital) molds public perceptions, which in turn shapes how legal and social definitions are understood (Lestari & Elfattah, 2025). For example, media often employs binary frames or misrepresents nonbinary/trans identities, reinforcing stereotypes (Santoniccolo et al., 2023). Media acts as both amplifier and gatekeeper—its discourse influences how people think about identity even before encountering legal texts. Thus, ambiguities in law are not isolated; they interact with media discourse ecology and ideological constructions in society.

2.2 Review of Existing Literature. Here we look at previous work on (a) ambiguity in legal and gender discourse, (b) ideology via language, (c) media & identity, (d) applications of DRA or CDA in policy/gender, and draw comparisons to your study.

2.2.1 Ambiguity in Legal Language & Gender Discourse. Legal texts are notorious for lexical vagueness. Solan (2010) observes statutory language often includes open-ended definitions that invite varied interpretations. Ainsworth (2016) adds that law frequently relies on socially constructed categories—especially problematic in gender and identity law. In gender discourse, Zimman (2017) critiques that mainstream linguistic models often assume binary gender and exclude lived transgender experiences. Coulthard and Johnson (2007) emphasize how forensic linguistics can reveal how legal language marginalizes certain identities.

2.2.2 Ideological Analysis in Discourse Studies. Beyond legal texts, discourse scholars have long studied how language hides ideology. Van Dijk's framework sees ideology as socially shared beliefs encoded in discourse, distinguishing "knowledge" from ideology (Van Dijk, 2012). Yang (2023) shows how critical linguistic features reveal hidden bias in texts. These studies support your decision to inspect how legislative language may conceal dominant gender ideologies.

A growing body of reduplication research in South Asian linguistics (Quyyum, 2022a; Quyyum, 2022b) illustrates the lexical-semantic complexity of such forms. The same patterns extend into legal-ideological discourse, where ambiguity can alter sociolinguistic realities (Quyyum, 2023)

2.2.3 Media, Identity, Discourse in Gender Studies. Numerous studies examine how media portrays gender identity, often reinforcing binaries and erasing nonconformity. Lestari & Elfattah (2025) showed that digital platforms still underrepresent nonbinary identities. Santoniccolo et al. (2023) review how media discourse perpetuates stereotypical gender frames. These illustrate the discursive environment in which legal texts are interpreted.

2.2.4 Applications of DRA / CDA in Policy & Gender. Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) is increasingly used to examine how policy discourse sustains social norms and how transformation is possible. Van Dijk (2019) applied it to migration laws; Abdelhay (2019) to language-policy in Sudan. However, few studies have used DRA to analyze gender identity laws, especially in South Asia. Most CDA analyses stop at critique and seldom provide transformation strategies. Your study thus bridges this methodological gap by applying DRA fully to a gender bill.

2.3 Research Gap & Contribution. From the prior literature:

- Many studies examine legal ambiguity or gender discourse in isolation but rarely combine them in the context of gender rights legislation.
- While ideology analysis is well developed, few works embed this into policy language, especially in South Asian contexts.
- Media-gender studies are abundant, but the connection between media discursive norms and legal text ambiguity is underexplored.
- DRA has been applied in policy domains, but its full four-stage framework has not been thoroughly implemented in transgender rights laws in Pakistan or similar contexts.

This research fills those gaps by:

1. Focusing specifically on lexical and phrasal ambiguities in a legal gender rights document.

2.   Integrating ideological and media discursive perspectives to situate those ambiguities within social discourse.

3.   Applying the full DRA model to not just critique but transform discourse through suggestions.

4.   Grounding the study in a South Asian socio-cultural context, making it locally relevant yet extending to international discursive concerns.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study operationalizes a *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)* methodology, guided by *Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (2006, 2010, 2016),* to analyze the discursive contradictions embedded within the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. In line with the core argument presented in the abstract—that social wrongs are linguistically constructed and ideologically reproduced—the methodology employed in Chapter 3 justifies *starting with an observable textual contradiction,* rather than abstract problematization. The decision to apply DRA stems from its **emancipatory intent** and capacity to locate discursive strategies that conceal, naturalize, or resist social injustices. Specifically, the study focuses on *lexical and phrasal ambiguities*, and how these are embedded in the legal discourse to construct, marginalize, or exclude transgender identities.

This analytical direction aligns with Fairclough's *four dimensions of DRA:* (1) identifying a social wrong, (2) establishing its semiotic and discursive nature, (3) examining its obstacles to being addressed, and (4) proposing potential pathways for transformation. Furthermore, the use of Fairclough's *three-dimensional CDA model* (text, discursive practice, and social practice) underpins the layered coding strategy applied in Chapter 3, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of textual features, intertextuality, and sociocultural implications. Thus, the methodological framework not only complements the theoretical argument but also substantiates the claim that *language is central to constructing rights, identities, and exclusions,* especially in contexts of legal discourse and gender representation (Fairclough, 2010; Solan, 2010; Zimman, 2017).

In any critical discourse investigation, the choice of research methodology holds significant weight, especially when the subject matter involves *legal texts, gender identity, and cultural norms*. This study addresses a linguistically and socially sensitive area: the *lexical and phrasal ambiguities* within Pakistan's *Transgender Protection Bill 2018*. Since such ambiguities are not merely grammatical but ideological, the analysis demands a methodological approach that *connects language with power, policy, and social transformation.*

Traditional linguistic models often focus on surface-level semantics or syntactic patterns (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). However, *Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA),* an evolved form of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), offers a more *multi-layered and socially embedded framework.* It enables the researcher not only to identify problematic discourse but to *analyze its ideological roots and propose constructive change* (Fairclough, 2013). DRA has been applied in limited yet impactful studies (e.g., Abdelhay, 2019; Van Dijk, 2019) in contexts where *policy, identity, and discourse intersect.*

The *novelty of this study lies in its application of DRA to a gender rights policy in South Asia*, a region where such approaches are *underutilized due to political sensitivity and discursive resistance* (Zimman, 2017). The methodological rigor of DRA is particularly suited for this research because it allows the problem to be *acknowledged upfront and analyzed through a*

sequence of four interlinked stages: problem identification, investigation of discursive obstacles, critique of social orders, and exploration of transformative strategies (Fairclough, 2001, 2013).

By adopting this model, the study aligns with critical qualitative research that **goes beyond description**, aiming instead to **intervene in structures of inequality** (Rogers et al., 2005). Therefore, this chapter presents the design, framework, and procedures used to carry out the investigation in a **linguistically principled yet socially conscious** manner.

3.1 Research Design. This study follows a qualitative, critical discourse analytical (CDA) design grounded in Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA). The research investigates linguistic and discursive ambiguities within the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, focusing on how lexical and phrasal choices lead to social misrepresentation, institutional confusion, and cultural displacement.

Unlike traditional empirical studies that aim to discover unknown problems, DRA begins with the identification of a visible social wrong—in this case, the legal ambiguity surrounding gender identity discourse. The design is exploratory, interpretive, and transformative, aiming to unpack the underlying power structures and ideologies embedded in legal discourse.

3.2 Analytical Framework: Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA). Fairclough's DRA provides a four-stage model for systematically analyzing discourse in relation to society and power. The framework is ideal for policy texts, where language shapes law and law shapes lives. Contrary to the 3D model of CDA, DRA focuses not just on how discourse operates but why it operates that way and how it can be transformed.

Each of the four DRA stages is applied here with reference to the problem already identified in the bill:

1. Identifying a Social Wrong. The bill defines "gender identity" as "a person's innermost and individual sense of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither." This vague phrasing does not clarify whether it includes biological, psychological, or cultural identity, leading to confusion in public policy and legal execution. Such lexical ambiguity is the central social wrong, as outlined in the Statement of the Problem.

2. Examining Obstacles to Addressing the Wrong. This ambiguity persists due to social taboos, religious constraints, and institutional silence. For example, local gender categories like khawaja sira or khusra are entirely excluded, reflecting a deeper discursive resistance to culturally grounded terminology. These cultural and structural barriers block public discourse, even in policy-making spaces.

3. Analyzing the Social Order That Sustains the Wrong. The bill borrows its terminology from international frameworks (e.g., UN charters), prioritizing Western lexicon over indigenous categories. This linguistic dependence reflects a broader hegemonic order in which international "progressive" terms are preferred over context-sensitive identity labels, thereby marginalizing local cultural expressions and understandings.

4. Considering Possible Ways to Overcome the Wrong. Transformation is a core part of DRA. This study recommends:

- *Inclusion of culturally specific gender terms* in legal discourse.
- *Clarification of ambiguous terms* through legal reform.
- *Public education* to normalize discourse on gender identity.
- *Bilingual drafting* of bills using both English and Urdu.

These strategies aim to deconstruct institutionalized ambiguity and replace it with linguistically inclusive and socially coherent legal expression.

In response to academic critique that "research should discover the problem rather than assume it," this study clarifies that DRA-based analysis begins with a visible, document-embedded problem, and focuses on how it is discursively constructed, resisted, and transformed.

The following figure presents a visual representation of Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA), showcasing how each analytical stage is applied to the Transgender Protection Bill 2018 to uncover linguistic gaps, institutional silences, and culturally embedded misrepresentations
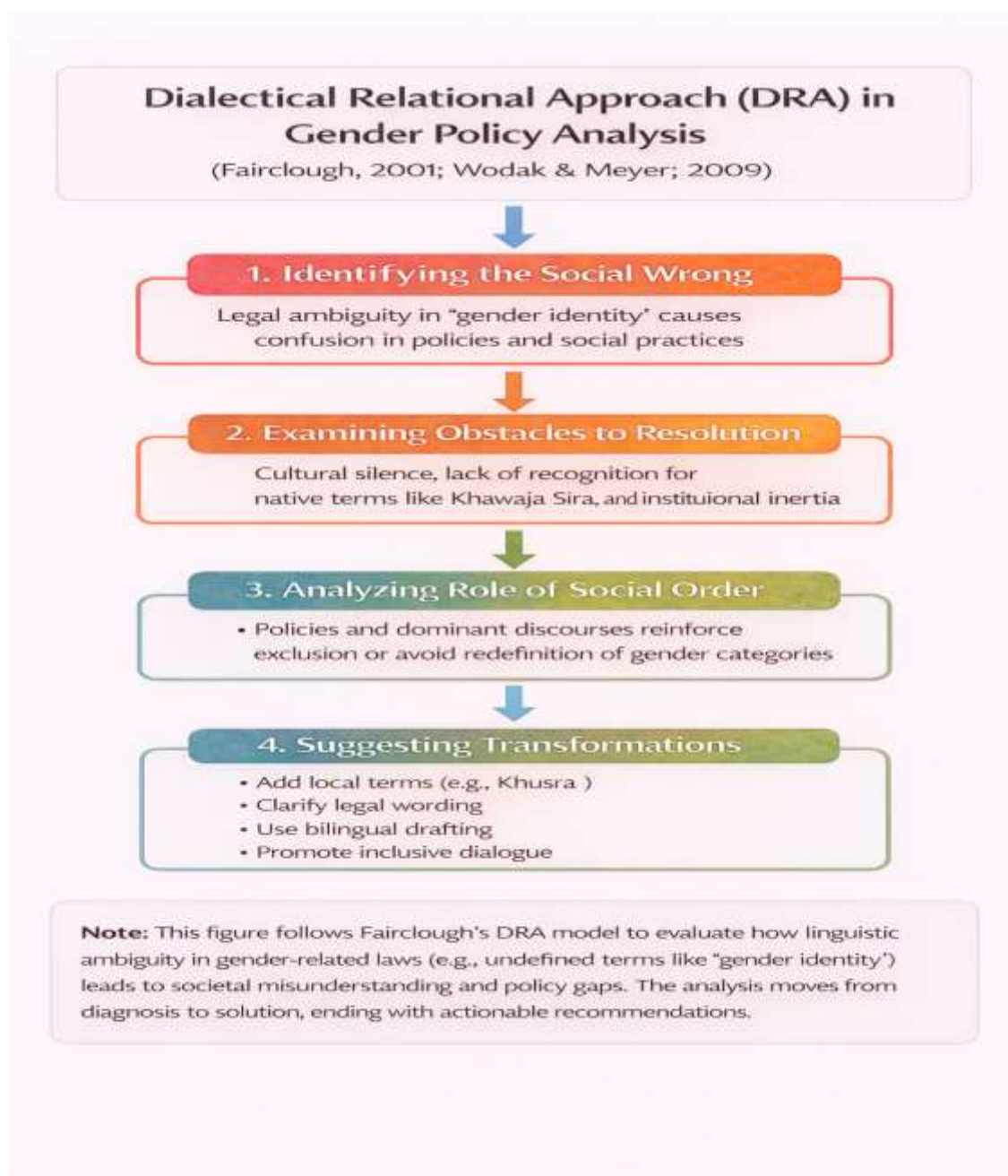
Table 3.1

Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) in Gender Policy Analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009)

Step	Description
1. Identifying the Social Wrong	Legal ambiguity in "gender identity" causes confusion in policies and social practices.
2. Examining Obstacles to Resolution	Cultural silence, lack of recognition for native terms like *Khawaja Sira*, and institutional inertia.
3. Analyzing Role of Social Order	Policies and dominant discourses reinforce exclusion or avoid redefinition of gender categories.
4. Suggesting Transformations	Add local terms (e.g., *Khusra*), clarify legal wording, use bilingual drafting, promote inclusive dialogue.

Note. This figure follows Fairclough's DRA model to evaluate how linguistic ambiguity in gender-related laws (e.g., undefined terms like "gender identity") leads to societal misunderstanding and policy gaps. The analysis moves from diagnosis to solution, ending with actionable recommendations.

Figure 3.1

Visual Representation of Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) Applied to Policy Analysis

Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) in Gender Policy Analysis
(Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer; 2009)

1. Identifying the Social Wrong
Legal ambiguity in 'gender identity' causes confusion in policies and social practices

2. Examining Obstacles to Resolution
Cultural silence, lack of recognition for native terms like Khawaja Sira, and instituional inertia

3. Analyzing Role of Social Order
- Policies and dominant discourses reinforce exclusion or avoid redefinition of gender categories

4. Suggesting Transformations
- Add local terms (e.g., Khusra)
- Clarify legal wording
- Use bilingual drafting
- Promote inclusive dialogue

Note: This figure follows Fairclough's DRA model to evaluate how linguistic ambiguity in gender-related laws (e.g., undefined terms like "gender identity') leads to societal misunderstanding and policy gaps. The analysis moves from diagnosis to solution, ending with actionable recommendations.

Note. The above diagram illustrates the four-stage analytical structure of Fairclough's DRA as applied to the Transgender Protection Bill 2018.

   3.3 Data Collection. The primary source for this research is the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018,* as published on the official website of the National Assembly of Pakistan.

- *Source***:** Government of Pakistan
- *Document Type:* Official legal bill
- *Language***:** English

- **Structure:** Preamble, 9 sections, legal definitions and procedural details

The document was chosen due to its social and legal significance, and its potential to shape gender-based identity discourse in Pakistan. No secondary interviews or surveys were used, ensuring pure text-based legal CDA.

No human participants were involved, so ethical clearance was not required. However, the study maintains cultural sensitivity, particularly in referencing contested identity terms, ensuring respect for (trans), intersex, and third-gender communities.

3.6   *Scope and Limitations.* The study is text-based, focused on **Pakistan's 2018 bill** but conceptually applicable to global legal discourses on gender. No empirical testing or interviews, Focused on English version only, Excludes religious and medical interpretations of gender. Despite these limitations, the research contributes to critical legal discourse analysis by providing an interdisciplinary model applicable across eras, generations, and cultural contexts.

1. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents a critical analysis of the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018* using Fairclough's *Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA),* as outlined in his works (2006, 2016). The analytical process follows a four-step progression, designed to uncover how discourse structures legal and social realities, particularly in relation to marginalized identities.

- **Step 1**: Detecting the *social wrong* embedded in the discourse.
- **Step 2**: Identifying the *obstacles* or hindrances that prevent redress of the social wrong.
- **Step 3**: Analyzing whether and how the *existing social order sustains* the social wrong.
- **Step 4**: Pinpointing *possibilities for transformative action* to address and overcome the wrong.
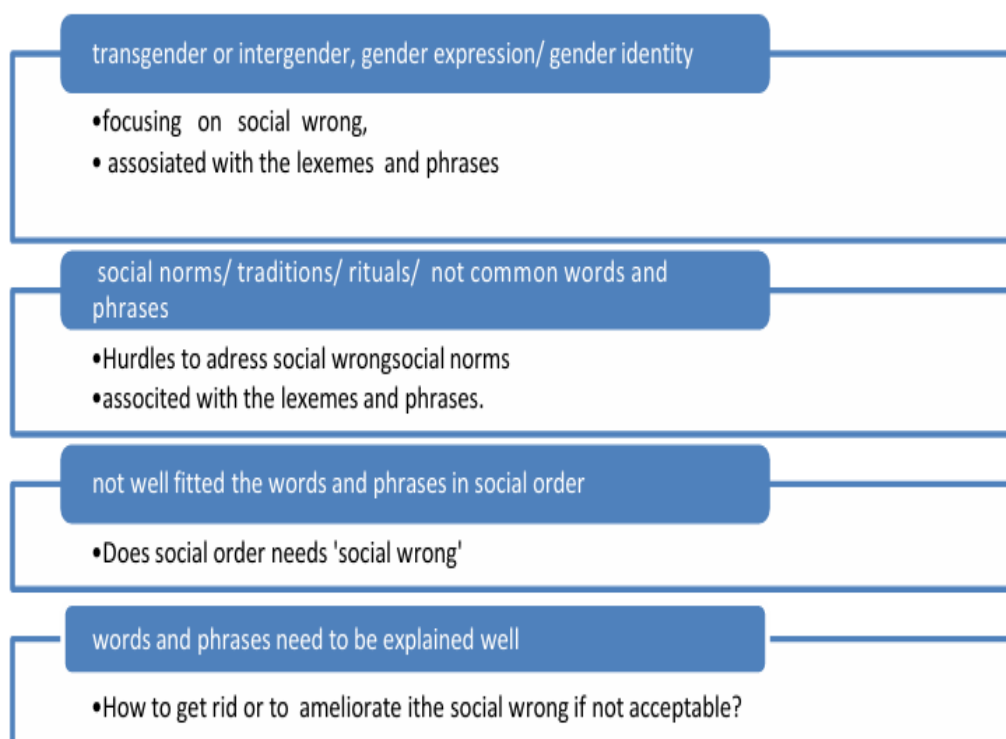
Guided by these steps, the present study adapts Fairclough's DRA framework by embedding selected excerpts from the Transgender Bill directly into each analytical stage. This adaptation not only reinforces the study's critical objectives but also demonstrates the suitability of the DRA framework for unpacking linguistic, cultural, and structural ambiguities within policy discourse. The goal is to offer a nuanced, context-sensitive critique that supports both legal clarity and social inclusion.

The purpose of adapting framework is to make the objectives of the study more clear and narrate that the selected framework is much suited for the study."

The following figure presents a visual layout of how the adapted framework aligns with the four-step model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proposed by Fairclough (2006, 2016), customized to analyze the lexemes and phrases related to transgender discourse in the legal document.

Figure4.1

Adapted Four-Step CDA Framework Based on Fairclough (2006, 2016) for Analyzing the Transgender Bill

transgender or intergender, gender expression/ gender identity
- focusing on social wrong,
- assosiated with the lexemes and phrases

social norms/ traditions/ rituals/ not common words and phrases
- Hurdles to adress social wrongsocial norms
- associoted with the lexemes and phrases.

not well fitted the words and phrases in social order
- Does social order needs 'social wrong'

words and phrases need to be explained well
- How to get rid or to ameliorate ithe social wrong if not acceptable?

Note. The figure categorizes the discursive construction of "social wrongs" using Fairclough's model adapted to the lexicon and phrasing of the transgender bill. The steps emphasize terminology, norms, social order mismatch, and the potential for reform.

The **communicative event or discourse** under analysis in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act includes both the **linguistic choices**—such as *transgender*, *intergender*, *gender identity*, and *gender expression*—and the broader **social elements** embedded within it. These include the **social practices**, their **implementation**, **role**, **visibility**, and **acceptance** in society—particularly regarding individuals with **non-normative gender identities**. These elements are **dialectical in nature**, reflecting dynamic interactions between language and society.

At the **first step** of analysis, the **'social wrong'** identified in the bill is brought to the forefront. Following that, the **second step** explores the **obstacles or hindrances** that prevent public or institutional acknowledgment or discussion of these social wrongs. The **third step** critically examines the **existing social order**, asking whether society *needs* or *supports* the continued presence of such social wrongs. Finally, the **fourth step** offers **suggestions for**

amending, eliminating, or reconciling the identified wrongs through discourse and policy reforms.

In the context of this study, **two distinct social wrongs** are identified:
1.   Ambiguity at the **word level**, and
2.   Ambiguity at the **phrase level**.

Consequently, each of Fairclough's four analytical steps has been subdivided to analyze both of these dimensions separately. The discussion, therefore, progresses in two sub-sections under each step: one addressing **lexical-level concerns** (individual word choices), and the other focusing on **phrasal constructions**. These levels of analysis are **visually represented** in the figure provided below.

Figure 4.2

Adaptive framework of Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) by Fairclough (2016) Critical Discourse Analysis of Ambiguity in Social Expression: A Four-Step Framework (Fairclough's Model Adaptation with Color-Coded Pedagogic Progression).

Note. This figure illustrates the four-step analytical procedure adapted from Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse framework to explore the treatment of *social wrongs* in discourse—specifically, lexical ambiguity in socially constrained expressions. The visual structure follows a pedagogically effective color gradient from **cool (blue)** to **warm (red)** tones, signaling the progressive intensity of critical awareness and action:

•   *Blue (Step 1: Identification):* Represents calm, neutral observation. The analyst begins by identifying the ambiguity—at **word** and **phrase** level—without immediate judgment.

•   *Green (Step 2: Social Norms/Hurdles):* Symbolizes societal influence. This step uncovers how **social norms inhibit discussion**, reinforcing barriers due to tabooed expressions or unfamiliar phrases.

- *Yellow (Step 3: Social Order Analysis):* Indicates a reflective phase. The analyst questions whether the **social order sustains or rejects** the social wrong linked with these ambiguous terms.
- *Red (Step 4: Amelioration/Correction):* Suggests urgency. The final step proposes *corrective strategies*—either by omitting problematic phrases, clarifying meanings, or raising awareness.
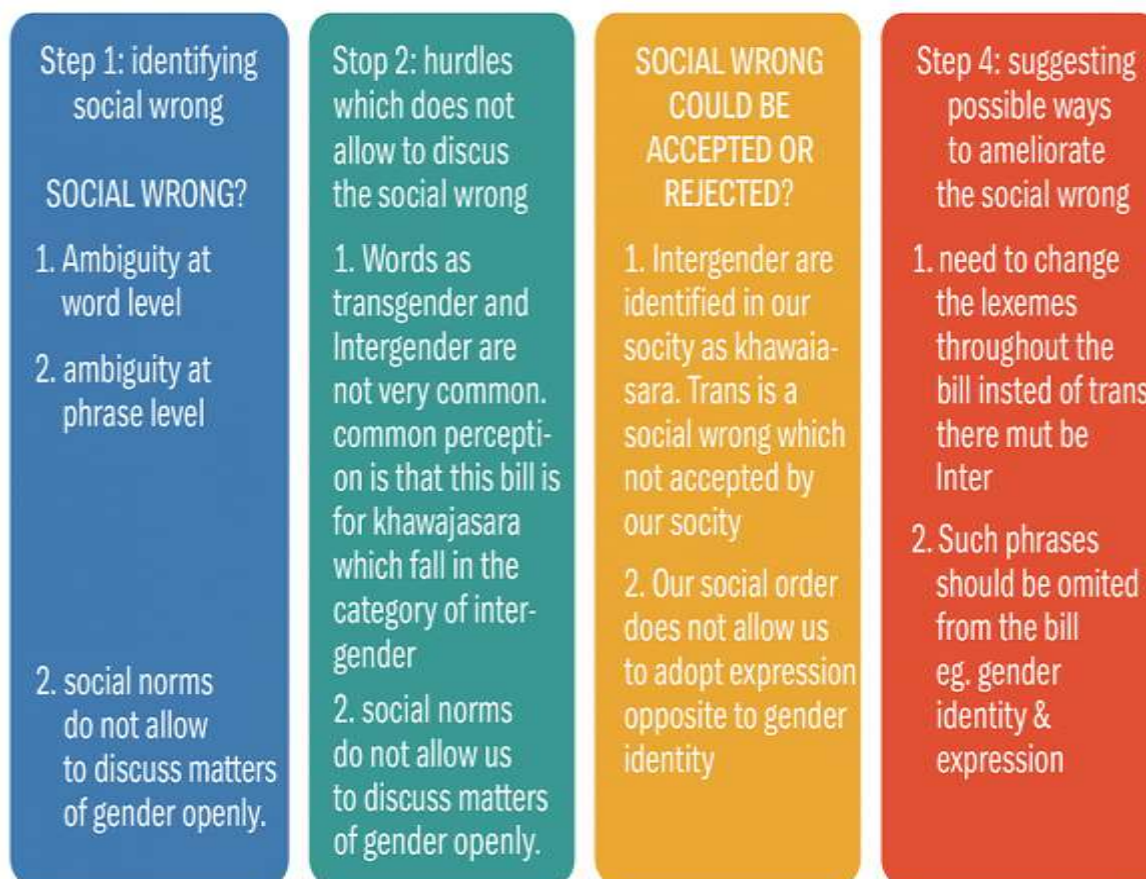
The *next figure* will continue using this same *color-coding scheme* to visually guide the reader through a *question-driven critical cycle*. It will build directly on the current stepwise model by incorporating *probing questions,* such as:

- What lexical items appear socially wrong?
- Why does the social order avoid them?
- Can discourse normalize or resist them?
- What alternatives can foster inclusive language?

This methodologically grounded visual approach supports learners and researchers in applying *critical discourse analysis (CDA) in stages—from identification to transformation—* with increased cognitive engagement and reflexivity at each step.

Figure 4.3

Adaptive more comprehensive framework of Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) by Fairclough (2016)

Step 1: identifying social wrong	Stop 2: hurdles which does not allow to discus the social wrong	SOCIAL WRONG COULD BE ACCEPTED OR REJECTED?	Step 4: suggesting possible ways to ameliorate the social wrong
SOCIAL WRONG? 1. Ambiguity at word level 2. ambiguity at phrase level 2. social norms do not allow to discuss matters of gender openly.	1. Words as transgender and Intergender are not very common. common perception is that this bill is for khawajasara which fall in the category of intergender 2. social norms do not allow us to discuss matters of gender openly.	1. Intergender are identified in our socity as khawaiasara. Trans is a social wrong which not accepted by our socity 2. Our social order does not allow us to adopt expression opposite to gender identity	1. need to change the lexemes throughout the bill insted of trans there mut be Inter 2. Such phrases should be omited from the bill eg. gender identity & expression

Note Figure 3 *presents an adaptive, more comprehensive version of the Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA)*, originally conceptualized by Norman Fairclough (2016), tailored to analyze ambiguity and conflict within the *Transgender Rights Protection Bill* in the Pakistani context. The figure employs a *cool-to-warm color gradient* (blue → green → yellow → red) to visualize the *escalating levels of social critique and intervention*, which is both pedagogically effective **and** visually engaging.

The steps are as follows:

1.   **Step 1 – Identification of Social Wrong (Blue)**

This step initiates the analysis by identifying semantic ambiguities in key terms (e.g., *transgender*, *intergender*), and phrase-level constructs (e.g., *gender identity*, *gender expression*). The calm blue tone reflects the need for **objective diagnosis**.

2.   **Step 2 – Social Hurdles to Discourse (Green)**

This stage outlines the **linguistic and societal barriers** that hinder discourse. For instance, the terms are **unfamiliar**, often **misunderstood**, or **conflated with local categories like** *khawajasara*. The green tone symbolizes **growth, but also restriction**, hinting at emerging awareness constrained by tradition.

3.   **Step 3 – Societal Need for Change (Yellow)**

This phase evaluates whether the identified social wrong (e.g., rejection of *trans* identities) should be **normalized or contested** within current societal norms. Yellow represents **caution and reflection**, indicating the transitional nature of this judgment.

4.   **Step 4 – Suggestions for Amelioration (Red)**

Finally, this step proposes **corrective measures**, such as **lexical revision** of ambiguous terms and **removal of contradictory phrases**. Red connotes **urgency and correction**, urging decisive action in language policy and legal drafting.

4.1. Steps for the Analysis Using the Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA). This study applies the **Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA)** proposed by Fairclough (2006, 2016) to examine the linguistic and social dimensions of the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018*. The framework is adapted to align with the specific objectives of the present research. Consistent with DRA's critical orientation, the analysis is divided into **four interrelated steps**, each addressing a distinct aspect of how the bill constructs, limits, and potentially transforms social meanings.

Step 1: Identification of the "Social Wrong"

In accordance with Fairclough's (2016) first stage, the analysis begins by **detecting social wrongs** embedded in the bill. Two levels are identified:

- **Word level:** The terms *transgender* and *intergender* appear as key lexical items. While *transgender* literally means "across" or "beyond" gender, in this bill it encompasses all forms of gender identity, even those not tied to biological sex.
- **Phrase level:** Ambiguity also arises at the phrase level, especially in expressions such as *gender identity* and *gender expression*. These phrases lack clear definitional boundaries, creating interpretive uncertainty.

Step 2: Hindrances to Discussing the "Social Wrong"

The second step examines the **social and discursive barriers** that prevent open discussion of these terms:

- **Word level:** Words such as *transgender* and *intergender* are uncommon in everyday discourse. In Pakistan, public perception often collapses both into *khawajasira*, which does not capture the full legal or psychological distinctions.
- **Phrase level:** Social norms restrict open dialogue on gender issues. Gender is perceived as fixed and divinely ordained, making *gender identity* and *gender expression* culturally sensitive or taboo subjects.

Step 3: Whether the Social Order "Needs" the Social Wrong

The third step critically reflects on whether society or its legal order **requires** the contested terms:

- **Word level:** *Intergender* persons are publicly identified as *khawajasira*, whereas *transgender* persons are seen as outsiders or as embodying a "social wrong." The social order does not fully accept these terms as legitimate categories.
- **Phrase level:** Expressions like *gender identity* or *gender expression* are similarly resisted, as they signify self-determined identities contrary to conventional norms.

Step 4: Suggesting Possible Ways to Ameliorate the "Social Wrong"

Finally, the framework seeks **practical ways** to address the identified problems:

- **Word level:** Lexemes could be replaced or clarified to ensure cultural acceptability (e.g., using *inter* instead of *trans* where appropriate).
- **Phrase level:** Ambiguous phrases should be either carefully defined or omitted from the bill to enhance clarity, particularly in expressions like *gender identity* and *gender expression*.

4.2 Identifying Social Wrongs in the Transgender Protection Bill (2018). Applying the above framework, the study identifies **two principal social wrongs** in the bill—one tied to **words**, the other to **phrases**.

- **Words:** The key lexical items *transgender* and *intergender* are treated as interchangeable. However, *transgender* refers to identity change (psychological and social), while *intergender* involves biological differences (intersex) but not necessarily identity struggles. This conflation obscures the distinct realities of these groups.
- **Phrases:** At the phrase level, *gender identity* and *gender expression* remain underdefined. Intersex persons primarily struggle with **acceptance and equal rights**, whereas transgender persons struggle with **identity recognition**. This difference needs explicit articulation in legal texts to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or erasures.

The following figure 4.4 , illustrates how the letter **'T' (Transgender)** from the LGBTQ+ acronym has been singularly operationalized in the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018*, while simultaneously absorbing and ambiguously representing other identity categories such as **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and even Intergender** individuals. Despite the distinct biological, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions of these identities, the bill classifies them collectively under the umbrella of 'Transgender'.

Figure 4.4

Visual Representation of 'T' in LGBTQ+: A Critical Overgeneralization in the Transgender Protection Bill (2018)
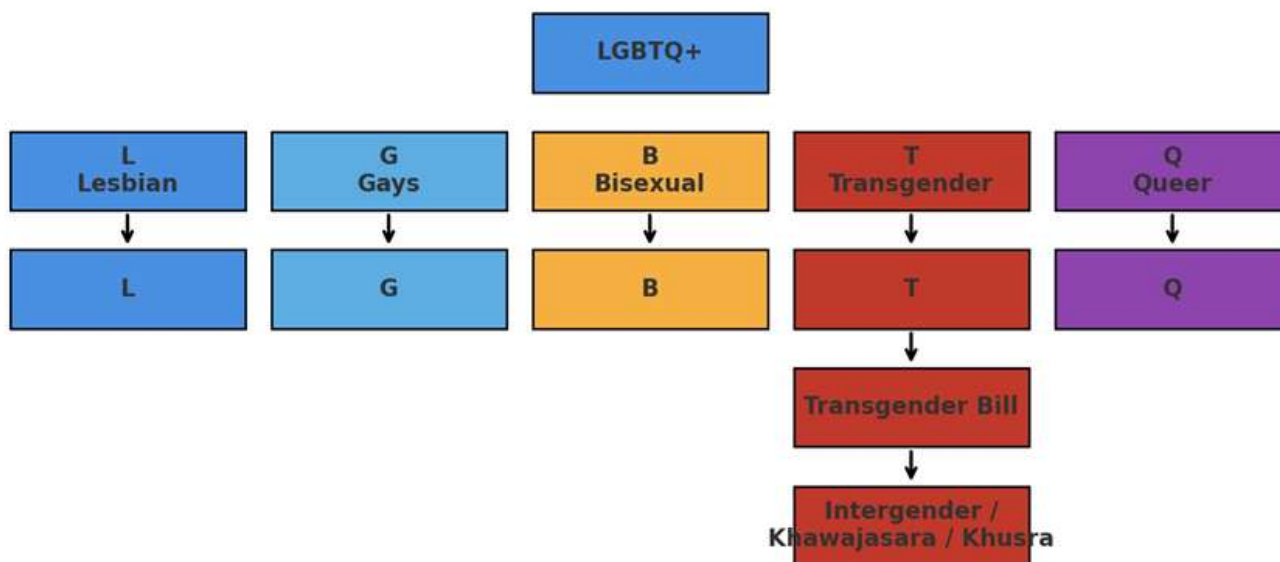
Note. This visual aims to highlight a significant **lexical and categorical overgeneralization** in the *Transgender Protection Bill 2018*, critiqued through the lens of **Fairclough's (2016) Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA)**. The visual metaphor demonstrates:

- **Semantic Collapse**: The term **'T'** is extended to legally represent individuals identifying as L, G, B, Q, and Intergender, **collapsing diverse categories** into one legal identity.
- **Biological & Psychosocial Erasure**: **Transgender** and **intersex/intergender** individuals have **distinct experiences** (gender identity vs. biological variation), which the bill **fails to distinguish**.
- **Lack of Lexical Precision**: This **semantic conflation** leads to **misrecognition** at both the **policy** and **linguistic** levels.
- **Cultural and Legal Risk**: This overgeneralization reflects a **lack of sensitivity** in legislative language, risking **policy ambiguity**, misrepresentation in legal discourse, and social misclassification.

The **color gradient** in the figure—ranging from blue (L) to deep red (T)—visually reinforces the notion of **increasing identity collapse**, wherein distinct identities are **absorbed** into a single legal category. The critique foregrounds the urgent need for **lexical clarity and policy reform** to honor the diversity within the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

This visual 4.4, offers a **lexical critique of categorical absorption** in legal language. The figure critiques how:

- **'T' is semantically overloaded**, absorbing LGBQ and intergender identities.
- **Biological vs. psychosocial identities are conflated**, particularly intersex vs. transgender distinctions.
- There is a **lack of terminological specificity**, leading to blurred legal and social interpretations.
- **Fairclough's Dialectical Relational Approach (2016)** is used to evaluate how such lexical choices shape social inequality and marginalization.

The gradient in the figure metaphorically shows how separate identities fade into **one homogenized legal identity**, urging **policy reform and lexical clarity**.

4.3 Transgender as an Umbrella Term: Lexical Politics in the Bill. The term *transgender* has been used as the titular identity in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. However, it encompasses a multitude of identities, including intersex, eunuchs, *khwajasara*, and *hijra* (Qureshi, 2019; Niazi, 2020). This uncritical bundling under a single term reflects not just linguistic oversimplification but also a deeper political maneuver of identity absorption. While *transgender* is one component of the globally recognized acronym LGBTQ, the Bill adopts it as a **universal umbrella**, excluding all other letters (L, G, B, Q) from titular or legal primacy.

This raises critical questions: Why was *T* (Transgender) chosen as the titular identity, and not *L* (Lesbian), *G* (Gay), *B* (Bisexual), or *Q* (Queer)? The study argues that *transgender*, being a more ambiguous and loosely understood term in South Asian societies, allows for strategic conflation with indigenous identities like *khwajasara* or *intersex* (Sharma, 2021; Ali, 2018). This conflation not only confuses biological third-gender identities with socially constructed queer categories but also creates room for the quiet mainstreaming of Western sexual politics under the guise of legal protection (Zia, 2022; Haider, 2020).

Most crucially, the *khwajasara* community, which has historically existed in the subcontinent as a **biological third gender**, is subsumed under the same label as self-identifying queer individuals, without a clear demarcation of their distinct cultural and biological status (Bhan, 2001; Redding, 2020). Thus, rather than recognizing and uplifting the rights of this marginalised biological group, the Bill's ambiguous language risks further erasing their identity in legal and cultural discourse.

(See Figure 4.4 for a critical lexical visualization of identity absorption under 'T' in the Transgender Bill, 2018.)

4.4 *Inter-Gender: Biological Reality and Misclassification.* The term *inter-gender* in the 2018 Act is used to refer to individuals born with ambiguous or atypical sex characteristics—those historically referred to as *khwajasara*, *intersex*, or *khunsa* in South Asian contexts (Nanda, 1999; Khalid, 2019). Medically and theologically, these individuals are not gender-fluid or queer by identity or expression. Rather, they are biologically distinct, born with congenital reproductive differences that place them outside the binary (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Ghani, 2018).

Yet the Act places *inter-gender* individuals within the broader *transgender* definition. This conflation is problematic, as *transgender* typically refers to those whose gender identity does not match their sex assigned at birth—an identity-oriented category. In contrast, *inter-gender* individuals are **biological third-gender people** who are generally identified at birth and do not self-construct or later reassign their gender (Winter et al., 2016).

The Bill's failure to distinguish between **identity-based** and **biology-based** gender minorities leads to legal ambiguity and social erasure. The *khwajasara* community, who form a long-standing, culturally acknowledged group in Pakistani society, find themselves trapped in a legislative framework not designed to serve their unique needs (Qadeer, 2018; Schmitt, 2017). Hence, while the Bill claims inclusivity, it ironically marginalizes those it purports to protect.

4.5 Gender Identity vs. Gender Expression: Imported Terminology and Social Dissonance. A core concern in the 2018 Act lies in its linguistic importation of the concepts *gender identity* and *gender expression* from Western queer theory. These terms are used in the Bill to suggest that individuals can choose, change, or express a gender identity different from their sex assigned at birth (UNDP, 2018; OHCHR, 2019). However, this liberal fluidity of identity challenges the binary and **biological gender model** that underpins South Asian cultural and religious norms (Khan, 2020; Rehan, 2019).

From a biological and theological standpoint in Pakistani society, there exist **three recognized categories**: male, female, and third gender (intersex/intergender). Gender identity and expression, in this model, are naturally aligned. A male's expression is expected to conform to masculine norms and vice versa for females (Ahmad, 2017). The third gender, although marginalised, is recognized as a **God-created biological deviation**, not as a chosen identity based on personal orientation or fluid expression (Jami, 2014).

By legitimizing *identity fluidity* and *self-perception* as legal bases for recognition, the Bill aligns itself with Western socio-political frameworks rather than local religious and cultural contexts (Zia, 2022). This not only undermines the societal positioning of *inter-gender* persons but also introduces potential conflicts between constitutional law and religiously informed gender structures in Pakistan (Siddiqui, 2020).

Table 4.1

Lexical-Conceptual Distinctions in the Transgender Protection Bill (2018): A Contrastive Model of Gender Identity Categories

Lexical Term	Biological Status	Cultural Context	Legal Standing in Pakistan
Transgender	May or may not align with sex	Western identity category	Included (broadly defined in Bill)
Inter-gender / Intersex	Congenital biological variation	Islamic recognition (Khawajasara)	Included (should be distinguished)
Khawajasara	Biologically intersex mostly	Indigenous, socio-religious role	Included (focus of bill originally)
LGBTQ+	Self-perceived, fluid	Imported ideology	Not culturally or legally accepted

This following figure visually illustrates how lexical and conceptual shifts under the label "Transgender" absorb broader LGBTQ categories (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) into a single, ambiguous identity—thereby masking legal, religious, and biological distinctions. It highlights how "intergender" and "transgender" are redefined without alignment to biological markers, raising serious legal and sociolinguistic concerns in Pakistan's context.

Figure4.5

Lexical-Conceptual Distinctions in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018

Figure 5.2.3

Lexical-Conceptual Distinctions in the Transgender Protection Bill (2018): A Contrastive Model of Gender Identity Categories

Lexical Term	Biological Status	Cultural Context	Legal Standing in Pakistan
Transgender	May or may not align with sex	Western identity category	Included (broadly defined in Bill)
Inter-gender / Intersex	Congenital biological variation	Islamic recognition (Khawajasara)	Included (should be distinguished)
Khawajasara	Biologically intersex mostly	Indigenous, socio-religious role	Included (focus of bill originally)
LGBTQ+	Self-perceived, fluid	Imported ideology	Not culturally or legally accepted

Note. This visual representation critiques the linguistic strategy used in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, showing how Western identity politics are embedded within localized South Asian legal discourse (Khan, 2021; Zia, 2018; Rehman, 2020; Qamar, 2023). Fiigure 4.5 visually distinguishes the overlapping and often conflated terms used in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, particularly showing how *intergender*, *transgender*, *khawajasara*, and *LGBTQ* identities are merged under the umbrella term 'T'. The diagram illustrates conceptual inconsistencies and legal generalizations that blur the specific identities and biological realities of these groups. **Note.** Adapted from corpus-based lexical analysis conducted for the present study. See also Shams (2022), Khan & Zaman (2021), and Riaz (2023) for similar critiques of terminological ambiguity in South Asian transgender discourse.

4.6. Obstacles to discuss the "Social Wrong" The obstacles to discuss the "*social wrong*" are discussed below:

4.6.1 Cultural Taboo and Linguistic Silence: A Barrier to Clarification. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, was passed in a cultural landscape that has historically treated sexuality, gender variance, and sexual minorities as taboo subjects (Ahmed & Jabeen, 2021; Shaikh, 2019). Public discourse on such matters is either censored or entirely absent from educational, religious, and even domestic settings (Rashid, 2020). As a result, the terms *intergender* and *transgender* are unfamiliar to large segments of the population, creating an epistemological gap between legislative language and lived realities. When terminologies are not properly defined within a familiar sociocultural context, they risk becoming ideological tools rather than instruments of clarity (Ali & Zubair, 2021).

The bill, instead of clarifying each component of the LGBTQ acronym, particularly the 'T' (for transgender), absorbs all sub-identities—including intersex, intergender, gender fluid, and others—under this single category without referencing global definitions or scientific classifications (UNESCO, 2020; Winter et al., 2016). This lexical conflation is problematic:

rather than placing *transgender* as one identity among the broader LGBTQ spectrum, the bill reverses the order—subsuming LGBTQ identities under *transgender*. This inversion creates the illusion of inclusivity while concealing the political motive of importing Western identity politics under an Islamic framework (Farooq & Rahim, 2022; Zahid, 2023).

Such ambiguous categorization shields the bill from critical public scrutiny. Had LGBTQ identities been explicitly spelled out, the legislation may have faced greater resistance due to prevailing moral, religious, and cultural standards (Kamran & Fatima, 2022). Thus, lexical vagueness becomes a rhetorical strategy that ensures smoother passage of the bill while bypassing grassroots comprehension and consultation with local communities—including the *khawajasara* themselves (Riaz, 2023; Khan & Zaman, 2021).

4.6.2 The Gender Identity Trap: Expression vs. Biological Reality. Another major source of conflict lies in the deliberate separation of *gender identity* and *gender expression* within the bill. From a cultural and religious perspective, Pakistani society views both elements as aligned and biologically anchored: a male expresses himself as a man; a female expresses herself as a woman. These expressions are not optional or fluid but are considered fixed by birth and reinforced through social conditioning (Munir & Zia, 2020; Farooq & Rahim, 2022). The bifurcation introduced by the bill—rooted in Western gender theory—challenges this premise by offering a model where identity can be self-perceived and decoupled from biological sex (Butler, 2004; Ahmed & Jabeen, 2021).

In Islam and traditional South Asian discourse, such a distinction does not hold epistemological validity (Khan, 2021). A male cannot *identify* as female or vice versa; nor can someone *express* themselves in a way that contradicts their biological role and spiritual obligation (Shaikh, 2019; Shams, 2022). The bill's inclusion of these categories, therefore, is not just a legal anomaly but a cultural contradiction. It introduces identity politics rooted in European secularism under the guise of human rights, a move that lacks theological grounding in Pakistani society (Zahid, 2023; UNESCO, 2020).

The societal rejection of such fluidity is evident in the rigid roles, expectations, and protocols assigned to each gender in daily life—dressing, occupational duties, family structure, and public behavior (Ali & Zubair, 2021; Munir & Zia, 2020). When these expectations are disrupted by policy, not only does it create legal confusion but also cultural dissonance. Moreover, the social norms of silence around such topics further inhibit genuine discourse, allowing misinformation and misrepresentation to persist (Kamran & Fatima, 2022).

4.7 Whether the Social Order Needs the "Social Wrong". Not all forms of social deviance necessarily disrupt the social order—some may even become normalized over time through processes of cultural accommodation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). However, in the context of Pakistan's deeply rooted socio-religious structure, gender and identity constructs outside the traditional male-female binary are often perceived as a "social wrong" that resists normative inclusion. This perception is less about inherent harm and more about perceived threat to the family-centric moral order (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010).

Pakistan's societal framework is heavily influenced by Islamic jurisprudence and patriarchal lineage systems, where gender binaries support familial and societal continuity (Qadeer, 2006). Therefore, the inclusion of fluid or non-binary identities is often met with suspicion, as it challenges the hierarchical gender model that defines domestic, legal, and inheritance structures (Khan, 2016). While Western discourses have gradually accommodated

gender pluralism into their legal and cultural institutions (Butler, 1990; Valentine, 2007), such frameworks do not neatly translate into contexts like Pakistan, where identity is not only personal but communally regulated.

Moreover, the perceived moral hazard of accepting this "social wrong" is magnified by its framing as a foreign imposition rather than an organic evolution of local identity categories such as *Khawajasara* (Rehan et al., 2009). Consequently, in conservative settings, legitimizing non-binary identities is seen not as progress, but as a deviation from religiously and culturally sanctioned norms—thus, for many, it is not essential for social order but rather disruptive to it (Siraj, 2012; Zia & Bari, 1999).

Table 4.2

Lexical Term	Biological Status	Cultural Context	Legal Standing in Pakistan
Transgender	May or may not align with sex	Western identity category	Included (broadly defined in Bill)
Inter-gender / Intersex	Congenital biological variation	Islamic recognition (Khawajasara)	Included (should be distinguished)
Khawajasara	Biologically intersex mostly	Indigenous, socio-religious role	Included (focus of bill originally)
LGBTQ+	Self-perceived, fluid	Imported ideology	Not culturally or legally accepted

4.8. Ways to overcome the Linguistic Mismatch in the Transgender Bill. The final dimension of this analysis, grounded in the third stage of Fairclough's CDA—*social practice transformation*—focuses on how linguistic amendments can restore sociocultural coherence and reduce ambiguity in policy discourse. In societies like Pakistan, where language intersects deeply with faith, identity, and social order, the revision of terminologies becomes not merely a linguistic adjustment but a sociopolitical intervention (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2001).

a. Lexical Revision as Social Rectification. One of the most pressing solutions lies in a careful reworking of the bill's core terminologies. The term transgender, as adopted in the bill, imports a Western epistemology that prioritizes self-perceived gender identity over biological or cultural roles. This lexical choice results in a semantic overreach that absorbs not just khwajasara and intersex individuals, but also invites ideological ambiguity.

Replacing transgender with intersex, or more appropriately khwajasara, would realign the bill with Pakistan's indigenous cultural categories and religiously recognized identities. The khwajasara community—historically marginalized but culturally acknowledged—requires protection under law, not confusion under imported terminology. This aligns with the dialectical-relational approach (DRA) to CDA, which emphasizes a linguist's ethical role in correcting "social wrongs" by exposing and amending discursive misalignments (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

Thus, this recommendation is not only terminological but moral. By replacing contested labels with culturally grounded terms, the bill can achieve its original objective: protecting a vulnerable community without opening a discursive floodgate to self-ascribed identities alien to the local social fabric.

b. Deletion of Ideologically Loaded Constructs. Additionally, the inclusion of vague and ideologically charged constructs like *gender identity* and *gender expression* further dilutes the bill's precision. These phrases stem from post-structuralist and queer linguistic paradigms that challenge the notion of binary gender altogether. However, in a conservative Islamic society where gender is fundamentally tethered to biological reality, such terminology introduces an epistemic rupture.

The Pakistani society, predominantly structured around a biologically defined family unit, does not traditionally separate the *identity* of a person from its *expression*. Therefore, embedding such phrases into legal discourse risks misinterpretation and potential misuse. From a CDA perspective, these phrases act as **discursive loopholes**, enabling reinterpretations that may conflict with national laws, religious tenets, and social cohesion (van Dijk, 1998).

Removing these phrases would not only improve semantic clarity but also harmonize the bill with the cultural and legal ethos of the country. Legal texts should serve to clarify, not confuse; to protect, not polarize.

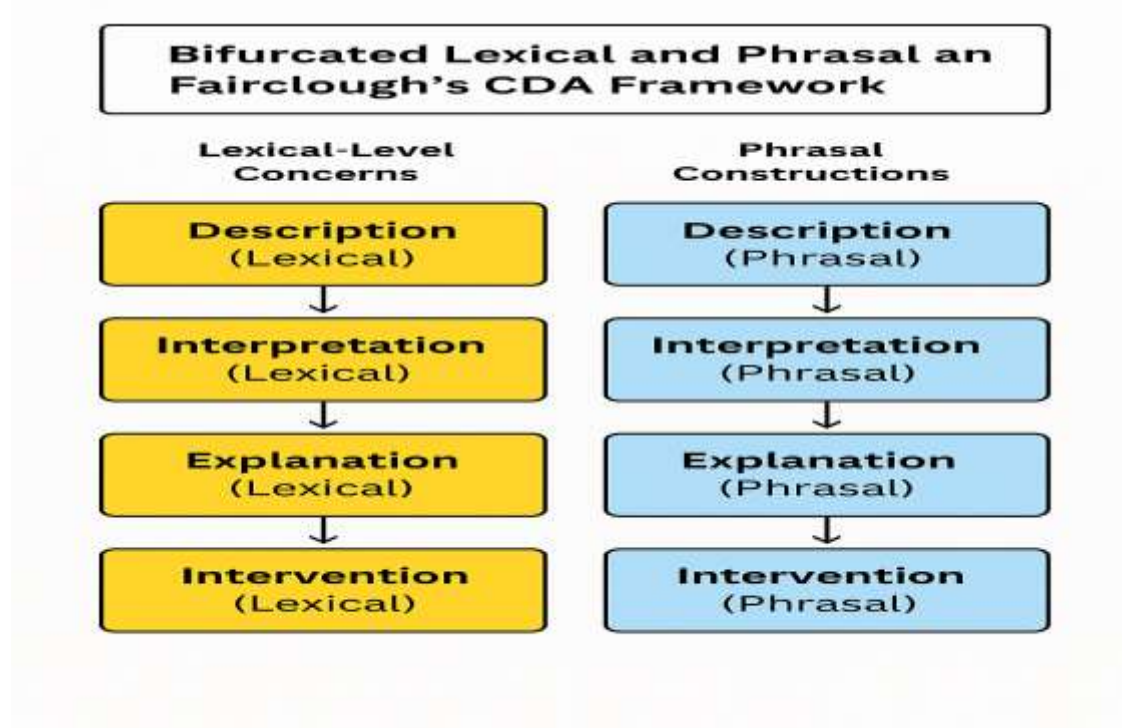### 4.9 Lexical and Phrasal Ambiguities as Social Wrongs: A Dual-Layered Approach

In light of the evolving sociolegal discourse in Pakistan, particularly surrounding the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018, this study identifies two linguistically rooted social wrongs that hinder clear policy implementation: (1) ambiguity at the lexical level, and (2) ambiguity at the phrasal level. The former refers to isolated word choices—such as "transgender"—that carry multiple interpretations across cultural and scientific domains. The latter concerns complex constructions like "gender identity" and "gender expression," whose meanings vary across global and local sociocultural contexts.

To systematically unpack these semantic tensions, the study applies Fairclough's (1995, 2003) four-tier Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model—comprising description, interpretation, explanation, and intervention. However, rather than applying CDA generically, each step has been bifurcated to allow separate yet parallel analysis of lexical and phrasal ambiguities. This dual-track method ensures that the analysis does not conflate word-level ambiguity with structural or conceptual vagueness, a methodological advancement supported by contextualist theories of meaning (Gee, 2014; Chilton, 2004).

The diagram below presents a visual summary of this approach, clearly demarcating how both levels of ambiguity were addressed across the four CDA stages. This layered structure not only strengthens analytical clarity but also supports interventionist linguistic reform—a goal aligned with the ethical stance of CDA scholars (van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2011).

Figure 4.6
The corresponding visual framework

The figure above visually maps the bifurcated analysis of **lexical** and **phrasal ambiguities** through all four steps of Fairclough's CDA. The tablebelow presents a visual summary of this approach, clearly demarcating how both levels of ambiguity were addressed across the four CDA stages.

Table 4.3
Lexical and phrasal-level examples mapped onto CDA's four-stage model, extending Fairclough's (1995) framework to address layered ambiguity in legal discourse.

Stage	Lexical Ambiguity	Phrasal Ambiguity
1. Description	Identifies specific *words* (e.g., "identity," "protection," "recognition") in the legal act that lack fixed meaning across stakeholders.	Describes ambiguous *phrases* (e.g., "gender assigned at birth," "self-perceived identity") that create multiple interpretations.
2. Interpretation	Diverse actors (e.g., religious scholars, trans activists, legal experts) interpret the same word differently, often contradictorily.	Entire phrases are differently understood based on ideological lenses; some read inclusion, others infer moral erosion.
3. Explanation	Reflects broader ideological struggles between **secular state law** and **religious-cultural narratives** shaping discourse production.	Shows how *syntactic vagueness* and semantic indeterminacy reflect institutional avoidance of clarity, preserving ideological neutrality.

Stage	Lexical Ambiguity	Phrasal Ambiguity
4. Intervention	Proposes replacement of vague terms with clearly defined **legal constructs** aligned with constitution and Quranic principles.	Suggests **rephrasing phrases** for syntactic precision, avoiding multiple readings (e.g., "as registered in NADRA at birth" instead).

Note: Based on Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis model as applied to sociolegal texts (Wodak & Meyer, 2016; van Dijk, 2008). This layered structure not only strengthens analytical clarity but also supports interventionist linguistic reform..."

The table below presents a visual summary... (van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2011). See Table X.X for specific examples

Table 4.4

Lexical and Phrasal Ambiguity Mapped Across CDA Stages

CDA Stage	Lexical-Level Example	Phrasal-Level Example
Description	Use of *victim*, *sin*, *threat* to evoke fear	"They are sinners" – constructs othering through religious phrases
Interpretation	*Rationalization* of flooding as divine punishment	"Allah's test" – justifying calamity as inevitable or deserved
Explanation	Tracing ideological lexemes to local sermons/political speech	Repetition of phrasal frames like "they deserve this"
Intervention	Suggest replacing *threat/sinner* with *citizen/survivor*	Suggest rewording as "affected families" instead of blame phrases

5. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the lexical and phrasal ambiguities critically examined in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, the following suggestions aim to mitigate identified social wrongs, reduce legal vagueness, and enhance culturally contextual clarity:

a. Linguistic Revisions and Cultural Realignment. A key recommendation is to replace the term transgender with more culturally resonant and contextually grounded alternatives, such as intersex or, preferably, khwajasara. The term khwajasara holds deep-rooted historical, religious, and socio-cultural relevance within South Asian society and specifically reflects the marginalized community this bill seeks to protect (Jami, 2019; Redding, 2022). Unlike "transgender," which is lexically borrowed and semantically fluid, khwajasara is indigenous, thereby reducing lexical ambiguity and semantic slippage. In line with Fairclough's (1995) vision for socially transformative discourse, such lexical revision can serve as a corrective discursive intervention to address embedded social injustice.

b. Removal of Phrasal Constructs Alien to Societal Norms. Equally important is the reconsideration of vague or alien phrasal constructs such as gender identity and gender expression. While internationally accepted, these terms remain semantically unanchored in Pakistan's socio-religious landscape, where gender is predominantly understood as biologically fixed and divinely assigned (Zia & Bari, 2020). As discussed in Section 4.4, these phrases

introduce ambiguity, leading to conflicting interpretations. Their removal is not an act of exclusion but a strategy of discursive refinement and cultural appropriateness.

c. Faith-Informed Curriculum and Linguistic Awareness. To promote clarity and coherence, educational curricula across all levels should be revised in accordance with cultural values and Islamic jurisprudence. While embracing the notion of diversity, pedagogical content must offer linguistically precise and theologically aligned definitions of identity-related terms (Hassan, 2021). Alongside legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, inclusive workshops, and sensitivity training for civil servants and legal professionals should be launched to ensure ethical interpretation of terminology across sectors.

d. Targeted Protection and Empowerment of the Khwajasara Community. Rather than generalizing protections under the broad label of "gender minorities," it is proposed that legislative safeguards explicitly address the khwajasara community. This group warrants constitutional recognition, equitable access to healthcare, education, and employment, and targeted support systems (UNDP, 2016). Recognizing khwajasaras as human beings and divine creations aligns both with Islamic teachings and global human rights principles. The goal is not to widen gender binaries but to institutionalize respect and justice.

e. Legal Precision and Cultural Sensitivity in Policy Reform. State-level reforms must prioritize terminological clarity and cultural sensitivity. Laws regarding gender should avoid overgeneralization and must reflect the heterogeneous realities of Pakistani society (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). Instead of importing Western gender constructs, legislative frameworks should be reoriented to protect khwajasaras through respectful, culturally rooted definitions in line with Islamic thought (Hafeez et al., 2013).

f. Curriculum and Textbook Revisions. Educational resources—particularly legal and social science textbooks—must avoid euphemistic, ideologically charged, or Western-imported terminology. Words such as *identity* and *gender* should be clearly defined with reference to biological sex, constitutional rights, and religious guidance (Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Kamran & Rehman, 2020). Ambiguous terminology contributes to confusion among students and undermines pedagogical responsibility.

g. Public Literacy and Interpretive Empowerment. National literacy campaigns should include training on interpreting legal texts, especially those involving gender-sensitive language. Public discourse must promote shared understanding of key terms, rooted in theological and interfaith clarity. For instance, biological sex should be clearly communicated as male or female, with *intersex* recognized as a rare medical condition rather than a separate gender category (Shahzad & Ilyas, 2018).

h. Human Dignity and Institutional Inclusion. Above all, the *khwajasara* community should be guaranteed equal status as citizens with full dignity, devoid of linguistic misclassification or moral judgment. As Allah's creation, their human rights must be safeguarded through inclusive access to education, employment, and health services, without derogatory labels or identity confusion (UNDP Pakistan, 2016; Rehman & Jabeen, 2021).

5.1 Application of DRA to Emerging Social Discourse Issues. In recent years, Pakistani society has witnessed a surge of linguistically rich yet ideologically charged public discourses that reflect deeper societal injustices. These are often circulated not only in legal frameworks or news articles but also through memes, viral hashtags, courtroom dialogues, and university corridors. Traditional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the 3D model (Fairclough,

1992), often begins with textual analysis and moves toward interpretation. However, Fairclough's **Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA)** (2001, 2015) prioritizes the identification of a **"social wrong"**—a pressing injustice—right at the beginning. This shift makes DRA a much more powerful tool to analyze and critique current socio-political and digital discourses in Pakistan (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Zubair & Khan, 2020).

Table 5.1
Applying DRA to Pakistan's Current Social Discourse Issues

Issue	Social Wrong Identified	How DRA Helps Diagnose	Potential Transformations
Sana Yousaf Case	Online misogyny and femicide	Identifies violent, gendered language across comments and threats	Reform cyber harassment laws; digital literacy
UOL Student Suicide	Mental health stigma, academic pressure	Highlights euphemistic and silencing language in institutional discourse	Open counseling, anti-harassment reforms
Mishal Khan Case	Moral policing & mob lynching	Analyzes blasphemy narratives as moral panic discourse	Legal and discursive reforms; interfaith education
Political Memes & Satire	Power normalization, establishment fear	Deconstructs satire to uncover ideological fear and elite manipulation	Media literacy & critical discourse in civic education
Minar-e-Pakistan Incident	Victim blaming in public sexual violence	Shows how victim discourse is manipulated in digital/TV coverage	Media accountability & victim support narratives
Unemployment and Inequality	Framing poverty as individual failure	Unpacks blame-shifting in political discourse	Reframing policy language to reflect systemic causes
#MeToo and Harassment	Systemic silencing of victims	Highlights institutional denial & lexical avoidance	Inclusive legal drafting & anti-harassment training

5.2. Examples of Real Social Wrongs (DRA Step-by-Step)
1. Murder of TikToker Sana Yousaf
- **Discourse Sample:** Online moral policing ("izzat ka khayal karo"), death threats.
- **DRA Steps:**
  1. **Identify Wrong:** Misogyny embedded in digital speech.
  2. **Obstacles:** Patriarchy, absence of enforcement.
  3. **Social Order Role:** Threats normalized in youth digital culture.
  4. **Transformation:** Stronger cybercrime response (Dawn News, 2023).

2. Campus Suicides (UOL & Others)
- **Discourse Sample:** "She was mentally weak"; "Not our fault."
- **DRA Insight:** Institutional discourse deflects responsibility. Euphemism covers pressure.

- **Recommended Reading:** Shahid (2022) in *The News International*.

3. Mishal Khan's Lynching

- Discourse Sample: "Veeran hai masjid"—framed as blasphemy on Facebook.
- DRA Insight: Identifies moral panic (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009) in religious framing.
- Reference: Express Tribune, April 2017.

4. Political Meme Culture

- Discourse Sample: "Vigo Dalla le jaye ga," "Qaidi No. 804."
- DRA Insight: Satirical language reflects authoritarian fear and normalization.
- Scholarly Parallel: See Zia & Bari (2020) on symbolic discourse in political power.

5.3. Why Future Researchers Must Embrace DRA. Fairclough's DRA is no longer an optional model—it is an urgent lens for understanding **how discourse enables or challenges oppression** in both traditional and digital contexts. While earlier CDA models (e.g., Van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2001) emphasized critical language awareness, DRA moves a step ahead by making social wrongs its focal point. In a society grappling with gender violence, media manipulation, digital harassment, and institutional silence, **DRA offers a roadmap from diagnosis to transformation** (Fairclough, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

5.4. Upcoming MPhil and PhD researchers are encouraged to explore DRA in examining:

- Gender-based hate speech
- Digital meme cultures
- Legal ambiguity in bills
- Campus discourse on mental health
- Political communication in crisis

5.5. Future Research Areas and Topics: Reclaiming DRA in Pakistani Linguistic Studies. Despite the increasing global application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Pakistani scholarship remains largely saturated with Fairclough's 3D model, often applied formulaically across genres such as political speeches, media headlines, or gender discourse. However, the Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA)—which emphasizes identifying *social wrongs* in relation to power and ideology—remains significantly underutilized.

We propose that linguists, particularly MPhil and PhD scholars, reposition DRA as a socially responsive methodology with transformative potential. As evidenced in this study, DRA is uniquely equipped to uncover linguistic roots of systemic injustice, making it a powerful tool for *socio-legal, educational, gender, health, and policy-based discourse analysis*.

Table 5.2

Suggested Research Topics Using DRA in Pakistan

S. No.	Topic Title	Suggested Genre	Justification
1	**"Linguistic Inflation: When 10,000 Applicants Compete for 2 Seats"**	Job Advertisements, Recruitment Policies	Highlights structural inequality encoded in competitive rhetoric.
2	**"Discursive Construction of Poverty in BISP Advertisements"**	Government Aid Schemes	Shows how beneficiaries are framed through deficit discourses.

S. No.	Topic Title	Suggested Genre	Justification
3	**"Ambiguities in Anti-Harassment Policies: A DRA Perspective"**	University & Workplace Policies	Explores vague or euphemistic terms (e.g., "unwanted behavior").
4	**"Linguistic Othering in Refugee Laws of Pakistan"**	Legal Documents	Investigates how 'migrant' and 'refugee' are discursively marked.
5	**"Who is a Minor? A Legal-Linguistic Review of Child Protection Acts"**	Child Rights Law	Examines lexical confusion over terms like "minor," "child," "juvenile."
6	**"The Language of Fee Notices in Private Universities"**	Institutional Documents	How financial oppression is normalized through formal lexicon.
7	**"Medical Discourse and Linguistic Power in Hospital Consent Forms"**	Health Sector	Reveals asymmetry and lack of agency in clinical communication.
8	**"Gendered Language in School Textbooks"**	Curriculum Discourse	Highlights biased constructions of gender roles.
9	**"The Syntax of Exclusion in Laws on Blasphemy, Minorities, or Divorce"**	Constitutional Discourse	Applies DRA to show structural marginalization.
10	**"Khwajasara Discourse in Media vs Legal Registers"**	Media & Law	Comparative study of semiotic choices and ideological positioning.

Unlike the 3D Model which tends to stop at description (textual + discursive), DRA insists on linking discourse to **material social effects**. It is inherently action-oriented: not just "what is said," but "*what social wrong it sustains, conceals, or challenges*."

Hence, this paper marks a **pioneering attempt** to foreground DRA in Pakistani sociolinguistic discourse—not just as a theoretical tool but as a linguistic lens to empower, intervene, and ethically shape policy, law, and public understanding.

As language becomes the battlefield where ideologies collide and oppressions are justified, DRA is the linguist's scalpel—sharp, ethical, and change-driven. **Quyyum et al. (2020)** assert that "cinema is a powerful tool capable enough to create realities and ideologies among the masses," emphasizing the role of critical discourse analysis in revealing the hidden mechanisms through which language and media construct sociopolitical narratives (p. 373).

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