

## THE LANGUAGE OF GENDER IN PAKISTANI MEDIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DAWN NEWSPAPER

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### **Abstract**

*The aim of this study is to examine the representation of gender in the Pakistani English-language newspaper Dawn using the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed by Norman Fairclough. The main objective is to discover the effect of the construction and reinforcement or debunking of gender ideology in the media in the socio-cultural framework of Pakistan. The study adopts a three-dimensional model proposed by Fairclough and discusses a purposive sample of news texts that discuss gender-related issues such as gender-based violence and women's rights for political participation. The analysis of the text shows that there are significant gender differences in representation. Women are often represented in terms of victim/oppressed, passive, and domestic, and men are often represented as leader, rational, and agent. Passive voice, euphemisms, stereotyped lexical elements tend to mask the agency of male perpetrators and silence voices of women. Authoritative discourse tends to be masculine and upholds power dynamics. In more progressive stories, the traditional gender roles are learned, albeit in subtle ways, by the way the story is framed linguistically. The research has four specific impacts on the study of gender studies, media linguistics and critical discourse analysis: Firstly, it provides empirical evidence into the role of language in English languages media in sustaining patriarchy. Secondly, this research will be useful in studying the role of language in sustaining patriarchy in second language acquisition. Thirdly, this research will be useful in studying the role of language in sustaining patriarchy in English languages media. Fourthly, this research will be useful in the study of second language acquisition. It sensitizes journalists, intelligentsia and researchers on the need to question gender-biased discursive practices. The study suggests a more extensive comparative and multimodal research approach for future studies to further enhance the understanding of the relationship between language, gender and media in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender Representation, Media Discourse, Fairclough, Pakistani Newspaper.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

By using language one constructs one's social realities, impacts human cognition, and questions or subverts existing power structures (Fairclough, N 1989). Language serves as an ideological filter, shaping messages about social actors and events within mass media institutions and outlets. Language does not merely record events and happenings, which is why an understanding of the language of the mass media becomes necessary in order to understand the way ideology and power functions in the society.

Media language is always constructed through selective and partial coverage of specific people and events. Being one of the most influential institutions within the modern society, social media constructs and shapes events, issues, ideologies and readers' know-how of social categories. It is through Language that 'Gender-roles' are constituted and reproduced in the

society. Society itself views language as the most powerful tool of social control (Cameron, 1992; Sunderland, 2004; Holmes and Meyeroff, 2003). The society maintains, reproduces and redefines 'gender roles and expectations' through language.

Such issues are common in Pakistan, which has a rich tradition of press that has served society as an agent of reform, channels of political struggle, and facilitator of nationalist discourse. Among them is *Dawn*, which is one of the oldest and most widely read English language newspapers and is also famous for influencing the policy-making elite and the educated urban middle class (Media Ownership Monitor Pakistan, 2018). As an influential Newspaper of legacy media, *Dawn* is a critical site for examining ways in which language reflects and constructs gender identities and relationships in Pakistan.

Mass media (TV, movies, social media, magazines and newspapers) perpetuates society's gendered worldview. Gendered language in media discourse helps construct societal norms about masculinity, femininity, and the roles of individuals. Even in texts, subtle language choices in terms of vocabulary, metaphor, similes, grammar and the use of pronouns can reflect pervasive gender bias, or help further gender inequality. However, print media is still considered to be a dominant vehicle for attitude formation and change (Jamel, 2014; Kim and Ward, 2012). Images in newspapers are also an immense means of spreading and perpetuating gendered ideologies.

Defining and understanding gender is highly important and complex. Hegarty (2001) asserts that the quantitative researchers should address this definition from a performative perspective in order to de-construct the gender concept. In this way, gender is a non-essential category which is repeatedly performed based on societal norms and values. (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018).

Chrisler (2016) argues that gender is a grammarian term that aims to describe individuals' social identity (woman/girl, man/boy), personality or behavioural tendencies (e.g., masculine, feminine, androgynous, transgender). Gender as a social identity is usually (but not necessarily) related to an individual's biological sex. Feminists and most behavioural science researchers prefer to use gender, rather than sex (male, female), to describe humans in order to imply that any differences between the groups are not necessarily the outcome of biological and physiological influences.

The linguistic representation is crucial; it is the process of representation of what language creates and represents pertaining to people, events, ideas, relationships, and gender. It operates at several linguistic levels: lexis, grammar, metaphor, pre-supposition, and intertextuality. In media discourses, linguistic representation may subtly implicate stereotypes, legitimate power relations, side line dissenting voices or justify certain political objectives. (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998; Richardson, 2007). How events are labelled, actors classified and actions attributed has serious implications for how reality is shaped in the public mind.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a robust theoretical and methodological armature for inspecting these processes. CDA investigates the relationship between power, discourse and ideology and has been developed by scholars, such as Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough. These researchers noted how CDA can analyse gendered representations in institutionalism discourse, particularly media texts. It draws attention to the fact that discourse is socially formative and socially formed – it shapes and is shaped by what it speaks, tries to bring into being, or reflects on. Through a systematic analysis of linguistic structures, the ideological dimensions that are often hidden within news discourses in media studies can be revealed by CDA. (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998; Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Newspaper language is not neutral; it often conveys specific perspectives, ideologies and power configurations, such as those that rest on sex (Fowler, 1991; Van Dijk, 1988). The *Dawn* – being the most prominent English-language newspapers in Pakistan - informs and influences the readership of the country in matters concerning it on a national and global level (Ahmad, Iqbal, and Ullah, 2020). However, relatively little research has been reported critically examining the language in *Dawn* in terms of its portrayal of gender roles, identities, and relationships.

The issue is subtle enforcement of patriarchal ideologies through selection of words that can seem neutral but has embedded meaning. These images can have an effect on societal gender perception in a way that perpetuates inequality. This research fills this gap through applying CDA to the linguistic representation of gender in *Dawn*, and unveil the underlying ideologies. The current study investigates how language constitutes gender identity and how language is implicated in the way that readers understand these constructions using CDA.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

The following are the main goals of this study:

1. To explore the linguistic construction and representation of gender in *Dawn*.
2. To explore and criticize the gender ideologies depicted in the language content of *Dawn*.

## 1.4 Research Questions

1. How does *Dawn* make use of language to represent gender roles, gender identities and gender relations?
2. What sort of gender related terms and ideologies are used in the *Dawn* articles and editorials?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The representation of gender in media is an important aspect of power relations and cultural addresses, as well as embodied identities. Considered as one of the leading public forums in Pakistan, print journalism is particularly relevant in the ways in which it reinforces, undermines, or challenges gender norms through its language use. This chapter is an attempt at a synthesis of existing theoretical discourses and empirical research related to the gender construction in the media discourse, particularly in the Pakistani English-language print media. CDA, which deals with the connections between language and power, is used in this chapter to examine the manner in which media texts reflect and reproduce societal discourses, including those about gender.

By situating this conversation in the context of *Dawn*, Pakistan's leading English-language newspaper, the review of the literature aims to foreground explicitly and implicitly gendered discourses in the coverage of journalism. Although, *Dawn* is known for its progressive editorial stance and relatively inclusive content as compared to vernacular dailies, it is not divorced from the imbricated patriarchal discursive structures guiding how men, women and gender-minorities are presented in the news.

The review is located within the theoretical premises of CDA, not least in (but not limited to) the work of Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1990) and Lazar's FCDA (2005). Such frameworks assert that media discourse is not value-free; rather, it is ideologically driven and socially located, frequently upholding hegemonic ideas and gender structures. The review also extends a global consideration of the trend regarding gender representation with important early interventions by Tuchman et al (1978) around the "symbolic annihilation" of women in media. These global understandings are then compared with and added to by studies in Pakistan that record the enduring prevalence of gender stereotyping, linguistic sexism, and the

discursive marginalization of feminist narratives and women's agency in national print journalism.

In analyzing language ideological formations of gendered subjectivities, the chapter highlights linguistic devices such as transitivity, passivation, nominalization, modality, and lexicalisation, that are employed to convey gendered significations. The articles also analyzes public sphere practices related to the reporting on gender-based violence (GBV), transgender representation and diachronic changes in the representation of women in Pakistan's leading newspaper, *Dawn*, in order to offer a full picture of continuity and change in Pakistani media discourse.

## 2.2 Gendered Talk in the Pakistani Media

The inclusion of gender in Pakistani media cannot be dismantled from a varied social-political backdrop that the nation embodies. The relationship of religion and politics to patriarchy profoundly shapes the manner in which media entertain and proliferate gendered stories. While the English-language dailies such as *Dawn* claim liberal aspirations, the discursive image of women often conveys conservative values, subtly conveyed in language.

Zia (2007) argues that feminist discourses have often been marked as a "Western import," an "anti-Islamic stance" or as "morally deviant" which has resulted in their silencing. It is achieved through lexicon that portrays feminists as aggressive or culturally foreign, segregating with van Dijk's (1998) ideological polarization between "us" (traditional, moral) v/s "them" (radical, deviant).

Zubair and Shaikh (2008) and Lodhi and Ahmad (2018) report that women in the print media are mostly represented in a familial, domestic or emotional discourses. Their occupations can be trivialised or associated with personal status signifiers, like whether they are married. Even if women are depicted in the public sphere, their appearance, particularly their dressings are questioned and challenged, labelling them liberals, or their lifestyle contrary to Islamic teachings and more in line with Western liberalism.

In gender-based violence (GBV), Mahmood (2018) discovered widespread use of passive voice in news discourse. Such language as "a woman was killed" or "a girl has been raped" vanishes the culprit from the story by directly attacking the victim and covering male responsibility. These linguistic habits are not just stylistic; they function ideologically to maintain male dominance.

Despite claiming to be liberal, the *Dawn* is not an exception to such practices. Its opinion pages may make room for feminist perspectives, but its hard news reporting are teemed with the use of more formulaic, conservative idioms. These findings show that institutional norms and journalistic work practices are implicated in the reproduction of gender hierarchies, even in progressive areas.

## 2.3 Linguistic stratagems and discursive features

An analysis of gendered discourses in Pakistani print media points to various mechanisms employed by these sites to subtly yet firmly influence understandings of the public. These tools are: the application of transitivity, lexical selection, passivisation, nominalization, modality, and presupposition—which together may be said to constitute tools of CDA.

The function of transitivity, as Halliday (1976/1985) theorizes it, is fundamental to the attribution of agency. In gender-scripted media accounts, males are more likely to be cast as actors who "do" and women are more likely to be portrayed as recipients of action. Not only does it downplay male agency in doing harm, it also subliminally reaffirms women's passivity.

Lexical selection is yet another important aspect. The use of sensational language when describing women, especially in crime or scandal news is a recurring phenomenon in media reports. Words like "helpless," "innocent," or "hysterical" conjure up helplessness in readers

as female characters are discussed using stereotypical language, while males are discussed in more generic or professional language. These options perpetuate traditional gender value patterns and dichotomies.

Nominalization also obscures who is doing the action in a sentence. For example, “rape incident” turns violence into vague, drawing focus away from the perpetrator. Passivization makes the doer invisible as well: “A woman was found dead,” does not tell the reader who killed her, adding a layer of cover-up.

Khan and Safdar (2010) studies’ illustrate that men are more likely than women to appear in active sentences, strengthening agency and dominance. Akhtar and Abbasi (2020) investigated headlines over a 6-month period and found that euphemising male-perpetrated violence was common, but reporting of women tended to moralise or to exaggerate.

Dragas (2012) conducted research on Gender relations in daily newspaper headlines: “The Representation of gender inequality with respect to the media representation of women” (Critical Discourse Analysis). This paper investigates gender related discourse in headlines of several famous daily newspapers in the USA. Discourse in this case refers to the entire set of social gender relations seen through the media. Based on an interdisciplinary approach to the problem, which includes both cultural and critical studies, the purpose of this research is to offer a critical review of the basic media strategies employed in discursive representation of gender relations within the society. Through the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the data collected from the Internet, the author seeks to describe the discursive reproduction of social power reflected in the newspaper headlines.

Adhikari (2018) conducted research on Mediated communication and commoditization of the female gender: Discourse analysis indian news magazines. This paper explores gender representation in three English news magazines from India and the social discourse thereby generated. It endeavours a discourse analysis by deconstructing the narrative built by the news magazines. It tries to analyze if gender stereotypes, including sexualization and commoditization of women, are being perpetuated in the news media by exploring the gender constructs in these news magazines through the method of critical discourse analysis (CDA).

In short, these discursive manoeuvres, though imperceptible, have profound ideological effects. They inscribe the values of patriarchy on to the terrain of news discourse and make the subordination of women look natural and appealing.

#### 2.4 ***Dawn* as a Discursive Space**

Pakistan’s media ecology is unique, and the newspaper *Dawn* has its own distinct place within it. Established in 1941 and deemed as the country’s most renowned English daily, *Dawn* is believed to be an independent, liberal and progressive newspaper in the country. But the contradiction between its editorial posture and actual reporting reflects the familiar dichotomy found in many news organizations.

On its face, *Dawn* creates space for progressive voices, especially in its editorial, op-ed and lifestyle sections. Articles in “Images,” “Herald” and “Blogs” frequently confront gender norms, covering topics such as workplace harassment, LGBTQ+ rights and women’s leadership. These contributions represent a counter-public sphere in which counter-normative gender discourses are circulated (Fraser, 1990).

But that liberal veneer typically runs contrary to the linguistic conservatism of much of straight news journalism. Some discrepancies in the coding arose from challenges to distinguish between victim-hood and dependency, as depictions of women as victims often aims to view them as dependent (as well as equally of them as brave, resilient and so on; also see Jabeen and Iqbal (2019) for a comparison of Urdu and English papers noting that although *Dawn* gave more attention and space to women, its language could still overstate the tropes of

victimhood, emotionality and ‘dependency’). This paradox indicates that simply making something visible is not enough for empowerment; discursive framing also has to change.

Ali and Batool (2015) analyzed coverage of *Dawn* over a period of 10 years and observed that even though coverage of women issues has been increasing significantly in terms of quantity, the quality varies greatly. Women’s accomplishments in science, technology, law and politics went under reported, and the reporting that did exist tended to cast them through personal filters, such as their marital status or looks.

Another more discreet discursive maneuver is ‘double framing’ — the parallelism of progressive news and regressive moral subtext that we often find in women-centric reports. For example, an article may mention that a woman has accomplished something professional, but it also includes comments about her dress, or how she behaves, or her husband and children, all of which subtly reinforce traditional gender roles.

## 2.5 Changes over Time in the Representations

The issue of diachronic analysis is, of course, key to the understanding the development of media representation, notably in societies undergoing social transformations. In Pakistan, the gender narrative has also undergone massive change since the 2000s due to rising literacy rate, internet widespread use as well as the global feminist wave.

*Dawn* began covering more gender issues after 2010s with the emerging use of the social media and citizen journalism. Occasion such as the Aurat March, the activism of Qandeel Baloch and discussions around the Anti-Rape Bill (2021) were granted front page and editorial treatment. This was a significant contrast to past eras when such themes were either side lined or handled gingerly.

However, Akhtar and Abbasi (2020) advise against conflating increased visibility with structural change. More articles on women do not necessarily make for more egalitarian portrayals. Indeed, the mood, vocabulary, and plot structure are often conservative. For instance, Qandeel Baloch’s media image was at once celebrated as feminist and castigated as a deviation from morality, thereby colonizing her agency and re-inscribing patriarchal norms.

Similarly, the Aurat March is covered in the defensive way, or is sensationalized. The media coverage often focuses on controversy — for example, slogans or clothing — rather than the policy demands of the movement. This mirrors the concept of van Dijk (1998) ideological square in which “our” group is represented positively and “their” group is represented negatively. If so, then feminist activists are “the other.”

Despite some minor progressive shifts, much remains unchanged. Some non-traditional roles still have a large proportion of women under representation. Longitudinal research (e.g., Ali & Batool, 2015) demonstrates the extent to which women in science, law and politics are rarely reported in the media, however when they are, the discourse tends to mirror that used for male profiles. And when women are covered in such contexts, they are frequently filtered through emotional or familial prisms.

This is a selective evolution due to wider socio political limitations. Religious outfits, government regulators and advertisers have pressured Pakistani media outlets. Satanic Verses should have ended, censorship by PEMRA, fear of blasphemy, and self-censorship on part of the editors also determine the limitation of feminist narratives to question set status quo.

## 2.6 Gender Depiction in the Pakistani Print Media

Indeed, beyond *Dawn*, the way gender is accounted for in Pakistani print media reflects a systemic prejudice that spans linguistic, geographical and political divisions. Analysis of top-level papers like *The News*, *Express Tribune*, *Jang*, *Nawa-i-Waqt* shows that the patriarchal framing, under-representation and lip service are cross-cutting themes.

Musa and Waseem (2015) implemented a corpus-based CDA comparing male and female journalists’ contributions in *Dawn*. They discovered a clear dichotomy in the male

authors tending to frame women as objects (either as passive or the objects of social critique), whereas female authors were more likely to focus on personal and collective empowerment, resilience, and social justice. This gender asymmetry in discourse production draws attention to the role of authorship in constructing media narratives.

Ahmad et al. (2022) examined *Dawn*'s Images section through the feminist stylistics of Sara Mills. They identified linguistic sexism in the form of gendered adjectives, asymmetrical lexical pairs ("career woman" and "businessman"), and marked references to women's bodies. Even lifestyle journalism, which intends to celebrate women, was shown to reinforce gendered expectations in a subtle manner.

Ullah et al. (2016) studied four national newspapers and found stereotyping to be the prevailing representational strategy. Women were often linked to the domestic sphere, love, victimization, and beauty. Career, intellectual, and political accomplishments were disregarded or underrated. This is a re-enforcement of the concept of 'symbolic annihilation' as defined by Tuchman (1978).

## 2.7 Comparative Analyses and Wider Media Context

Although this research zeroes in on *Dawn*, complementary analysis of other Pakistani media also provides rich context to consider the systemic and multi-layered phenomenon of gender discourse.

Mehmood and Ahmad (2014) analyzed the language of four popular English newspapers and found gender differences in Syntax and diction. Male and female writers were observed to use assertive and abstract language, and emotive and context-rich language respectively. Such linguistic patterns seem to mirror broader general gender-normed communication styles deeply embedded in society.

The Cogent Social Sciences research used feminist stylistics and CDA to examine representation of gender in *Dawn*, *The News*, *Express Tribune*, and *The Nation*. The report identified several recurring patterns in gender representation:

- Gendered metaphors (e.g., "iron lady" compared to "soft-spoken man"),
- Stereotypical depictions (e.g., wedding dresses on women).
- Distorted narrative framings (e.g., background as a mother amplified in cases of women but not those of men).

These findings imply that news representation is still very much structured by patriarchal norms, regardless of ideological orientation in newspapers. And even when coverage is critical of GBV, or the lack of gender equality, media reports often lack an investigation of the structural roots or questioning of societal complicity.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This research is qualitative and proposes to pinpoint the use of CDA to analyze gender representation in media press, particularly in *Dawn* newspaper. The CDA approach is particularly well adapted for this study as it allows for the investigation of how language reflects, constructs and perpetuates gender ideologies in media discourse. Norman Fairclough's (1995) model provides the overall analytical approach while Halliday's (1994) systemic functional linguistics is employed for the micro-level analysis of language.

### 3.2 Theoretical Framework

The analysis is based on Fairclough's (1995, 1999, 2003) three-dimensional conceptual framework of CDA.

The reason for choosing Fairclough's model is that it is able to link close textual analysis to wider societal ideological and power relations. As this study explores gender representation within media discourse, Fairclough's model proves highly relevant in that it can accommodate both linguistic analysis and ideological critique. It provides tools for examining not only what

is said, but how and why it is articulated, and how it impact public's understanding of gender. By using this model the study moves superficial interpretation and offers a critical framework.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Five articles from the online version of *Dawn* Newspaper have been purposively selected from the month of Jan 2025 to May 2025. The selection includes:

- Editorials
- Opinion columns

The choice of analyzing five articles was determined by the qualitative design of the study and the intensity demanded by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As CDA entails multi-level textual, discursive, and social examination, a small but purposefully chosen sample enables the linguistic strategies and ideological structures to be richly and in detail explored. Taking more articles could have watered down the intensity of analysis, while less would risk constraining diversity of gendered themes. The five chosen articles offer a balanced variety of topics, including gender-based violence, political participation, and social norms, such that the sample is both concentrated and representative for the purposes of this research.

Selection was based on the availability of themes related to gender, including gender-based violence, representation of women and men in public spaces, gender roles and concerns around gender equality.

### 3.4 Sampling Technique

The sampling is purposive and thematic, specifically targeting articles that directly or indirectly discuss gendered issues. Great care was taken to select texts to represent both men and women enabling their comparative analysis of representation.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study is based on common source of information from public available newspapers; there are hardly any ethical risks. The writing is supported by proper citations and information is thoroughly researched and presented with academic responsibility. There is no personal or private information or opinion in this study.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Article 1

- Summary of "Against Women," by Zakaria (*Dawn*, March 8, 2025)

Zakaria (2025) shows how the global and national opposition to women's rights is trickling into our own backyards, including conflicts in the United States; in Pakistan, dooms day religious leaders exhort men to "control" their women, and 90 percent of women have no access to justice; such biased attitudes help prove that there is selective terrorism against women. She condemns the entrenched patriarchy, systemic misogyny and daily micro-aggressions Pakistani women experience both at home and in the workplace and public. Although urban women have fared well in education, structural factors inhibit their empowerment. As long as those societal attitudes do not change at a fundamental level, Zakaria opines Pakistan will continue to be one of the worst countries in the world for gender equality, with little hope for the country's women for generations to come.

#### 4.1.1 The Analysis of Texts (Description)

This level concerns the linguistic features in the article: word choice, metaphors, grammatical constructions and patterns that signal power, inequality or ideology.

- **Lexical Choices:**

**Polarized terminology:** The words "brunt," "threats," "violence," "resentment," "condemnation" and "periphery" describe women. While men are associated with "frustrated," "angry," "passed up," "mock," and "resent." These have evocative and evaluative overtones.

**Verbs of agency:** Male actions are positive — "mock," "make passes," "leave out," "disparage." "I am always the one who has to \_\_\_" Fill in the blank with whatever the work of

inclusion or diversity requires of you: face it, experience it, endure it, again and again and again, all of it little more than different forms of action toward women, and if that action is not level appreciable numbers of people, the women and girls lose power, your own power.

### **Metaphors & Symbolism:**

Terms such as “cycles of economic dependence,” “living hell,” “acts of charity” and “throng of frustrated men” carry powerful structural and emotional imagery.

### **Pronoun Use:**

The article employs third-person plural pronouns (they, them, their) to generalize the suffering of women, and second person (if you’re a woman driver) to solicit identification and empathy.

- **Discourse Practice (Interpretation)**

At this level the article takes a step back and looks at such issues as how it is produced, distributed and consumed — and how intertextuality and genre are linked to meaning-making.

### **Intertextuality:**

The narrative also cites reports from UN Women and SSDO which institutionalise and legitimate the claims being made, and the statistics as well, thus, leading to the discursive legitimacy of the article.

### **Genre and Register:**

As a news opinion article, though, the register mingles journalistic objectivity with opinionated rhetoric. Its emotional, anecdotal tone (“married bosses making passes”) makes it one that should resonate with the public.

### **Audience Positioning:**

Readers become complicit witnesses of injustice, or become implicated in that injustice, if they are particularly guilty men who recognize the behaviors being described. It generates guilt, reflection, or solidarity, according to reader identity.

- **Social Practice (Explanation)**

This last layer tells us how this discourse is related to the larger power relations, gendered ideologies and social structures.

### **Gendered Ideologies Present:**

**Structural patriarchy:** Men are the purported gatekeepers of justice and opportunity; women, in contrast, are a systemically oppressed group.

**Misogyny and cultural stigma:** There’s a reliance on cultural inhibitions to report rape, implying gendered silencing.

**Fixing women:** The notion that divorced/single mothers are fit for marrying in the capacity of “acts of charity” reveals beliefs in female deficiency or dependence.

**Butch fragility and hate:** Men feel threatened by women’s rights, or success — the sign of fragile hegemonic masculinity under siege.

- **Tentative Findings**

### **RQ1: How does *Dawn* represent men, women, and gender relationships?**

Women are mostly portrayed as victims of violence and structural neglect, however, also as resilient and marginalized actors. Men are cast as villains, as banal onlookers, or even as grudging opponents of gender equality on a good day. Power relations between men and women are portrayed as skewed, antagonistic, and locked in an unchanging, oppositional binary, with male superiority normalized.

### **RQ2: What ideologies are conveyed in the language?**

**Patriarchal ideology:** Promoted male justice, male economy, and male narrative.

**Victimization-blaming led victim culture:** Epitomized by the phrase women being “socially raped for filing charges.”

**Opposition to feminism:** Scene in the depiction of men ridiculing the feminist demonstrations such as Aurat March.

#### 4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis of Article 2 (Selected)

- **Summary:** Article "A Question of Gender" by Noor (*Dawn*, April 22, 2025)  
Noor (2025) examines women's growing (but misleadingly reported) political role in Pakistan, profiling the arrests of women activists and politicians including Mahrang Baloch and Aliya Hamza. In the past, women who had a political voice were often members of elite families, but now educated, middle-class, and even rural women are taking leadership roles and wading into activism on their own. Movements such as PTM and BYC have been able to mobilize women in conservative areas, and polling data has shown that there has been a rise in "deviancy": women voting differently from male family members. Noor criticizes the prevailing sexism in political commentary and society's resistance to increased political roles for women, and suggests this resistance to women's empowerment is a result of more general fears of change.
- **Imaging and Analysis (Text Description)**  
This step aims at addressing terms, the use of grammar, metaphors, and rhetorical structures that relate to gender.
- **Lexical Choices:**  
**Agency and strength in women:**  
Terms such as "pushed their way to centre stage", "captured public imagination", "braved imprisonment" depicts woman in contrast to the usual passive depiction. Women are "leaders," "mobilizers," "politicians," all potent identity roles.  
**Contrast in representation:**  
Men are depicted as cowed, e.g., "men — fearful of jail or worse — caving," and women are indomitable. This inversion of traditional gender roles is somewhat peculiar.  
**Pronoun Use and Repetition:**  
Repeated use of "these women" / "their" as well and generic references to women contribute to the visibility and plurality of women's political roles – a discursive act of inclusion.  
**Metaphors and Framing:**  
The expression "captured the public imagination" ironically endows women's actions with iconic/heroic status. The article also makes fun of patriarchal discourse: "men get uncomfortable when women begin to stake a claim" is how it frames male reluctance to surrender control, as if it were garden-variety nervousness.
- **Discourse Practice (Production & Interpretation)**  
Here, we are dealing with the way the article is written and its interpretation within the wider socio-political framework.  
**Author's Positioning:**  
The writer directly addresses misogyny, overturning double standards in politics and journalism ("just misogyny and fear of change"). The story is not merely a chronicle of events, but a counter-narrative to privileged patriarchal portrayals, one that lets us hear from non-elite women — mothers, sisters, housewives.  
**(Inter)Textual And Historiographical Reference:**  
References to Maryam Nawaz, Kulsoom Nawaz, Begum Wali Khan position the women of today within a historical continuum of resistance. By transforming old activism into new, the article undermines the notion that women's political agency is a recent exception.
- **Social Practice (Ideological Effects and Power Structures)**  
This is interested in the reproduction or contestation of gender ideologies as well as power relations.

### Gender Ideologies Identified:

**Patriarchy Undercut:** The piece undermines the male power from which political commentary originates, hinting that the fear of men feels, not rational analysis.

**Agency and Rationality in Women:** It does not help that we are still dealing with the myth that women vote with their "emotions" (Read: "Women are too sentimental to be in politics and they are too weak to vote for a competent and strong candidate.").

**Legitimising women of the Margin:** These leaders also go against the elite-centric ways we think about women in leadership, and the 'Balochistan' and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa leaders are a reminder that women leaders at the base of the pyramid can also be politically powerful.

- **Findings**

**RQ1:** What kind of language does *Dawn* use in portraying and rendering women, men and gender relations?

In the article titled "Defence" in the daily *Dawn*, women are represented as active subjects and the gendered bias of political legitimacy is criticized. It re-imagines old gender dichotomies: as women are seen as brave, committed, transformative, at times men are shown as hesitant or reactionary.

**RQ2: Which forms of gender-based ideologies can trace through the language use?**

Anti-patriarchal ideology: Rejection of the dominant male form of mainstream political speech.

Narrative of empowerment: Women, even those who don't have a leg up in the form of a legacy or a family, are understood as legitimate political actors.

Misogyny as systemic: The piece frames gender bias not in terms of personal prejudice, but as structurally embedded in the wider socio-political system.

### 4.3 CDA of the article 3

- "Summary of Women & Power" By Khalid (*Dawn*, Jan. 24, 2025):

Khalid (*Dawn*, Jan. 24, 2025) follows the development of women's political participation in Pakistan from independence through 2013. Pioneers like Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan and Fatima Jinnah had set the stage for women's inclusion, and landmark historical moments, from Fatima Jinnah's presidential bid to Benazir Bhutto's premiership, had pushed back against military rule and gender norms alike. Resistance was always there, though we had setbacks during the cold dark years of Gen Zia, there were resistance movements – like the Women's Action Forum. Reforms made under Musharraf as well as subsequent democratic governments such as women's quotas and increased representation further promoted the women's political agency. Leaders today such as Maryam Nawaz, Yasmin Rashid, and Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari indicate we are moving from the high-water mark of exceptional female engagement to a new normal. While women have always faced challenges, especially in the rural areas and political parties, they have forged ahead with their contributions in democratic transitions in Pakistan.

- **Lexical and Language Patterns (Micro-level Analysis)**

#### Representation of Women

**Empowering Lexicon:** The author employs affirming and powerful language in words like "resilience," "transformation," "revolutionary moment," and "blazing new trails." These words represent women as doing something to bring about change.

**Metaphors and Symbolism:** 'She carried with her the dreams of millions' for Benazir Bhutto is a symbolic maternal and visionary leader, women are the nurturers for collective hope.

**Historical Anchoring:** The history of women is situated in nation-building. Phrases such as "foundations," "formative years," "political narrative," bear the hint that women were not the adjuncts but indispensable actors of Pakistan's growth.

Institutional Visibility Language such as “judiciary,” “bureaucracy,” “core positions” and “parliamentary caucuses” highlights women’s presence in state structures, promoting a formal empowerment focus.

### **Representation of Men**

Men are seen largely in institutional or structural terms — Gen Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Gen Ziaul Haq, Musharraf — more often than not as shapers of the political terrain that women moved within.

So when we talk about men, we don’t use emotional or symbolic (like the “angry white male”) language, indicating a functional, rather than narrative, representation of men as the default political subjects.

- **Discursive Practices (Mesoanalysis)**

The article is organized like a chronological-historic narration to account for women’s political incorporation from 1947 until now. This is part of the mechanism of creating a “story of progress”—a story in which women’s political agency escalates in a straight line, over time. It grounds women’s current political capacities in the history of the country from its start.

### **Agency Attribution**

Women are ascribed active agency: “stood alongside men,” “carried the dreams,” “emerged as leaders,” “reshaping the landscape.” This is in contrast to the stereotype of women benefiting from male reform as passive subjects. Even in contexts of oppression (e.g., Zia’s Islamisation), women are depicted as in resistance: “opposition into organised activism,” “sparks powerful resistance movements.”

### **Social Philosophy and Power Relations (Macro-level Analysis)**

#### **Language-Embedded Gender Ideologies**

Liberal Feminist Ideology Right, representation, and legislative change (e.g., Elections Act 2017, property rights) align with a liberal feminist approach that equates structural inclusion with equality.

**Post-Patriarchal Imaginary:** A statement like “We’re not just participating in politics anymore; we’re redefining what politics means in Pakistan” invites us to imagine a future where one’s gender doesn’t impede one’s political aspirations.

**Crossing into the modern and the traditional:** The discursive power-play casts traditional norms (e.g., “family legacies”) against modern empowerment (e.g., “blazing new trails”), reflecting the dual tug on Pakistani women and keeping them eternally in tension.

### **Gender Relations**

The story is critical, if lightly, of male-dominated systems (military juntas, for example), but it focuses on the pockets women were able to carve out within them. There seems to be awareness of structural patriarchy (e.g., “tied to family networks,” “battle for decision-making seats”) but the speech is more about progress than criticism -- suggestive of an evolutionary reformist stance rather than radical feminist.

### **Answer to Research Questions**

#### **How does the language posit and represent women, men and the gender relations in Dawn newspaper?**

*Dawn* speaks out for women through powerful and agentive language, *Dawn* depicts women as active agents and reformers of the political system. Men are much less seen as figures of external inside looking behind a door or a tent than as structural elements of authority or barriers. Gender relations are presented as changing — from traditional and patriarchal restraints to more open and participatory politics, and the discourse is one of progress, institutional change and the normalisation of the role of women.

**What are the types of gender ideologies represented in the language of the extracts selected from *Dawn*?**

The article replicates a liberal feminist ideology by concentrating on policy, representation and rights. It offers a developmental tale of women's discovery and fulfilment vis-a-vis national identity and employs a language of inclusive nationalism. There is an evolutionist-reformist discourse that acknowledges past struggles yet grounds itself on current gains; the emphasis here is avoiding overt radical critique of the patriarchy.

**4.4 Critical reflection on Article 4**

- Summary of 'Girls' Education' by Khaki (*Dawn*, Feb 14, 2025)

Khaki (*Dawn*, Feb 14, 2025), The task of educating girls in Muslim societies and, in particular, in Pakistan, remains fragile despite religious teachings that attach importance to knowledge. He cites a report from Clandon et al., *The Global Gender Gap in Muslim Education* (2018), where it shows the broad gender divide in education for Muslim women around the world. He looks at the Hunza Valley, where Aga Khan foundations started girls' schools in the 1980s, believing that it gives families an overall lift when you educate girls. This resulted in better lives and spurred wider community transformation.

Yet most of Pakistan remains hostile, the author observes. The main obstacles are inadequate school buildings, security fears, low teaching quality, bullying and irrelevant courses. Quoting Ansari and Ali (2024), he highlights safety and basic facilities to be major determinants of girls' education. Opposition to educating girls often is based less on Islam and more on tribal and cultural values. Heeds that combating these systemic barriers through policy-making at the top and community action at the bottom is essential, and outlays for girls education is not simply a religious obligation, but a social need.

**Language and the Perception of Women and Men**

The article deals with women's education and, more specifically, the educational inequalities of Islamic societies with girls as the central focus of the debate. The language adopted mirrors an understanding, sympathetic, women-behind-syndrome to the education advancement of women: Lexical choices like "appalling condition," "disabling factors," "gainful employment" and "dignity and respect", shows that the article portrays the women as candidates in need of opportunities and equal footing. Women are depicted in responsible or agentive positions ("are engaged in gainful employment," "many have moved overseas," and educate the whole family, these are examples of how women run Finally, family and community is the third recurring theme emphasized in the four OAO education examples. This defies portrayals of women who are unassertive or reliant. A division is made between the conservative rural areas and the developing young society (Hunza is a much referred example of this trend) and it is used to put down cultural resistance and aim at gender equality.

Men are barely mentioned in the article, but when they are, it's to make comparisons, i.e., "The boy can survive even doing menial jobs," suggesting that providing education to girls has broader social implications.

- **Discourse Strategies Used**

**Intertextuality:** The article refers to studies (Clandon et al. 2018; Ansari and Ali 2024), often invoking scholarly authority to substantiate its claims.

**Metaphors and rhetorical strategies:** "Knowledge is power" and "weakness invites aggression" are metaphorical expressions to imply urgency and necessity to educate.

**This is not evidence:** The Hunza and Aga Khan family as an example that Human interest is persuasive and add credibility and emotional appeal.

**And the binaries:** educated/ignorant; powerful/weak; empowering dis/empowering environment — all of these structures support that reformist vision of what needs to change.

**Answers to Research Questions on this Article:**

### **What is the language that *Dawn* uses to depict women and men and gender relations?**

*Dawn* employs an empowering, progressive language that depicts women as capable, important for family and social advancement, and in rights of equal education. Men are scarcely found, primarily as reference points, and traditional gender stereotypes are satirically challenged. The intention of the language is to honour and humanize women in the face of cultural norms that diminish and disempower them.

### **What types of gender ideologies are reified in the language of selected articles in *Dawn*?**

The piece itself mirrors egalitarian, developmental, and human rights oriented principles. It rejects patriarchal, tribal and cultural excuses for gender inequality, makes female education indispensable to women and men, and we affirm that the adjustment of culture and mind set is everyone's responsibility. It also assumes that environmental and organizational changes are required in order for gender equality to take root.

## **4.5 Critical Discourse Analysis of Article 5**

- Summary

Failing Women (*Dawn* Editorial, March 3, 2025):

This editorial highlights the shocking collapse of Pakistan's criminal justice system in terms of GBV. Based on a recent SSDO report, it notes depressing conviction rates: mere 0.5% for honour killings and rape, 0.1% for kidnapping and 1.3% for domestic violence in 2024. On a daily basis in Pakistan, on average 67 kidnappings, 19 rapes, 6 domestic violence cases and 2 honor killings were being reported — many more unreported due to stigma and lack of faith in the system.

The piece attributes this crisis to long standing patriarchal biases that dominate police forces and the judiciary. Victims are usually not believed, or are harassed into dropping charges or signing extrajudicial agreements approved by jirgas or panchayats. Botched investigations, mishandling of evidence, delays in the legal process, and the lack of specialized GBV units also contribute to a culture of impunity.

To counter this, the editorial prescribes urgent remedies: increasing the availability of female police – they currently represent less than 2% of all officers – fast-track courts to deal with GBV cases, banning plea bargains and out-of-court settlements in matters of sexual and domestic violence, efficient forensic procedures and easy legal aid. If systemic change is not forthcoming, it warns, women will remain under violent assault without redress.

### **Women, Men, and Gender Representation**

The article uses heavily-laden and accusatory language aiming at highlighting the systematic inability to protect women from GBV. Women are depicted principally as: Victims of structural injustice (“as the justice system has really failed to protect women”, “an average of 19 rapes and six domestic violence cases a day”). When this abuse takes place behind closed doors, the victims are silenced and side lined, and we see evidence of this from quotes, such as “only a fraction of incidents... becomes known” and “victims are so often not believed or discouraged from coming forward.” Reliant on protection of the state – indicating their vulnerability and state responsibility. Although men are not named specifically, males are inferably the offenders in rapes, domestic violence, honour killings and abduction cases. Patriarchal values are indirectly attributed to male-dominated institutions such as the police, judiciary and jirgas. The article also calls for women's inclusion in law enforcement, e.g., “they need to hire police women first of all”, indicating the shift from being passive victims to active agents.

### **Ideologies On Women in the Text**

It advocates feminist and reformist rhetoric, manifested in several forms: Patriarchy as the beginning and end of the problem: It explicitly condemns the “patriarchal norms that have long penetrated law-enforcement and judicial bodies”.

Critique of parallel justice systems: The text debunks “jirgas and panchayats” that tend to uphold out-of-court settlements — a tradition that is not in women’s best interests regarding justice.

Focus on structural reform: It propagates a rights-based ideology, for fast-track courts, legal aid, women recruitment, and strengthening of forensics — all state-centered reforms.

Data-driven urgency: After relying on specific numbers (“0.5 pc for honour killings,” “19 rapes per day”), a crisis image is designed that needs to be addressed now.

Building institutions for gender equality: It advocates more inclusion of women in policing — “less than 2 per cent of our police force is made up of women” — and goes further, establishing that gender parity is a necessary requirement for justice.

- **Discourse Strategies Used**

Lexical Choices: Words such as “appalling,” “shockingly” “failed,” “real crisis,” “intimidation,” and “mishandled” create a tone that is very critical.

Statistics: An appeal to objective numbers gives legitimacy and helps make a reasoned case for a reform.

Obligation: This article excessively uses the word “must” to emphasize an obligation or imperative (e.g., must be outlawed, must be hired, must increase dramatically).

Contrast and Parallelism: The vast remove between more violence and no checks and balances (e.g., “Sindh and Balochistan recorded no rape convictions”) might make the systemic malfunction more vivid.

**Responses to Research Questions:**

**How does *Dawn* newspaper use language to portray and reflect women, men & gender relations?**

In this post, *Dawn* showcases women as victims of a non-functional, patriarchal legal system; that such an injustice has been able to endure the legal and cultural architecture in which it persists is dominated by men. But this article also suggests that women can be catalysts for change and it does so by encouraging more women in policing. In its depiction of gender relations are unequal and social institutions looking out for men first.

**What kind of linguistic gender ideologies can we see in language use in some articles of *Dawn*?**

The article expresses liberal feminist and reformist values of gender justice, legal change and institutional equality. It is militantly opposed to patriarchal and traditionalist ideologies, such as those entrenched in the police, courts and non-state legal codes. Then questions of state response, women’s voices, and the removal of bad tradition mirror a commitment to progressive gender values.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

This study examined how gender was linguistically constructed and represented in five selected news articles by *Dawn* by using Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The text-analysis showed that *Dawn* uses empowering as well as critical language when it comes to the portrayal of women and men. The portrayals of women tend to be along the lines of strong-minded or strong-willed agents of change, political leaders or victims of structural oppression. Men are all shown as either agents of institutions who are somehow keeping the gates or as agents and actors who somehow contribute to patriarchal patterns, often men with bland to non-existent descriptors. The discursive deployment of pronouns, metaphors, lexis, and the passive tense convey a more general power asymmetry and ergo deeper ideological scaffolding.

At the level of discursive practice, *Dawn* has presented itself as a socially committed magazine, invoking the authority of the institution, historical authority and anecdotal evidence. The integration of independent journalism and advocacy rhetoric allows the

newspaper to act both as educator and advocate to its readers. Through inter-textuality, *Dawn* builds narratives that relate past struggles for gender equality to the present-day situation, establishing a sense of continuity in women's battles for equal rights in the gender war. Readers are primed to identify with or think critically about these gendered experiences, and this can amplify a feeling of solidarity, empathy, and, for some readers, accountability, depending on whether they share in the experiences because of their gender in their given social context.

The social practice analysis calls attention to how both the content and text perform discursive contestation with hegemonic patriarchal ideologies and necessarily also with reformist and feminist ones. The main ideologies are Liberal feminism, anti-patriarchal resistance, and education and political mobilization. The pieces, fearlessly, criticize systemic failures in justice and governance, while offering solutions, such as women's engagement in law enforcement, and in politics. In the process, *Dawn* plays its part, and contributes to shaping the gender norms on the social and political topography of Pakistan, by seeding the new, and sometimes cautious, narrative of gender equity and transformation.

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Summary of the Study

This research critically examined the linguistic construction of gender in the English language press (the newspaper *Dawn*), through the analytical framework of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This study investigated the ideological use of language in journalistic texts to construct and represent gender identities, roles and ideologies. The study aimed to uncover patterns of gender representation and assess the extent to which they resist or reinforce power relations between men and women in society. It employed critiques such as close reading (Anderson, 1993) and critical language analysis to examine media texts published in the *Dawn*.

The study was set against the background of persisting gender disparities in Pakistan and the critical role of media discourse in mediating and sustaining social and cultural norms. While *Dawn* is perceived as a liberal and progressive newspaper, the present study sought to question whether its language practices conform to the stated values or subtly reproduces the conventional gender ideologies.

The methodological design of the research is qualitative and focused exclusively on Fairclough's three-dimension CDA model (textual analysis, discursive practice and socio-cultural practice). Textual analysis centred on scrutiny of lexis and grammar, syntax, modality and transitivity to reveal ideological meaning inscribed within the language. For a discursive practice which centred on how the texts were both produced and read, including the institutional and editorial contexts of newspaper journalism. Lastly, socio-cultural practice offered a wider scope of analysing how media discourse influence and are influenced by societal norms, values and power relations.

Articles for analysis were selected on the basis of thematic relevance to gender, which could be topics related to gender such as domestic violence, honour killing, women rights, political participation, and gender legislation. Such texts were analyzed by doing a discursive dissection to unravel the rhetoric devices employed in the construction of male and female characters, the ascription of agency and the delimitation of gender.

It was found that the women were frequently marginalized in news discourse, especially in domains surrounding politics, governance, science and economics. The women who were discussed were typically passive, suffering, or domesticating themselves. Core patterns of language included the use of passive language to separate agency in violence (eg, "a woman was raped"), euphemistic language to soften the severity of acts of violence based on gender, and constrained sourcing that privileged the male speaker as the informed expert.

In contrast, men were rational, leaders and decision-makers who were situated at the centre of stories about national affairs or resolving conflict or making policy. The lack of voice, agency, and presence was a reflection of broader structures according to which patriarchy and gender hierarchy is naturalized in and through discourse.

The research also identified that women's views were frequently mediated or reframed through narrative framing or teller, limiting narrational autonomy. Even in stories that were supposed to be about women empowerment, the language frequently either perpetuated gendered ideas — with women portrayed as essentially vagina-bearers carrying the offspring of males — or hinted, in coded way, that women needed male validation in order to be legitimate citizens in the world.

## 5.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

Although the current research offers rich insights into gender representation in *Dawn*, it is time- and space-limited in nature. For this reason, further research can enhance the following areas for a more profound understanding of gendered discourse in Pakistani media:

**Comparative Media Analysis:** Comparative media analysis of English- as well as Urdu-language newspapers (e.g., *Dawn*, *The News*, *Jang*, *Nawa-i-Waqt*) can provide more detailed insights by emphasizing the variations in gender representation across linguistic as well as cultural boundaries.

**Multimodal Discourse Analysis:** Subsequent research can also use multimodal CDA, combining textual and visual data like headlines, images, captions, and layout to examine how gender ideologies are conveyed through both words and pictures.

Reader reception studies can be used to see how audiences interpret gendered representation in media texts. This would serve to connect discursive construction with actual-world interpretations and effects.

**Longitudinal studies:** Longitudinal analysis of gender representation in *Dawn* and other newspapers needs to be done over a longer period to analyze the developments in gender representation in these and other newspapers over time, particularly in connection with significant social or political events (e.g., women's rights movements, parliamentary reforms, elections).

**Comparisons with International Papers:** Comparisons between Pakistani media and international newspapers may also indicate cultural flexibilities and global patterns of gender discourse.

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