Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies 169
Vol. 26(1), 2026, pp.169-188, ISSN: 2072-0394(Print), ISSN: 2663-8886(Online)

Pakistani Women and the Politics of Representation: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Digital News Discourses

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Abstract

The linguistic representations of women in media discourse are pivotal in shaping meaning, visibility, and power relations. The central concept used to explore various portrayals of women in the media is the politics of representation, focusing on the frames that define who are included or excluded in media spaces. This study explores the representation of Pakistani women in national digital news media in the wake of the country's dismal position on the Global Gender rankings. By utilizing an integrated methodological framework combining corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, the study examines the varying frames employed to represent Pakistani women in the Pakistan-based newspapers Dawn and The News International. The findings reveal diverse portrayals of Pakistani women in news discourse, with media often reinforcing women's individual identities through frames of success, while constructing their collective identities as passive agents in need of rescue, wherein women's empowerment is frequently invoked to signal its absence in Pakistani society. The study offers implications for media organizations and policy-makers to inform the production of more enabling representations of Pakistani women, contributing to the discursive change the country requires in transnational spaces.

Keywords: Pakistani Women, Politics of Representation, Media Framing, Linguistic Representations of Women, Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis.

Introduction

Gender disparity and discrimination are the two key human rights issues affecting more than half of the Pakistani population (Ali et al., 2022). The country is currently grappling with a wider gender gap contributing to the overall deteriorating sociopolitical conditions reflected in the low performance of Pakistan on global performance indicators (World Economic Forum, 2023). According to Butt and Shahid (2012), the intricate interactions between social, political, economic, and religious factors that are necessary for the structural and functional arrangements of a society influence the status of women within it. These arrangements, which place women on the margins of health, nutrition, political empowerment, and literacy are primarily managed and directed by men in Pakistan, leaving women open to violence, discrimination, and marginalization perpetuated by patriarchy,

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regressive social norms, and gender stereotypes (Ali & Batool, 2015; Amjad et al., 2021; Musa & Waseem, 2015). This is despite the country's commitment to seven international human rights treaties. Four of these treaties focus on improving the status of women in Pakistan- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5) (National Report on the Status of Women in Pakistan, 2023, 2023). The latest reports reveal that Pakistan has not made any advancements in attaining gender equality (SDG 5) and addressing substantial challenges in this domain (World Economic Forum, 2024; Sustainable Development Report 2024, 2024). Research studies on gender parity in Pakistan have identified the dominant patriarchy as the root cause of the ongoing issue (Aksar et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2022; Butt & Shahid, 2012). The patriarchal system marginalizes women (Rabia et al., 2019; Serez, 2017) and inhibits their equitable participation in several spheres of life. According to Fraser (2005b), participation parity is a necessary condition for gender justice involving social arrangements that enable all individuals in a society to participate as equals in social life. Therefore, contexts in which women are denied equitable participation are suitable research settings for the study of gender justice.

Research on linguistic representations and discursive construction of women in media accounts for a significant proportion of knowledge in applied linguistics built on the intersections of media, language, culture, and identity (Rahman & Nova, 2020; Yasmin et al., 2019). Most of these women groups, whose linguistic representations and constructions are widely problematized, hail from conservative contexts such as Saudi Arabia (Karimullah, 2020; Tabaza & Mustafa-Awad, 2022), Myanmar (Rahman & Nova, 2020), India (Nagar, 2016), and Pakistan (Musa & Waseem, 2015; Ullah et al., 2016; Yasmin et al., 2019) wherein gender inequality has been globally acknowledged as a key factor impeding women's prospects and growth. However, women's portrayal also appears to be governed and influenced by the religion and occupation they adopt as proven by the significant amount of research examining the portrayals of Muslim women (Calvo-Barbero & Carrasco-Campos, 2020; Kasirye, 2021; Rahman, 2012; Rinaldo, 2011), and female politicians (Adcock, 2010; Osei-Appiah, 2019; Ross et al., 2020; Van Acker, 2017) in various countries, emphasizing how media representations of women are highly dependent on contextual realities including social, economic, religious and political factors impacting the way they are perceived and discussed in the media. Likewise, examining the divergent portrayals of women in local and international media also makes it easier to analyze a country's general perception worldwide and how that perception compares to or differs from the native realization portrayed in the local media. For instance, research studies (Calvo-Barbero & Carrasco-Campos, 2020; Kasirye, 2021; Rahman, 2012) examining the portrayal of Muslim women in the Western media emphasize how they are largely constructed as either threats or victims, terrorists, extremists, and passive recipients of male dominance and religious backwardness. On the

other hand, studies examining the portrayal of Saudi women (Albawardi & Jones, 2021; Althobiti, 2024) in the international media point out a shift in women's portrayal with Saudi women being shown as agentic, holding the steering wheel of a car, in harmony with the ideals of consumerism, but disconnected from the everyday politics played on them in real life.

Pakistani women, on the other hand, tend to make interesting research subjects due to their immediate patriarchal context marked by 'the cultural gender segregation' (Aksar et al., 2020, p.80), the religion widely practiced in Pakistan (Rahman, 2012), and the overall position and reputation of the country post-9/11 disaster leading to the war on terror, and the country's subsequent reliance on foreign aid due to the deteriorating social, economic, and political conditions over time. The country's internal instability combined with the global and regional outcry for gender parity and women empowerment have put Pakistani women at the center of transnational debates, efforts, and processes. The current study expands the existing knowledge base built on the media representation of women and other marginalized communities in the media under the lens of Fraser's notion of the politics of representation as constitutive of participation parity. The concept is employed due to Pakistan's complex international image resulting from the country's declining socioeconomic conditions forcing Pakistani women, who make up half of the population, to assume an active role, and Pakistan's low ranking on the Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum,, 2024), calling for a comprehensive investigation into the lives of Pakistani women made possible by an exploration of their linguistic representations in the international and local media.

Research Question

The study seeks to uncover the issues facing women through their media representations and answer the following question:

- How are Pakistani women linguistically represented in national news media, and what discourses surround them?

Review of the Literature

Linguistic representation is considered a key component of the meaning-making processes since language is a medium through which human thoughts, feelings, and emotions are represented (Fairclough, 1993, 2017; Hall, 1997b). Politics of representation, which involves the study of the language used to assign meaning to various groups and their social practices, focuses on the role of language in the struggle for the power of representation (Wenden, 2005). Politics, on the other hand, is the management of conflicting interests and power struggles (Wenden, 2005). In the age of globalization, mass media is the most widely used site for the language-based politics of

representation, which may influence or modify the audience's perception of a particular group or country (Yu et al., 2024; Zubair, 2016). The active engagement of mass media in representing and re-representing images generates a plethora of meanings, resulting in competition among groups over what is correct, appropriate, and the most legitimate representation of reality, also known as the politics of representation (Hall, 1997a; Wenden, 2005). Campbell (2017) argues that an analysis of how different groups are portrayed in the media is essential to revealing the dominant ideologies that are attached to them, and also because objects are produced by discourses (language), and the apparatus of power (media) that represent them (Geerts & Van Der Tuin, 2013; Hobbs, 2008). Fowler (1991) emphasizes the importance of media discourse by asserting that the press is 'skewed' (p. 11) due to the procedures that dictate how news is selected, modified, and presented. These processes are influenced by various social, political, and economic factors that reflect a particular ideological perspective. Fairclough (2017) believes that media representations should be critically examined as components of action, as they are greatly influenced by significant social ideologies.

Van Dijk (2013) contends that one of the tasks of critical discourse analysis is to establish a relationship between discourse and social power. This means that a critical analysis of media texts should demonstrate how unequal power relations are produced and perpetuated through the discourse of dominant groups or institutions, such as the media. This makes media discourse a valuable social resource to which not everyone has access (Van Dijk, 2013). This holds true for marginalized communities, including women who often do not have control over how they are represented in the media. For Hall (1997a), discourses are methods of generating knowledge regarding a certain topic, social activity, or institutional context within society, encompassing the development of ideas, images, and practices that facilitate discussions about that particular subject. These discursive formulations specify what is and are not appropriate in our conceptualization of a specific topic or social activity, what information is deemed pertinent and helpful in that context, and what kinds of people exhibit its traits. In this context, 'discursive' refers to any method in which culture, meaning, and representation are regarded as constitutive forces in social life (Hall, 1997b). Discursive practices, on the other hand, refer to the concrete ways in which broader discourses are enacted, negotiated, and sometimes resisted through language use in specific texts and communicative events. It is primarily because of the constitutive nature of discourse that linguistic representations are significant, as they constitute ways in which we think about or evaluate different social entities. According to Corson (1992), power structures don't exist in isolation; instead, they manifest in the activities they control and in the linguistic descriptions of these activities that agents report, suggesting a close relationship between social and discursive structures that frequently limit human agency and are reflected in stereotypical depictions of women in the media. Discursive practices both maintain and reconstruct these social systems,

creating the possibility of breaking free from repressive structures and beliefs (Corson, 1992; Fairclough, 1989; Fairclough & Scholz, 2020).

In recent decades, feminist discourse on the politics of representation has suggested that the practices and meanings associated with this area are opaque, necessitating inquiry into the reasons certain groups are portrayed in the media as other (Hinterberger, 2007; Van Acker, 2017). Hall (1997a) considers 'difference' or 'otherness' as a compelling theme in the context of media representations focusing on differences emerging out of race, gender, and sexuality to examine issues of marginalization, bias, and stereotyping.

Fraser's conceptualization of the politics of representation enacted through the *framing* of women in transnational spaces embodies social, economic, and cultural practices that influence participation parity (Fraser, 2005b). She contends that a narrow application of feminist politics on a social and economic plane overlooks the transnational causes of social injustices that frequently transcend national boundaries, as decisions taken in one territory often impact the lives of women outside it (Fraser, 2005a). This implies that the scope of the feminist struggle for redistribution and recognition must be expanded beyond the territorial state into transnational spaces, as gender justice and women's welfare depend just as much on transnational processes as on those within their sovereign state (Ferrarese, 2015). Fraser argues that the earlier two dimensions of gender justice, i.e., redistribution and recognition, must be understood with an explicit reference to the problem of the frames being used to represent women (Dahl et al., 2004). Her third dimension of gender justice, i.e., the politics of representation, addresses the problem of misframing of women in transnational spaces, including the misframing of women in mass media through linguistic representations (Calvo-Barbero & Carrasco-Campos, 2020; Kasirye, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The study utilizes Fraser's (2005a) notion of the politics of representation to examine Pakistani women's representation in national news media. As noted above, her concept of gender justice is built on the assumption of participation parity, which can only be enabled if all individuals in a society receive equal recognition (respect), distribution (resources), and equal representation (voice in decision-making). Fraser's (2005b) social and political theory has been widely cited and utilized in feminist studies (Fraser & Naples, 2004), education (Keddie, 2012; Vincent, 2020) and several other spheres. However, there has been limited application of her theory in applied linguistic research. The explicit relevance of her work to feminism, gender, and social justice illuminates the possibility of applying her theory of the politics of representation in applied linguistics research. Just as linguistic representations give insights into deeper socio-cultural realities, Fraser's (2005b) concept of representation also uncovers cultural and economic injustices committed against women due to the overarching nature of the politics of

representation that encompasses politics of recognition and politics of redistribution. Fraser (2005a) contends that representation not only requires giving women an equal voice in political advocacy but also requires reframing social justice issues in transnational spaces. In this regard, the media is acknowledged as a well-established venue for transnational politics in today's globalizing world. Social justice issues in general and gender justice issues, in particular, are framed, misframed, and reframed in the media to reinforce, perpetuate, and challenge maldistribution and misrecognition, such as women's marginalization in the workforce and stereotypes rooted in culture to relegate women (Askanius & Hartley, 2019; Dikwal-Bot, 2018). Fraser's concept of the politics of representation focuses on determining who is included in, or excluded from, the legitimate political community. The study draws on her concept of the politics of representation as a discursive mechanism to examine how women are depicted in media discourse and how such representations position them as included or excluded, agentic or unagentic, and as legitimate or illegitimate social actors.

Research Methodology

Corpus refers to a large body of texts stored in a computer database (Efe & Ozer, 2015; Sajjad, 2023), whereas corpus linguistics is the study of real-life language use (Efe & Ozer, 2015). The term discourse, on the other hand, refers to ideas, emotions, and opinions expressed through language (Touileb & Salway, 2014). Critical discourse analysis has emerged as a popular academic tradition that mainly focuses on the dialectical relationship between language and society (Baker et al., 2008; Efe & Ozer, 2015). According to Fotiadou (2020), the idea of discourse as a social practice means that discourse is a social activity that takes the form of discursive constructions loaded with ideological effects, producing and reproducing unequal power relations and normalizing particular ideologies. Despite its obvious merits and wider application in critical studies, the approach, however, has often been criticized for cherry-picking the data and issues concerning its operationalization, making scholars propose a combination of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics (Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019). Although the two are opposing strategies (Kim, 2014; Yu et al., 2021), their synergy is acknowledged as a standard framework and powerful method for deconstructing media discourse (Baker et al., 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2015; Efe & Ozer, 2015; Hou, 2018; Jaworska, 2021; Kim, 2014).

The synergy of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis responds to the limitations of both fields (Baker, 2010; Baker & Levon, 2015; Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019) as critical discourse analysis is often criticized for its inadequacies for linguistic analysis (Karimullah, 2020), whereas corpus linguistics relies heavily on the numeric strength of the linguistic components used in the data (Musa & Waseem, 2015). Some of the advantages of employing this combination include increased objectivity achieved through quantitative and qualitative means of analyses (Efe & Ozer, 2015), broader generalizations based on

large datasets, and easy identification of recurring discursive structures and their significance required to lend credibility to the analysis (Al Fajri, 2020; Karimullah, 2020; Lukač, 2011; Musa & Waseem, 2015; Samaie & Malmir, 2017). Drawing on the merits of corpus based critical discourse analysis, Al Fajri (2020) claims that this method may be used to determine the gradual influence of media discourse by drawing attention to the ways the media texts may frame issues and subjects in the same way over a prolonged period. Consequently, it may offer insight into the kinds of cultural and ideological views that are commonly stated and may even be adopted by readers. These cumulative effects can be revealed through corpus linguistic approaches to discourse analysis, which can gather large samples of repeated phrases or grammatical constructions as discursive constructions of a social group are thus not formed by a single text, but by repeated instances of language use (Baker et al., 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2015).

The study uses a corpus based critical discourse analysis framework consisting of four stages i.e., identification, interpretation, explanation, and evaluation proposed by Mcenery and Baker (2015) for three key reasons. Firstly, a large dataset required researchers to use automated tools to process it objectively. Secondly, the corpus based technique is a suitable means of operationalizing critical discourse analysis as demonstrated by previous research studies (Baker & Levon, 2016; Efe & Ozer, 2015; Fotiadou, 2017, 2020; Khan & Zaki, 2022; Kim, 2014; Yu et al., 2024). Thirdly, because the study's objectives were best served by the combination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, requiring researchers to first identify the frames using the collocation feature followed by a careful analysis of the underlying themes using the concordance tool necessary to execute the analysis of the last two stages wherein the researchers position their findings in a wider context and evaluate the consequences of diverse linguistic representations.

Corpora Building

A purpose built corpus was gathered from two Pakistani digital news media outlets, the Dawn and the News International published between June 2014 and June 2024. The selection of news services was determined by several important aspects, including readership, and international recognition demonstrated by the widespread distribution of these news platforms throughout Pakistan. The Dawn is the largest English newspaper in Pakistan and enjoys a robust online presence with a large readership, just like The News International, which enjoys a wide circulation and prestigious reputation nationwide. The researchers collected the data from the English websites of these news services using the search terms *woman, women*, *girl,* and *girls*. The news stories were collected regardless of any social, political, or religious considerations on the part of the researchers to avoid sampling bias. To get a clear picture of the media representation of Pakistani women, the news stories, news articles, columns, and editorials, that included the keywords were

selected and copied into separate plain text files resulting in a collection of the National News Media Corpus (NNMC) containing 349 news pieces gathered from the Dawn and the News International. Table 1 presents a comprehensive summary of the data collected for analysis. The samples were gathered in English as it is the global lingua franca, the language of globalization, and the language that is most frequently used in transnational contexts. The gathered corpus was re-examined until deemed fit for analysis.

Table 1: Summary of the Corpus Data

	News Outlet	Search Terms	Articles	Words	Tokens	Sentences
National News Media Corpus (NNMC)[1]	Dawn	Woman Women Girl Girls	196	241, 381	279, 059	9, 918
	The News International		153			

Note. *[1]National News Media Corpus

Data Analysis

Frequency Analysis

A wordlist containing the frequently occurring words in the NNMC was extracted using Sketch Engine following the protocols of corpus based critical discourse analysis, where the identification of the significant patterns is the first step toward textual analysis. The NNMC list comprised 17, 623 items with 241,381 total frequencies. This provided a useful starting point for linguistic analysis, but the output needed refinement for further steps. For instance, functional items such as articles (e.g., a, an, the), pronouns (e.g., he, she, it, they, we), possessive constructions (e.g., hers, theirs, woman's, man's), and coordinating conjunctions (e.g., but, and, or, then) were removed from the list. This was done to carry out a focused analysis capturing the purpose of the study, and also because these items ranked high on the frequency list even when they were not part of the meaningful patterns. Kim (2014) suggests removing unrefined collocates from the wordlist when analyzing the news genre to identify significant patterns that facilitate corpus based critical discourse analysis. Since the study aimed to explore the linguistic representation of Pakistani women in news media, we decided to focus our attention on

nouns and adjectives employed to mention Pakistani women in news discourses. The verbs, however, were not excluded from the scope of analysis, but we decided to analyze them in the context of nouns and adjectives. Our initial processing showed *woman* and *Pakistan* as the most frequent nouns in the NNMC, demonstrating the appropriateness and relevance of the corpus. On the other hand, adjectives carrying higher frequencies were *female, Pakistani*, and *other*. Table 2 contains the list of frequently occurring nouns and adjectives in the corpus.

Table 2: Top ten Higher frequency Adjectives and Nouns in the National News Media Corpus (NNMC)

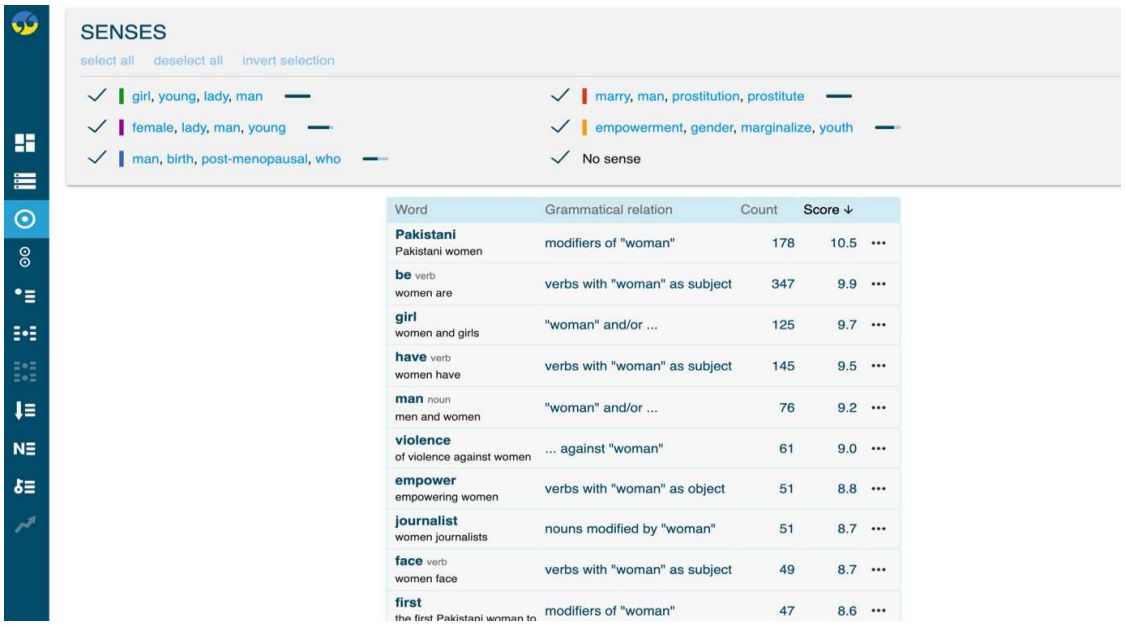
List of Nouns		List of adjectives	
Item	**Frequency**	**Item**	**Frequency**
Woman	3762	Female	365
pakistan	1149	Pakistani	363
Girl	1142	Other	336
Man	531	Many	323
Year	525	Such	306
Gender	514	More	300
Country	491	Political	281
Child	415	Social	265
Police	412	First	242
education	411	High	227

Note. *[1]National News Media Corpus

Collocation Analysis

According to Gablasova et al. (2017), Log Dice is a standardized metric with a maximum value of 14 that allows for direct comparisons across different corpora. This makes it more effective than MI-score and MI2, which lack a fixed maximum. Log Dice indicates how close a particular combination is to the theoretical maximum, representing a completely exclusive pairing (Gablasova et al., 2017). All grammatical relations of *woman* were merged and listed in terms of their collocational strength. This stage of analysis revealed a set of recurring discursive patterns in media representations. Women are predominantly constructed as a collective group defined by their national identity (*Pakistani women*) and are frequently positioned within relational groupings, such as *women and girls* and *women and men*. Verbal collocates unveiled a dominance of relational and experiential processes (*women are*, *women have*, *women face*), emphasizing conditions of women and challenges they face rather than agentive action.

Similarly, constructions such as *violence against women* and *empowering women* situate women primarily as objects of harm or intervention, reinforcing victimhood and development oriented framings. While professional roles such as *women journalists* increase institutional visibility, agency remains largely role based, and achievements are often marked as exceptional through modifiers like *first woman*.



Word	Grammatical relation	Count	Score ↓
Pakistani Pakistani women	modifiers of "woman"	178	10.5
be verb women are	verbs with "woman" as subject	347	9.9
girl women and girls	"woman" and/or ...	125	9.7
have verb women have	verbs with "woman" as subject	145	9.5
man noun men and women	"woman" and/or ...	76	9.2
violence of violence against women	... against "woman"	61	9.0
empower empowering women	verbs with "woman" as object	51	8.8
journalist women journalists	nouns modified by "woman"	51	8.7
face verb women face	verbs with "woman" as subject	49	8.7
first the first Pakistani woman to	modifiers of "woman"	47	8.6

Given the space constraints, concordance analysis focused on three statistically salient and conceptually central collocates: *Pakistani women*, *violence against women*, and *empowering women*, as these capture key dimensions of identity representation, harm, and agency in media representations.

Concordance Analysis

A close analysis of concordances of *Pakistani women* reveals an ambivalent portrayal of Pakistani women, highlighting both agency and marginalization. In Example 1, Samina Baig is explicitly named and celebrated as the *first Pakistani woman* to have climbed North America's highest mountain. She is attributed full agency and framed as a pioneering, capable individual who has challenged stereotypes of passivity. Her national identity as a *Pakistani* woman in the context of her unique achievement serves to position her achievement in a global context in which Pakistani women are usually known as passive recipients of regressive social processes. Her representation as an achiever of a

distinct honour in a domain traditionally associated with men reveals how Pakistani women are contributing to foster a better image of Pakistan and its women. Although the collocation *first Pakistani woman* shapes the discourse of women's participation in the public sphere, its association with individual women highlights the limited nature of this participation.

1. 'Samina Baig, the ***first Pakistani woman*** to climb to the top of the highest mountain ….'

In contrast, Example 2 presents a bleak, statistical portrayal of women, showing 48% of Pakistani women as deprived of the freedom of expression. The discursive association of women's limited freedom in health matters represents them as passive recipients of discriminatory social processes, which also implies a lack of agency in reproductive matters. While the aggregation of women in terms of numbers emphasizes the pervasiveness of the problem, reference to health matters highlights a lack of bodily autonomy allowed to women, shaping the discourse of familial and social control on women's bodies that restricts their mobility and decision-making in crucial matters of their lives.

2. '48pc ***Pakistani women*** have no say in health matters….'

Example 3 frames Pakistani women as facilitators to Afghan men's integration in Pakistani society. However, this discursive association situates these women within the context of legal struggle as they seek to have the court grant their Afghan spouse the right to nationality. Although this shows women's agency as they plead for equal rights, references to nationalities, *Pakistani* women and *Afghan* men, reveal a conflictual relationship between the two countries, while women are represented as mediating the tension, shaping the discourse of marriage on the intersection of gender and nationality.

3. '……, there were many examples of ***Pakistani women*** marrying Afghan men'
4. 'Like many Asian countries, ***Pakistani women*** form a major part of the labour…'

Example 4, however, portrays women as a major part of the labour force, illustrating a gradual change in the public sphere as more women have entered the workforce. However, women's entry in the public sphere is not without challenges, as such constructions, despite acknowledging women's share in the workforce, draw attention to challenges they are facing in the form of a lack of recognition, workplace policies, and their work-life balance. When considered together, the collocation *Pakistani women* illustrates a tension in discourse, as women are represented using diverse frames that depict them as empowered actors, but also as passive recipients of social processes, and as women caught in conflictual marriages reflecting complex and often contradictory

ways in which Pakistani women are represented in media and institutional narratives. Similarly, an examination of concordances of *violence against women* highlights the multiple and intersecting forms of violence women face, including both physical and psychological violence. Certain socially imposed factors, such as infertility (Example 5), are framed as triggers that provoke aggression against women, making them targets of both direct and indirect violence while reinforcing their reproductive labor and overall marginalization within patriarchal norms. Although violence against women is legally recognized as a crime, it is often treated as a socially accepted practice, reflecting the gap between formal legislation and its weak implementation.

5. '…. Infertility, she pointed out, was a major factor that provoked ***violence against women,*** though violence had its roots in the submissive gender …..'

This weak enforcement of legislative measures is also invoked by political actors who may publicly condemn incidents of violence and express solidarity but fail to take substantive action to prevent or address them (Examples 6, 7). The manifestations of violence are diverse and pervasive, including domestic abuse, murder, sexual assault, child abuse, child marriages, honor killings, harassment, and other anti-women cultural practices. Together, these concordances present Pakistani women as simultaneously vulnerable to systemic and culturally produced violence, while exposing the persistent gap between the recognition of their rights and the realities of their lived experiences. Moreover, these constructions frequently point to marriage as a controlling mechanism through which male dominance is often formalized in a way that domestic violence becomes a socially accepted norm.

6. '***Violence against women*** in Pakistan is both a crime and a socially accepted norm…'

7. '…. across party lines, the National Assembly's last parliamentary session saw a show of solidarity among women parliamentarians from most major political parties in a chorus of condemnation of Noor Mukaddam's murder, the increasing reported incidents of ***violence against women*** and the weak implementation of …..'

The discourse surrounding the collocation *empowering women* reveals a pattern, in which the focus is on advocating for, and reinforcing the importance of empowerment rather than reflecting women's existing agency or autonomy. The following examples (8 & 9) highlight institutional and social initiatives aimed at enabling women, emphasizing the need for training, skill development, and economic participation as mechanisms to achieve empowerment. This framing indicates that women are not yet empowered; instead, empowerment is positioned as a goal that must be actively pursued through deliberate interventions and policy measures. The repeated emphasis on women's empowerment thus constructs a narrative of necessity, signaling both recognition of

current gender inequalities and the imperative for transformative action to enable women to exercise greater control over their social, economic, and political lives.

8. '…… to train female drivers, conductors and the staff the government remained steadfast in their commitment to ***empower women***'

9. '***Empowering women*** economically not only benefits women individually but also yields wide-ranging advantages…'

Concordance analysis emphasizes how women's depiction is frequently constructed through conflicting and intersecting frames of success, vulnerability to various forms of violence and social control, marriage and women's desires for empowerment. When women are portrayed via frames of accomplishment, like Samina Baig, they appear as unique personalities. On the other hand, depictions of violence against women portray them as a group that needs to be freed from restrictive standards that obscure their personal agency and accomplishments. In a similar vein, examples of *empowering women* portray them as passive agents, creating an aspirational rhetoric that suggests real empowerment is lacking. When taken as a whole, these frames reveal a conceptual divide between rhetoric, women's lived reality, and acknowledgement of women's empowerment. This also emphasizes how important it is for media portrayals of Pakistani women to be more agentic in order to bring about the necessary change that the country needs.

Conclusion

In light of the particular obstacles faced in countries with notable gender disparities, this study offers a novel viewpoint on women's representation in the media to emphasize the significance of media as one of the essential venues for framing and reframing issues for social development. The study extends Fraser's politics of representation to the digital news realm to examine Pakistani women's representation in national news media, with the understanding that women's representation in the media is suggestive of their inclusion in or exclusion from the legitimate political community. Just as the frame is a decisive factor for Fraser's politics of representation, women's representation through linguistic frames also decides whether women are the active agents of change or passive recipients of discriminatory social conditions. The study achieves its objective by employing a combination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, which facilitates the linguistic analysis and the identification of dominant discourses surrounding Pakistani women in national news media. Findings reveal a clear representational pattern where these women are represented with their individual identities in the context of success, and with their collective group identity as passive recipients of violence and aspirants of empowerment, shaping discourses of violence, marriage, control, and women's aspirational empowerment. These discourses serve to question women's legitimacy for an equitable recognition and redistribution that they

need for the country's sustainable development. While women's limited autonomy in health matters draws attention to the misrecognition of feminine identities, it also uncovers a systemic dependency of women on men in terms of financial resources and fulfilment of their basic needs. Similarly, the representation of women as victims of violence or as caught in conflictual marriages reproduces systemic marginalization of women sustained through marriage. Across all examples, the politics of recognition and redistribution intersect in complex ways and find expression in the politics of representation played out in the media.

This study sees media representations as a crucial factor in the overall struggle of women for recognition in society, as media, with its wide impact and reach, can portray agentic women to inspire a much-needed change. Thus, it is essential to analyze media representations in order to prepare and advocate for the change Pakistan needs. What media can do is to contextualize incidents that are detrimental to women and to highlight instances in which women seem more autonomous and in control of their lives. The study offers implications for media organizations and policymakers in order to facilitate the change that Pakistan needs for sustainable development.

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