

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Women's Narrativization in Extreme Discourse: A Comparative Study of Islamist and Populist Narratives in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the representation of women's roles in extreme discourse within Punjab, Pakistan while inclining towards a comparative analysis of Islamist and populist narratives. Availing on the discursive and sociocultural dimensions of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this qualitative study concentrated on revealing these ideological frameworks constructing public perceptions towards the role of women in society. Data comprised of 20 populist and 16 Islamist texts via purposive sampling collected from public speeches, newspaper articles, parliamentary debates, and religious gatherings where the sources were screened for ideological content relevant to the research questions. Through the examination of language superficially, and the ideologies and sociopolitical contexts extensively, the study aimed to reveal the dynamics of power and gender in these extreme discourses. The analysis involved thematic and narrative analysis to identify recurring themes as well as narrative patterns, capturing both moralistic and strategic framing of women's roles and exclamatory voices. Findings revealed that the Islamist discourse in Pakistan tends to emphasize moralistic portrayal of women rooted in religious cores with populist narratives predominantly reflecting political biases, representing women based on factional affiliations and treating the common female populace in a diplomatic style. This study contributes to gender studies and discourse analysis, offering insights into the local socio-political and cultural factors impacting gender representation. By highlighting how these extreme narratives contribute in determining female identities, the research provides implications for advocacy, policymaking, and future discourse studies, encouraging more balanced portrayals that respect women's voices within ideological contexts of Pakistan.

Keywords: Women's representation in extreme discourse, Fairclough's 3D model, Islamist narratives, populist narratives, gender dynamics, Punjab, Pakistan

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Introduction

Extrême Discourse refers to any form of communication or rhetoric that expresses radical or polarizing viewpoints (van Dijk, 1991; Wodak, 2015 as cited in Schledom, 2024; Sarsfield, 2024), often characterized by a sharp departure from mainstream norms. It can cover a wide spectrum of issues (e.g., political, social, cultural) and appear in a broader range of contexts, from political debates to controversial social discussions where extreme expressions of opinion are employed (Balinhas, 2023), whether or not they call for radical change or violence (Schledom, 2024). The defining feature is extremity in tone or position, serving the purpose to shock, provoke strong reactions, or draw attention to radical views. The content may be inflammatory, highly polarized, or unconventional, but it may not always encourage taking action (Loof, 2018). For instance, extreme discourse can exist in art, media, or public debate without necessarily leading to extremism or violence (Verloo, 2018; Corrochano & Lopez, 2024). Such discourses might push boundaries but stay within legal limits unless they cross into hate speech or incitement (Hietanen & Eddebo, 2023).

The intersection of religion, politics, and gender representation is a complex area within discourse studies (Khan et al., 2024), particularly in regions like Punjab, Pakistan, where ideological narratives significantly shape societal norms and public perceptions. In this context, discourse around women's roles in society often emerges through "extreme discourse" rather than "extremist discourse" (Loof, 2018). Analyzing these discourses is essential for understanding how they influence the portrayal of women within the region's socio-political and religious landscape.

Pakistan's political and religious frameworks have a deep influence on societal norms and values (Zahid et al., 2022), particularly in Punjab, a province where both political populism and religious conservatism hold sway. Islamist narratives (Qutb, 1964 as cited by Murr, 2009; Roy, 2009 as cited by Dawson, 2022; Kepel, 2003) in Pakistan generally draw on religious values, constructing moralistic frameworks for women's roles that emphasize modesty, family obligations, and spiritual responsibilities (Munir, 2011). Conversely, populist narratives (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018) often reflect factional interests, framing women's roles within nationalistic or partisan lenses. It results in varied representations based on political alliances, wherein women affiliated with certain factions may be presented in more favorable or critical terms (Yahya et al., 2022). For the women of general public, populist narratives tend to adopt a more diplomatic tone, reflecting a strategic approach to

garnering broad support while still promoting specific gendered expectations (Shahzadi et al., 2017; Shah, 2022).

Research on discourse analysis has demonstrated the effectiveness of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional (3D) Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in examining such complex ideological representations (Fairclough, 1992; as cited in 2013). Fairclough's model provides a layered framework to analyze discourse at three interconnected levels: textual or linguistic features, discursive practices, and sociocultural practices (Chng, 1996). In the context of this study, Fairclough's model is employed with a focus on the discursive and sociocultural dimensions, excluding the linguistic level to emphasize how broader social and ideological forces shape women's representations in these extreme discourses. The discursive dimension examines how these texts are produced, consumed, and interpreted within specific ideological contexts (Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002), while the sociocultural dimension explores how local cultural and historical factors influence and sustain these portrayals (Richardson, 2007).

This study's focus on comparing Islamist and populist narratives within Punjab's unique cultural context contributes to a deeper understanding of how women's voices are shaped, constrained, or amplified within Pakistan's extreme ideological discourses. By applying Fairclough's model, the study provides a nuanced approach to examining how these powerful frameworks impact the role and perception of women, offering insights that are relevant for both gender studies and discourse analysis.

Review of the Literature

In the paradigm of political discourse of Pakistan, Kuraishi (2024) examined elite rhetoric constructing post-truth narratives on the democratization of Pakistan infrastructure. The purpose of this study was to investigate how these narratives impact democracy and how public opinion is shaped by rhetoric used by elites during elections. Thus, the objectives of this study were identifying post-truth narratives in the elite rhetoric and their influence on the attempts of democratization in Pakistan. For this purpose, an interpretative methodological approach based on discourse analysis was used after purposive sampling of 1209 articles from three Pakistani newspapers published during the national elections between 2007 and 2018, and then, NVivo was utilized for coding the analyzed data.

The results show that post-truth narratives can serve as mobilizing strategies in shaping democracy and are not always detrimental, so the study establishes that post-truth narratives can foster democratization in electoral autocracies like Pakistan while contradicting the usual association with democratic declination. The study is limited to print elite media and does not incorporate digital media analysis, but at the same time introduces a new interpretative approach for analyzing post-truth as discursive strategy.

A significant work appeared recently on the rise of populism in 21st century in Pakistan along with the rise of Imran Khan (Shah, 2022). The aim of research was to examine the emergence of populism in Pakistan particularly through the political journey of Imran Khan. The objectives include how populism has shaped Pakistani politics and how Khan employed populist strategies for gaining political power. The data comprised purposive sampling of speeches and interviews of Imran Khan from 2011 to 2022 and 10 key informant interviewees (PhD scholars and professors). For analysis, Chantal Mouffe's theory of Agonistic Pluralism was amalgamated with Fairclough's 3D model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The results illustrated that Imran Khan used populist narratives of patriotism, anticorruption, and religious symbolism to mobilize the masses. Furthermore, study concluded that populism poses a threat to parliamentary democracy in Pakistan by incrementing political polarization. Although the study is limited to Pakistani political landscape and does not underscore global trends, it offers an in-depth analysis of how populism affects democratic stability in Pakistan.

Another research followed a corpus-based analysis of rhetorical techniques, vocabulary enrichment, and sentiment analysis in current political discourse in Pakistan (Nazeer, Yousaf, & Anwar, 2023). This study was designated for the aim to explore the linguistic shifts in the political rhetoric with the advancement of digital age, so the objectives of the study included analyzing changes in political language and their respective influence on political polarization and misinformation. Total 735 tweets, numerous speeches and articles as well as political texts were collected via stratified random sampling from online sources such as news sites, government archives, academic libraries, and social media. The corpus-driven analysis incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods where data was collected from different time periods and political affiliations, and involved sentiment analysis, type-token ratio (TTR), and qualitative content analysis. The results of the study portray that the political discourse has become less diverse and more

simplified, leading to massive polarization and misinformation. Hence, the conclusion is that political communication in digital age prioritizes accessibility but risks oversimplifying complex issues and promoting polarization. The study offers deep insight into the simplification of political rhetoric and its polarization though shows limitation for linguistic shifts across broader regional comparisons while focusing on mere digital platforms.

Othman (2023) unveiled implicit ideologies in political speeches giving way to respective cognitive processing. The purpose of this study lay in investigating the implicit ideologies in political discourse, thus, generated objectives exploring how these ideologies are embedded in political discourse thereby leading to proliferation of positive self-representation and negative other-representation. To conduct this research, 20 speeches (10 from male and 10 from female politicians) were selected across different national contexts, particularly focusing on the political speeches from UK, USA, Germany, and Canada through qualitative sampling based on political significance. To analyze the data, van Dijk's CDA and socio cognitive models were employed, resulting in the findings that ideologies are shaped by both social and cognitive processes, and politicians employ discursive strategies for conveying implicit ideologies. The conclusion of this study asserts that implicit ideologies are subtly conveyed through positive self-representation and negative other-representation. The study underscores a strong analysis of implicit as well as explicit ideological discourses, yet finds limitation with respect to small sample size and lack of a broader comparative framework.

Similarly, a research on ideological weaving and polarization in the political rhetoric of Pakistani politicians was executed on the propaganda tactics for positive self-representation and negative other-representation (Masroor, Khan, Aib, & Ali, 2019), the impetus of which was to analyze the ideological strategies embedded in Twitter discourse of Pakistani politicians. The main objectives were uncovering the rhetorical moves in the communication of political figures via Twitter with CDA perspective. To conduct this analysis, 80 tweets based on massive political engrossment during Panama Leaks controversy in total were compiled: 40 from Imran Khan and 40 from Maryam Nawaz from the period of political crisis encompassing October to December of 2016. In order to analyze the data, a thematic analysis for assessing polarization, positive self-representation and negative other-representation was performed utilizing van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis in combination with ideological square framework. Results

depict that the political elites use Twitter to portray a positive image of their selves while displaying negative image of their opponents, creating an us vs. them prejudice. The conclusion of this study highlights the contribution of political discourse on Twitter in the construction of ideological as well as political positions through polarization strategies. Although the study is limited in scope to only two political figures and a narrow timeframe, it tends to describe how social media platforms such as Twitter shape political discourse and, resultantly, the public opinion.

Likewise, the sociocultural propaganda faced by Sweden in election campaign discourses were analyzed by Almahfali and El-Husseini (2023) who aimed to examine the political rhetoric used by Nyans' party in sociocultural context during the tenure of election campaign. The objectives of this research were to explore how Nyans' discourse was a product of social and cultural issues and how it aligned with populist ideologies. Data focusing on the month leading up to 2022 Swedish elections was collected in the form of 66 Facebook posts, 25 photos and 21 videos from Swedish page as well as 150 Facebook posts, 79 photos, and 46 videos from Arabic page from Nyans' party through manual selection based on their relevance to sociocultural issues. To analyze the data, Critical Discourse Analysis and agenda-setting analysis were employed. Results demonstrate that discourse produced by Nyans' party emphasized sociocultural issues such as burning of Qur'an, the veil, and childcare law, often aligning with far-right narratives. It concludes that Nyans raised emotional issues appealing to Muslim community but did not represent broader immigrant population. The study is limited towards assessment of economic and social welfare issues within election campaign but presents a strong analysis of how sociocultural issues are exploited in election discourse.

With regard to the religio-political coalescence, Pally (2020) conducted a research investigating the religious rhetoric served by populism prevalent in the United States employing a rubric-based analysis of populist propaganda including religio-cultural background. The purpose of study was exploring the correspondence between populism and religio-cultural history in the United States, focusing on the US evangelicals. The objectives of this study were analyzing the roots of US populism in religio-cultural history of the country and the role of this history in shaping modern populist movements. In order to analyze these aspects, a purposive sampling of the historical documents and speeches related to American political discourse and evangelical movements was accomplished from early US history to

contemporary populism in an attempt to investigate established religious influences on US populism. This was a qualitative analysis in which cultural and religious themes in the political rhetoric were unveiled. The results of the study express that populism conceives persuasiveness in itself by incorporating in-depth influences from historical and cultural traditions in United States, particularly through religious themes, which concludes that US populism is not an aberration but profoundly intertwined with its religio-cultural arena, ultimately making it a powerful political force. The study portrays a strong cultural and historical analysis of how populism is impregnated with religious traditions; however, the study is limited to the United States and hence, lacks broader application to global populist paradigm.

In the pursuit of discursive strategies implied in religio-political narratives, Abbas, Tahir, and Qadeer (2024) conducted a corpus-based study of the agentless as well as by- passive construction in Pakistani political and religious texts. The purpose of this study was to investigate the frequency and co-occurrence of both kinds of passive structures in written discourse. Objectives of this study included an examination of the usage patterns of these structures and their rhetorical strategies in Pakistani political and religious texts. For this research, a corpus of 60 texts (30 from each genre) comprising 410,747 words was compiled from the political policy documents and religious essays. The data selection was based on the relevance of texts to political and religious registers of Pakistan. AntConc (version 4.2.4) and MAT tagger (version 2.4) were utilized for the analysis of frequencies. The results of this study stated that the agentless passives are more frequent in political texts, while by- passives are less frequent in the religious texts. Henceforth, the conclusion brought the claim that Pakistani political written discourse opts for formal and depersonalized addressing style with agentless passive constructions, while religious texts use fewer passive structures. The study offers insights into register specific linguistic patterns in Pakistani English, but lacks generalizability owing to focus on only two registers and no comparison with other varieties of English.

Moreover, a Critical Discourse Analysis of politeness strategies in 'The Nation' newspaper was performed (Khan, Basheer, & Maryam, 2024). The study was conducted for the sake of examining the ideological imposition of religio-political agendas through the columns of this newspaper. The objectives of this study revolve around checking the dissemination of media propagated religious and political ideologies and their overall impact on society. The data for this qualitative study was

collected through purposive sampling of two relevant columns from ‘The Nation’ newspaper composed by Dr. Atiique Rahman and Tariq Ali from 2023-2024, and the analysis was done by employing Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Model together with van Dijk’s CDA model. The results show that ‘The Nation’ newspaper artistically manipulates religio-political ideologies shaping public opinion. Hthe study concludes that these columns provide a positive display of Pakistani religio-political landscape though ground realities may differ. The study employs a profound qualitative analysis of ideological dissemination through media, yet limited to small dataset and no broader media comparison.

Women and Nationalism has been a subject of interest in international spheres as well. For example, a case study in Poland was conducted by Sygnowska (2022) who worked on political narratives in terms of nationalism, anti-Muslim rhetoric, and gender discourse. The purpose of this study was to analyze the role of women involved in right-wing political movements as well as their contributions to nationalism in Poland. Therefore, the objectives of study were exploring how Polish right-wing female politicians invoke women’s rights in anti-Muslim discourses to advance nationalist agendas by applying Fairclough’s three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focusing on narrative strategies and the intersections of gender and nationalism. Data selection was achieved by selected statements from media, public speeches, and parliamentary appearances on behalf of six prominent Polish right-wing female politicians: Kempa, Mazurek, Pawtowicz, Siarkowska, Szydlo, and Wisniewska. Results display that Polish right-wing female politicians invoke women’s rights in anti-immigration discourses to strengthen nationalist and xenophobic agendas. The conclusion of the study is that these politicians contribute to nationalism in Poland by promoting exclusionary politics while simultaneously benefitting from feminist legacies in their careers. The research presents a strong analysis of how right-wing politicians contribute to nationalism through discursive strategies; however, it finds limitation in generalizability due to focus on specific politicians and narrow scope.

Similarly, a research conducted by Rahbari, Longman, and Coene (2019) who inspected bio-politics keeping in view the national identity of Iran shaped by online media. The aim of this analysis encompassed an investigation of how female bodies are set up in Iran’s official online media as upholders of national identity, so the objectives revolve around an inspection of the representation of women’s bodies in nationalistic discourses in Iran between 2014-2017. The study focused on three

fundamental cases: Taraneh Alidoosti's feminist tattoo, Leila Hatami at Cannes, and women's entrance to stadiums. 90 media texts on women's bodies and nationalism were selected from the official Iranian online platforms ranging over 2014-2017. To analyze this data, Foucauldian bio-politics was applied in association with Critical Discourse Analysis as well as Feminist theory, inducing that female bodies are represented as a significant tool in constructing national identity in Iran with deviations inciting moral panic. Henceforth, it is concluded that women's bodies are central to Islamic nationalist discourse though alternative rhetoric is emerging in online spaces. Despite the limitations of this research towards focusing official online media of Iran and neglecting informal and international media perspectives, the study develops a detailed analysis of discursive construction of women's bodies in the reflection of national identity.

With reference to women's narrativization, Keil (2020) evaluated orality and speaking style in the populist rhetoric, gender discourse regarding nationalism and anti-genderism. His study focused on the goal to investigate the role of gender discourse, especially the notion of lost masculinity, in the rhetoric of AfD, a right-wing populist party in Germany. The objectives of this analysis were exploring how gender themes correspond with different populist narratives and help in framing AfD as the authentic voice of ordinary Germans. This was a qualitative study where data containing key speeches, policy papers, manifestos, and public statements of AfD politicians from 2013-2017 was processed with Fairclough's 3-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis was manipulated. The results express that AfD exploits anti-genderism as a rhetorical device to link its disparate policies creating a populist dichotomy of us vs. them. The study concludes that the gender discourse in AfD's rhetoric serves as an articulation of ethno-nationalist notions without directly resorting to extremist language, thereby broadening its appeal. Nonetheless, it lacks quantitative data and lacks a broader European context.

Marcora (2024), into the bargain, carried out an analytical study on the Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni's Femonationalist stance on Instagram. This was a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) combined with the Social Semiotic Theory which aimed at exploring the semiotic features manipulated by Meloni for the sake of disseminating Femonationalism through Instagram. The objectives of this study were identifying the semiotic resources in dominant discourses which support Femonationalist agenda in Meloni's communication. To conduct this study, 67 theoretically sampled cases had been identified in total from Meloni's Instagram

posts, aligned with Femonationalism, spanning between 2020-2022, from which 12 posts were selected for the sake of in-depth analysis. The results of the research indicate that semiotic resources like high deontic modality stand for dominant discourses including women's rights, violence against women, and national identity, which takes to the conclusion that Giorgia Meloni uses Femonationalist discourse in order to promote traditional gender roles as well as national identity through social media. The plus point of study refers to employment of both visual and linguistic resources conveying Femonationalist messages, while holding a limited scope of consideration as to be limited to Instagram and excluding other forms of media ecosystem.

Meanwhile, a Corpus-driven Critical Discourse Analysis of UK newspapers was also conducted in order to assess media oriented female voter discourse (Verheigen, 2023). The aim of this study was a critical examination of UK newspaper's representing their female voters during 2015-2017 elections and the EU referendum. Thus, the objectives of this research were to explore the marginalization of female voters through linguistic constructions. A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) was employed, incorporating van Leeuwen's social actor representation in this study, where the corpus comprised UK newspaper articles from Nexus UK encompassing 2015, 2016, and 2017 elections and the EU referendum. The diachronic data collection was based on political orientation, publication type, and the gender of author of these newspapers. A mixed method approach for keyword analysis and social actor representation study was selected. The results find that female voters, particularly those seen as non-normative, are under-presented and often marginalized. Thus, the study reaches to the conclusion that female voters' voices go unheard: often belittled or treated as invisible in political discourse. The study is limited to newspapers and lacks interviews with voters and real-time social media analysis, but still acts as a strong voice raising awareness of female voter exclusion from UK electoral arena.

Verloo (2018) had scrutinized the political discourse in an attempt to reveal the implanted discursive strategies, gendered knowledge, and epistemic dynamics. The purpose was to understand how extreme-right populist parties in Netherlands oppose gender equality along with feminist politics. The objectives owing to this motivation were to analyze the role of knowledge production in shaping opposition to feminist politics focusing on epistemic dynamics and extreme-right populist narratives. In order to conduct this research, political texts, speeches, and public

statements illustrating discursive shifts between 2004-2017 were selected from the positions taken by extreme-right populist parties in Netherlands such as PVV and FvD. To process the data, Social Complexity Theory by Walby (2009) and discursive institutionalism were employed in collaboration with the Critical Discourse Analysis of these political texts and party programs. It is deduced that these populist parties exploit discursive strategies for the aim to deny the existence of gender inequality and oppose feminist politics. Therefore, the conclusion of this analysis is that the epistemic dimensions of opposition to feminist politics are crucial in evaluating the impact of extreme-right populist parties. Notwithstanding the efficacies, the study lacks empirical data from voters and broader movements and is limited to textual and discursive analysis exclusively.

On contrary, a study was conducted in Pakistan in which Jan and Malik (2022) surveyed the theatre of public punishment in Pakistan by looking over the social media language depicting power relations and public rhetoric. The motif behind the study was an efficient examination of the discourse of public hanging on social media reflecting power dynamics in Pakistan. The objectives of this study were investigating how public discourse regarding hanging reflects power of the State and silencing of alternative discourses. Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory (intertextual analysis) was combined with Critical Discourse Analysis for inquiring 735 tweets on social media using hashtags like #HangTheRapist and #JusticeForZainab. This data was manually collected from multiple time periods (2018, 2020) during the outrage of key social events using Twitter's advanced search function, which resulted in the fact that public hanging discourse is used to propagate State power by reinforcing patriarchy and silencing justice-seeking women. The research concludes that public hanging discourse reifies patriarchal structures with State using discourse in order to maintain power and control over society. Although the analysis is limited to social media discourse and lacks empirical data from other media and social contexts, it clearly analyzes the role of public discourse in reinforcing State's power and patriarchal norms.

A critical evaluation of political incorrectness, verbal aggression, and power dynamics in Pakistani social media rhetoric was studied by Abbas, Khan, and Tabassum (2023) which aimed to explore the use of political incorrectness as a tool in political discourse. The objectives of this study were to highlight the politically incorrect statements used by Pakistani politicians and to examine the motivations behind them. Fairclough's 3D model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was

employed for this study where data was collected in the form of 735 tweets by political activists across different timeframes through random sampling focusing on the political unrest of the state. Results show that political incorrectness is used as a powerful tool to degrade, mock, and ridicule political opponents. The conclusion of the study is that political incorrectness molds public opinion, particularly among less educated individuals, so as to aid political parties achieving their aim. The study has limited contextualization because of analyzing only on the contemporary political scenario of the country and not going beyond social media; still it radiates an in-depth analysis of political incorrectness and its impacts on shaping public opinion in Pakistan.

Besides, Afzaal, Naqvi, and Raees (2022) had conducted a collocation analysis of the populist rhetoric and media discourse representing Naya Pakistan. The motive behind this study lay into an evaluation of PTI's populist rhetoric represented by media from 2016 to 2018. Therefore, the objectives of research encompassed analyzing shifts in PTI media coverage from promoting their rhetoric before election to criticizing its performance post-election. Corpus was developed from the Pakistani English language newspaper articles, headlines, and editorials published between 2016-2018 through purposive sampling based on election coverage. The corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) incorporated keyword frequency analysis, collocation analysis and the concordance lines. The results of this study state that media coverage shifted from promoting PTI's vision before the elections to criticizing its governance failures post-election. The study, hence, reached at the conclusion that PTI's populist rhetoric demonstrated a shift in media portrayal as being initially valorized but later criticized. Overall, the research exhibits a strong use of corpus linguistics to highlight these shifts but is limited to English-language sources and specially to a specific time period.

Subsequently, Khalid, Akbar, and Khan (2023) explored proselytization in the religious rhetoric and extreme discourse in Pakistani context. The purpose of this study was basically an exploration of the factors driving radicalization among Pakistani women and its impact on society. The objectives included identifying how sectarian teachings and extremist narratives have contributed to radicalization of Pakistani women. This was a qualitative research using descriptive and analytical approaches along with discourse analysis of religious and extremist narratives. Data collection was done through political speeches, religious institutions, historical accounts, and interviews. The results deducted that socially endorsed beliefs and

religious narratives used to promote extremist ideologies drive radicalization among Pakistani women. This concludes that religious radicalization in Pakistan is exacerbated by extremist organizations that exploit women's sentiments to reinforce their agendas. The research presents a strong analysis of the role of religion in radicalization, particularly among women apart from the fact that implications lack empirical data, non-negotiable for a comparative analysis with other regions than Pakistan.

A most relevant study appears from Zahid, Sial, and Rana (2022) who scrutinized the framing of religious populism in Pakistani social perspective. The purpose of this research was to explore the drivers of religio-populist rhetoric in Pakistani, specifically the construction of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) claiming itself as an advocate of Islamic ideology. Henceforth, the objectives of this study were to explain the rise of TLP through religious populism while focusing on its mobilization strategies. The framework applied was Social Movement Theory which analyzed the selected speeches, public talks, interviews, publicly available documents, and secondary data sources related to TLP from a timeframe between 2015-2027 pertaining to key events in Pakistan. Qualitative content analysis together with Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to draw results which claim that TLP constructed a populist narrative through securitization of religious concepts like Hurmat-e-Rasool and Khatam-e-Nabuwat. The study establishes that TLP's use of religious populism led to social radicalization particularly among lower and marginalized classes. Although the research is limited to TLP and provides no comparative analysis with other populist movements, it provides a strong insight into mobilization strategies of populist rhetoric.

Another study conducted by Yahya, Anwar, and Zaki (2022) analyzed the expression of gender language in political media discourse in Pakistan. The motif of this study was to investigate how women are represented in political talk shows and how this impacts the overall image of gender roles in Pakistan. Thus, the objectives of this study were analyzing the quality, frequency, and nature of women's participation in Pakistani political media rhetoric. Data was collected by purposive sampling of top political talk shows aired on Pakistani television between September 2020 and February 2021 based on their TRP rating. In order to analyze this data, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focusing on textual, discursive, and sociocultural levels was adopted. Results demonstrate that women remain marginalized in political talk shows in both representation and the treatment they receive during discussions.

Therefore, the conclusion of this study is that women's empowerment is still a distant goal in Pakistani politics as they are underrepresented and often trivialized in media discourse. The study highlights gender dynamics in political talk shows while offering insights into patriarchal structures in media though limited to a small data set and exclusively focused on specific context of television talk shows.

Then again, Amin, Fayyaz, and Mahmood (2024) explored the gender framing in Pakistani politics by the print and electronic media through narrative construction collectively dealing with societal norms. This was a qualitative study, the purpose of which was to investigate the depiction of Pakistani female politicians in media. The objectives of this study were to elaborate the media narratives as well as framing strategies directed towards portrayal of women in politics over time. Therefore, a Corpus-Assisted Diachronic Discourse Analysis (CADDA) was amalgamated with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) along with the Framing as well as Feminist theories. The corpus was developed by purposive sampling based on media coverage related to female Pakistani politicians, specifically from print and electronic media. To analyze the data, corpus-based keyword analysis, collocation analysis, and concordance plot analysis were carried out. The results of this study depict that patriarchal norms and gender biases persist in media illustration of female politicians though a gradual shift towards positive recognition is evident. This concludes that the media representation of female politicians in Pakistan is influenced by traditional gender roles which acts as a hindrance in their engagement in politics. The study carries out a stout diachronic analysis while tracing attitude shifts over time, but lacks a broader scope by limiting to print and electronic media and leaving the stance of social media analysis.

In addition to this, a gender discourse-based exploration of military rhetoric was carried out by Khan (2024) who aimed at analyzing the contribution of media wing (ISPR) of the Pakistani Armed Forces in shaping a feminine patriotic identity. The objectives of this study were to explore the role of military discourse in promotion of a specific image of women as patriotic subjects. To pursue this research, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) was employed on the editorials in *Hilal for Her* magazine issued from March editions between 2018-2024 while focusing on the narratives related to women's role in Pakistani society and nation building. Results demonstrate that the magazine does construct women as subjects of national-patriotism, reinforcing traditional gender roles in strong association with the military and national identity. The conclusion of this research posits that Pakistani

military shapes gender discourse in correspondence with the national interests by prevailing the stance of an ideal patriotic womanhood. The study carries out an in-depth analysis of the military construction of female subjectivity of patriotism though us limited to the content from mere one magazine and its portrayal of women.

The aspect of interdiscursivity was previously studied by Farukh, Haroon, and Mahrukh (2022) by applying Critical Discourse Analysis. The motive of the qualitative study was to highlight the cultural impact of drama serials and, so, to reveal the social structures in Pakistani media. Henceforth, the objectives of analysis included bringing light upon the exhibition of social power, violence, and hegemonic role of patriarchy in Pakistani drama serials. For this purpose, relevant scenes from four Urdu drama serials: Baandi, Cheekh, Baghi, Ab Daikh Khuda Kia Karta Hai, were selected, and analyzed via Fairclough's three-dimensional model. Results express that discursive patterns are a vivid revelation of sociocultural norms as well as power dynamics, which leads to the conclusion that interdiscursivity in Pakistani dramas reflects societal power dynamics together with respective issues. Although the study has limited generalizability towards the panorama of the whole Pakistani society, it offers insight into societal pressures and hegemony through popular media.

Another study using Critical Discourse Analysis was conducted by Arslan, Haroon, and Shakeel (2022) upon short story titled 'My Son the Fanatic' in order to inspect the social power relations and identity crises in a postcolonial hybrid culture. The objectives of this study were to identify conflicts, dominance, and power dynamics in Pakistani literature. Data were collected through manual selection of impactful dialogues and lexicons manipulated by main characters. The results show power conflict between father and son where female characters are marginalized reflecting societal gender norms. This concludes that power is interactive; both characters share dominance, but male dominance persists, especially through language and action. This analysis displays a strong framework application and qualitative analysis of language in literature; however, it focuses primarily on power, overlooking other issues like religion, identity, and generational conflict.

The review on literature addresses several notable gaps in existing literature related to discourse, ideology, and gender. A primary gap lies in the limited focus on women's voices within extreme ideological contexts, especially in Islamist and

populist discourses. While previous research has examined gender in media and political narratives, few studies have explored how women's voices are represented or shaped within these specific ideologies. Moreover, most studies address either Islamist or populist narratives in isolation, neglecting a comparative analysis that could reveal contrasting patterns in ideological depiction of female community. Also, here is a lack of region-specific studies, particularly in Punjab, where sociocultural dynamics play a crucial role in determining discourse patterns, envisaging the impact of local beliefs and cultural norms on ideological narratives. The rationale for this research is thus rooted in addressing these gaps through Critical Discourse Analysis by uncovering the discursive strategies that define Islamist and populist narratives regarding women's agency within extreme ideological contexts, a relatively unexplored area, especially in South Asia.

Methodology

❖ Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically drawing on Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional (3D) Model, which integrates linguistic analysis with sociocultural contexts in order to apprehend how discourse shapes and is shaped by social power dynamics (Fairclough, 1992; as cited in 2013). Fairclough's model is particularly dedicated to exploration of how discourses construct, reinforce, or challenge social representations. The very focus of this research lies in discursive and sociocultural dimensions, excluding the linguistic dimension, to better align with the research objectives and context.

In Fairclough's model, the discursive level examines how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed within a specific ideological framework. For this research, the discursive practice dimension involves identifying how these ideological frameworks are embedded within discourse practices (Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002), previewing representations and influencing audience perceptions of women. By investigating the discursive strategies pertaining to each narrative type, this study aims to reveal the ideological framing of women's roles and recognition in Islamist and populist paradigms.

The sociocultural dimension of Fairclough's model further contextualizes these narratives by examining the social, cultural, and historical influences underpinning such discourses (Richardson, 2007). This level of analysis is particularly relevant

owing to the unique socio-political context of Punjab, Pakistan, where cultural and religious values play a significant role in maintaining or molding public stances. By examining this interplay, the study aims to uncover certain socio-cultural factors that affect the construction as well as sustenance of these narratives within Punjab's social landscape.

This theoretical framework, rooted in Fairclough's 3D model, provides a structured approach for exploring complex intersection of gender, ideology, and culture within Islamist as well as populist narratives (Chng, 1996). It, thus, positions the study within CDA's critical perspective, dealing with reflection of power structures and societal values while particularly looking over the manner in which women's voices are amplified or marginalized within extreme discourse.

❖ **Research Design**

This evaluative study employs Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to compare populist and religious narratives on women's role in extreme discourse in Pakistani perspective. The study focuses on discursive and sociocultural dimensions of model, highlighting vast ideological constructions over linguistic features, aligning with the comparative goal. The scope of study is regionally centered on Punjab, where both religious and political ideologies have a substantial impact on public opinion.

❖ **Data Collection**

Data collection procedures involved gathering relevant online posts and video clips from social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, along with additional sources through Google searches. Each source has been screened for content directly related to the focus of study. Since this study excludes the linguistic dimension of analysis, no transcription of content based on videos was performed. The data incorporate public speeches on national days, national newspaper articles, parliamentary debates, and religious gatherings across varying time frames in Punjab, Pakistan, reflecting political and religious narratives towards women's representation on behalf of political parties, influential leaders, and prominent religious figures.

❖ **Sampling**

This qualitative study employs a purposive sampling method in correspondence with the research focus on women's representation in extreme discourse. The

sample size consists of 16 samples from populist discourse and 14 from Islamic rhetoric, collectively considered representative for achieving the objectives of study, as the balanced selection criteria includes content that clearly reflects ideological themes related to women's roles and rights, emphasizing demographic representations relevant to both populist and religious narratives within Punjab's socio-cultural landscape.

❖ **Data Analysis**

The data analysis is guided by Fairclough's 3D model within Critical Discourse Analysis, focusing on the discursive and sociocultural levels to explore how Islamist and populist narratives construct women's roles. The analysis follows a systematic process: data has initially been evaluated for thematic alignment with the study objectives, and then coded within each narrative. Finally, findings have been interpreted within Punjab's sociocultural context, allowing for a comparative understanding of gender representation across both discourse types.

❖ **Validity and Reliability of Methodology**

The validity of study is ensured by corroborating sources of produced discourses such as public speeches, newspaper articles, and social media posts providing varied perspectives on women's representation in Islamist and populist narratives. Peer debriefing has also been conducted to enhance objective evaluation of findings. To affirm reliability, compatible criteria have been applied across all data as per Fairclough's model, and transparency has been maintained by thoroughly documenting data collection and references, qualifying the research for further proceeding.

However, certain limitations might have affected validity and reliability, such as exclusion of the linguistic dimension quitting detailed inspection of language features, and lacking evidence of sociocultural reflections upon certain events. Despite these constraints, the study provides a reliable analysis of discursive trends within the ideological framework of Punjab, Pakistan.

❖ **Ethical Considerations**

As this study does not involve human subjects, and as all data were collected from publicly available, broadcasted and published content accessible through online sources, formal ethical approval was not required by ethics review board. Moreover, confidentiality is maintained as no private or sensitive information of individuals is

included; all sources are public and do not involve identifiable personal data. Ethical protocols have been regarded for upholding the research integrity.

Analytical Discussion

❖ Findings and Discussion

The study delves into the narratives towards women fabricated via extreme discourses on behalf of the populist and religious persona belonging to Punjab administrative circle, both of which play a crucial role in representing the overall arena of a state in respect of their cultural norms as well as social credentials of Pakistan. Interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 1995) is studied in these religio-political statements for the sake of inquiring the ways in which discursive practices 'contribute to reproduction and alteration of the order of discourse these are part of' (Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002). On the other hand, sociocultural implication of such discourses are examined in order to probe into the production and reproduction of social realities while maintaining or transforming social belief system' (Richardson, 2007).

❖ 'Politics is not for good girls': Populist Crossroads

On discursive level, critical evaluation offers a notion that extreme discourses have been manipulated as an integral tool for suppression of alternative constructions of meanings leading to subsequent maintenance of hegemony (Fairclough, 1992; Sygnowska, 2022) within political panorama of almost every republic, and not to exclude the democracies (Churchill, 1947).

Having a bird's eye view on the populist stances of partisans in context of Punjab, Pakistan, there are observed no lime lighted derogatory or depreciating statements within public talks by the contemporary political parties' chairpersons. Conversely, they tend to maintain a positive, encouraging self-image in public opinion; for instance, the appreciating remarks and encouragement towards the women of common masses has been a consistent part of Imran Khan's speeches during the election campaigns and national protests as well such as in PTI procession held in Islamabad (Khan, 2017). Similarly, massive instances of Mariyam Nawaz's speeches are evident to promote their governmental agendas for women empowerment (Nawaz, 2024), and role in national development on occasions such as women's day ceremony and launching motor bikes scheme for girls in Punjab (Nawaz, 2024).

Nevertheless, the arty representatives have often been recorded to make disputable remarks on the women of rival parties, and, at times, the conflict has transcended to considerable rush of conflicting debates among dissenting groups in parliamentary sessions and media talks as well. For instance, in a parliament session held on June 08, 2016, an antagonism flared up when Khawaja Muhammad Asif, the defense minister on behalf of PMLN government, pronounced PTI's activist, Shireen Mazari, with a mocking remark 'tractor trolley' on being repeatedly interrupted by the lady among other opposition members. "Please make this tractor trail shup up, Mr. Speaker. They cannot even manage their household. Never had witnessed such a worthless opposition!" He added (Asif, 2016). The incident gave way to a web of cross-talks on public as well as political level, taking it as an attempt to harassment and body shaming, often faced by politicians, female membership in particular. For instance, in a talk show named 'On the Front', political analysts imparted equal blame on the assembly speaker for not playing arbitrary role at the occasion, giving an impression of partiality towards one faction (Shahid, 2016). In response, the PMLN spokesperson declared it as a natural frustrating remark common to aggressive verbal exchanges during parliamentary sessions (Ali, 2016).

During the tenure of PTI government spanning 2018-21, Shireen Mazari who was then the minister of human rights, made a blazing speech in national assembly regarding incrementing cases of rape and murder of women countrywide, putting forward a stance that 'a woman must be esteemed as per her bestowed rights of womanhood, in equivalence to patriarchs, but not because of her correspondence to her male relations. Nobody is qualified to utter a word on her dressing or moving outdoors alone, without any Mehram as it refers to their legal right...' (Mazari, 2020). The mentioned excerpt of Mazari's speech was considered a similitude to elite liberal feminism on behalf of religious deliberators and conventional public as a foreigner right demanded against societal norms and Shariah as well (Munir, 2011). However, the modernists hold it as an integral right for women empowerment in 21st century Pakistan (Mazari, 2020).

On the other hand, the PTI member of National Assembly, Muhammad Iqbal Afridi, made a comment on the inappropriate attire of female coworkers. "There should not be such democracy here that ruins a society, he added, demanding that there should be an SOP for dressing imposed on NA committee meetings because such demonstration might have adverse impact on the ethical dimension of society (Afridi, 2024). The stance was taken as a sexist remark by government ministry who,

in turn, demanded for his suspension from lawmaking wing (Zaigham, 2024). Moreover, the panel's chair, Muhammad Idrees, declared Afridi's statement as a result of misunderstanding as women's dressing is a personal choice, and apologized for Afridi's statement (Zaigham, 2024).

The current regime-change in Pakistan instigated a prolonged wave of aggression and condemnation in the political backdrop, giving in to political, economic, and societal instability in the country (Lodhi, 2024) particularly blazing the tension between PMLN government along with establishment, and the PTI activists together with supporting masses (Whitney et al. 2024) showcasing numerous instances for the exchange of extreme discourses among entities. After the abolition of PTI government in early 2022 (Haleemi & Shah, 2024), there commenced an all-to-all series of arrests of the PTI workers, specifically, women workers have been detained on adjournment (Haleemi & Shah, 2023), causing a major setback to the integrity of women on state level, particularly from Punjab. Among the detainees, Khadija Shah, Alia Hamza, and 7 other accused women talked to media while being taken to the court on June 2, 2023 (Hamza, 2022), stating that they had been arrested from their homes at midnight and have been kept in remand for 25 days without introducing them to magistrate, which reflects state's disrespectful attitude, or rather, inhumane attitude, towards womanhood (Shah & Hamza, 2023). Male members of PTI have also been observed protesting against these unjustified arrests and prolonged imprisonment of their women coworkers including Yasmeen Rashid, Alia Hamza among others (Khan, 2024)

Moreover, bitter exchanges of discourse keep going on between PMLN government officials and PTI ministers. Women are equally confident in expression, and tend to speak for their as well as their party's rights (Khalid et al., 2023). For example, in parliament session of April 28, 2024, PTI MNA, Zartaj Gul, boldly talking about the forced resignations on behalf of PTI women, leaving PTI with a few strong female devotees, claiming that the oppressors would have disrespected the sister of Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan for their interests (Gul, 2024). In another session, Khawaja Asif again got scandalized for uttering insulting remarks for PTI women, calling them 'trash of Khan' and 'PTI remnants' while reprimanding the PTI leader over their reign (Asif, 2023) Again, there was a great retaliation arisen from PTI women as well as media persons condemning Asif's unchecked language. PTI senator, Zarqa Soharvardi, declared Asif's attitude as a flaw in his upbringing (Soharvardi, 2023). Another PTI senator, Fozia Arshad, shared a video message while expressing her

resentment over Asif's misbehavior, asserting that the incident reflect his caliber and family background, proclaiming it as a general instinct of PMLN representatives towards opposition women (Arshad, 2023). In response to criticism over his PTI women remarks, Asif proclaimed that women on both sides are actually the product of training given to them by their leader, and so PTI women are vol due to their unethical leadership (Asif, 2023).

'Politics is not for good girls' (Sygnowska, 2022): the social dimensions of Punjab, in fact, the holistic view of Pakistan towards active involvement, or rather mere inclusive debates, in the political landscape has remained controversial (Khan et al., 2023), and the situation becomes intensified at the nexus of ideological disagreements among rival groups. This has been a perpetually contentious practice (Verloo, 2018) followed in the Punjab civil administration to scandalize leadership of opposing factions, specifically their women, in order to make the overall position of these parties controversial in public opinion owing to the fact that dignity has been a prioritized approach while establishing reliability on folks in local culturalism (Nussbaum, 2014). Consequently, this factor halts active participation of women from respectable middleclass family backgrounds, making the general democratic panorama of the state founded on the 'Politics of Fear' (Wodak, 2015). Resultantly, in an attempt to nullify the stance of opposition, silencing the women voices is a major agenda in Punjab governance as well as throughout Pakistani populist infrastructure (Khan et al., 2023).

❖ 'The fair sex is your department': Religious Orientation

Being a Muslim state, the religious wing holds a dominant role in administration of Pakistan in addition to determining majority of mass attitudes (Zahid et al., 2022). Religious populism is predominantly prevalent in state's infrastructure (Naseemullah & Chhibber, 2024). As far the religious scholars popular with public are concerned, no aggressive or extreme discourse is evident because of vindication of women roles and rights chartered by Islam, and so, they approve a respectful and protective stance towards women; for example, the attributions from Moulana Tariq Jameel, a celebrated Pakistani Islamic, Mufti Tariq Mas'ood, Dr. Zakir Naik, and Khadim Hussain Rizwi from TLP, a religion driven political party of Pakistan (Zahid et al., 2022). These scholars do talk about the necessity of Pardah, domestic role of women, and male dominance ascribed by Islam, yet these discourses do not qualify to be included in extreme rhetoric.

However, although the common religious perspective in Pakistani society is beneficent towards women, situation seems pathetic when it comes to religion driven political parties such as Moulana Fazlur Rahman's use of vulgar language for the women followers and participants in PTI processions. The actual discourse is not available in public platforms, which in turn, received a fierce disapproval from social media, public as well as PTI activists such as Zartaj Gul, Nusrat Cheema pronouncing him a 'cheap person'. Additionally, former Senate speaker declared his words depicting an unethical family background. Moreover, Qasim Suri, Fawad Chaudhary, and Dr. Adnan Khalid claimed this incident to be annihilation of Fazlur Rahman's political career.

The ex-cricketer of Pakistan, Saeed Anwar, came into a social rift while talking about the rise of divorce rates in Pakistan, attributing it to women's demand for freedom to work and stressing the 'risks' of women embracing financial independence, stating that 'Since women have started working in Pakistan, divorce rates have climbed by 30% in the last three years' (Anwar, undated video clip). Anwar's narrative was considered controversial as taken against women empowerment and financial independence, and stirred social media controversy.

Moreover, on his visit to Pakistan, Dr. Zakir Naik, an Islamic public orator, seemed criticizing Maryam Nawaz as being Punjab Chief Minister, in particular, and establishment of female government, in general, declaring Nawaz's government non-Islamic, as a single woman would be sitting with male cabinet alone, and would have to handshake with male delegates. He claimed women's governance to be a hindrance in national progress.

Remember that the study has addressed those statements exclusively that are confined to mere statements and Islam-oriented declarations on behalf of different persona, and does not include aggressive talks which consequently incite aggression among people such as TLP leader, Naeem Chattha Qadri's provoking expressions against the women of Qadyani cult.

Reaching an agreement on the above-mentioned instances, it can be asserted that Islamist rhetoric in Pakistan is not that extreme generally (Khan et al., 2024), but that minute extent, which is welcomed by masses, especially the peoples known to be influenced followers of these Islamic scholars (Yilmaz & Morieson, 2023).

Limitations

This study, while providing valuable insights into the representation of women in Islamist and populist narratives within Punjab, Pakistan, has certain limitations: Firstly, this study hits upon the analysis of extreme discourses while focusing exclusively on the discursive and sociocultural dimensions of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. Textual analysis is almost impossible to inspect due to limited or vague reception on electronic and print media sources, often due to unsophisticated choice of words and coarse statements on behalf of spokespersons, yet the study of specific language features might further enrich understanding of these narratives.

Another limitation is the reliance on publicly available, online sources such as speeches, articles, and media content, limiting access to all relevant perspectives, specifically those outside mainstream media.

Lastly, the study is regionally confined to Punjab, which may limit the applicability of findings to other regions in Pakistan or beyond. Despite that, the analysis offers a focused and meaningful account of extreme discourses shaping women's roles within this specific context.

Recommendations

The findings serve monitory purpose in reviewing religio-political stances towards women, and so advocate for promoting a balanced and respectful outlook for women in both religious and political discourses as well as by policymakers, media practitioners, and community leaders. Political and religious leaders ought to consider the societal impact of their rhetoric, and avoid lodging the narratives that may reinforce stereotypes or the factional political biases. Furthermore, educational initiatives plus awareness programs can also be developed to cultivate the articulateness of critical media, enabling audience to identify partial voices and appreciate narratives that respect women's roles and dedication in social welfare.

Implications

The implications of this research are substantial for both discourse analysis and gender studies within Pakistani sociopolitical landscape. By providing insights into

the framing of women in Islamist and populist narratives, the study yields for a discernment of the influence discourse lays on public perceptions towards gender. Academically, the study's focus on Fairclough's 3D model in non-Western contexts showcases ideological constructions based on local cultural, political, and religious accounts.

Future Trends

Future researches pertaining to this subject matter can expand the horizon of this study by including the linguistic dimension of Fairclough's 3D model, analyzing the specific language features that contribute to ideological framing in extreme discourse. Moreover, changes in women's representation can be investigated in response to political shifts providing apprehension of evolving discursive patterns. Additionally, delving into the role of social media in shaping public narratives could reveal new trends influencing public attitudes. Expanding this research to religious minorities of Pakistan might also offer a comparative perspective on how extreme discourses about women influence mutual relationships.

Conclusion

This study highlights distinct portrayal of women within Islamist and populist narratives in Punjab, Pakistan. Apart from exceptions, the Islamist discourse frames female roles through a moralistic lens rooted in religious values while stressing upon women's responsibility in maintaining household and nation building as well, while populist discourses strategically represent women based on political affiliations, favoring their supporters and representatives while addressing the general public diplomatically. Since the socio-cultural atmosphere of Punjab heavily influences these portrayals, it seems to reinforce conservative gender expectations in both ideological frameworks. Nonetheless, women show agency by negotiating or reinterpreting their roles within these narratives. This research calls for balanced and respectful representations of women, contributing with insights that are valuable for media, policy making, and gender studies within regional discourse analysis.

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Appendices

Populist Narratives

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