

Power, Surveillance, and Control: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Case No. 9

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Abstract

This paper examines how power is constructed and exercised through discourse in the Pakistani television drama Case No. 9 (Geo TV). Drawing on Michel Foucault's concepts of discourse, power, surveillance, discipline, and power/knowledge, the study applies Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to selected dialogue from the drama. It explores how language regulates behavior, constructs identities, and reinforces institutional and social authority. The analysis focuses on exchanges in police stations, courtrooms, and domestic settings to show how discourse shapes both institutional practice and everyday social interaction. The findings indicate that institutional discourse constructs identities such as guilty/innocent, credible/non-credible, and moral/immoral, while family discourse reinforces silence, conformity, and social control. The study shows that power operates not only through formal institutions but also through everyday language and cultural norms, and it adds a Foucauldian reading to discourse-oriented studies of Pakistani television drama.

Keywords: Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, Michel Foucault, Surveillance, Institutional Authority, Social Control, Pakistani Television Drama

Introduction

Pakistani television dramas have become significant subjects of scholarly inquiry because they represent social values, gender relations, and institutional practices. Beyond entertainment, these dramas portray public attitudes toward justice, women's rights, and family life. Research on Pakistani television has examined the representation of women, patriarchal expectations, and the relationship between popular media and social norms (Ahmed & Wahab, 2019; Muneer, 2019; Saigol, 2014). Studies of gender and justice have also drawn attention

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to the ways television narratives portray women's experiences within legal and domestic settings (Zafar, 2018).

Case No. 9, broadcast on Geo TV, engages with the aftermath of sexual abuse and a survivor's pursuit of justice. The drama presents the survivor's encounters with law-enforcement authorities, the courtroom, and her family, which provides a basis for examining how language constructs credibility, authority, and social expectations (Khanzada, 2025). Its dialogue offers an opportunity to investigate how institutional procedures and everyday interactions position a survivor in relation to established expectations of morality, reputation, and acceptable conduct.

This paper draws on Michel Foucault's theory of discourse, power, and surveillance. Foucault (1972, 1977, 1980) argues that power cannot be understood solely as a possession held by particular individuals or institutions. It operates through social relations, systems of knowledge, and practices that establish the conditions under which particular claims and identities become legitimate. Discourse, in this account, does not simply describe social reality; it helps constitute the categories through which people understand themselves and others. Mills (1997) and Smart (2002) explain how this perspective connects language, institutional authority, and the production of social subjects.

Research on Pakistani television has examined how female characters are represented through familial honor, morality, and social convention. Such representations can reproduce patriarchal expectations even when a drama addresses women's rights or exposes injustice (Ahmed & Wahab, 2019; Muneer, 2019; Saigol, 2014). Work on gender, law, and justice in Pakistani television has extended this discussion to institutional representation (Zafar, 2018). Discourse-analytic studies have also examined how language constructs ideology, hierarchy, and power in Pakistani dramas (Mirza et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2024). These studies provide a basis for examining the linguistic processes through which authority and social expectations are represented.

The present study focuses on the discursive construction of institutional authority in Case No. 9. Rather than treating the drama primarily as an illustration of gender inequality, it examines how power operates through particular linguistic choices and interactions. This approach draws on Foucault's account of power as productive and relational, with attention to the ways discourse establishes credibility, defines

acceptable conduct, and positions individuals within institutional and social hierarchies (Foucault, 1972, 1980).

Case No. 9 is suitable for this investigation because its narrative includes the police station, the courtroom, and the family home. These settings allow the analysis to examine how similar discursive mechanisms, including questioning, presupposition, and evaluative judgment, recur across different social and institutional contexts. Although the stated purposes of police questioning, courtroom argument, and family discussion differ, each can be examined for how it defines the survivor's position and regulates the terms under which her account is received.

The broader significance of the study concerns the representation of people who report sexual abuse. Television dramas can portray how police officers, legal professionals, and family members respond to survivors, thereby presenting particular understandings of victim-blaming, credibility, and institutional accountability. Research on Pakistani television has already examined gender representation and the relationship between media and social expectations (Ahmed & Wahab, 2019; Saigol, 2014; Zafar, 2018). A close analysis of dialogue adds a linguistic dimension to this work by examining how such expectations are enacted within particular interactions. Because the material is fictional, the findings concern the drama's representation of institutional and social practices rather than the actual conduct of police or courts.

❖ Problem Statement

Research on Pakistani television drama has examined gender representation, social issues, and the construction of ideology through media discourse (Ahmed & Wahab, 2019; Mirza et al., 2021; Muneer, 2019; Rehman et al., 2024; Saigol, 2014). However, the discursive construction of institutional power through surveillance, normalization, and subject formation requires further investigation within this context. Critical Discourse Analysis has been used to examine relationships between language, ideology, and social inequality, particularly in relation to the reproduction and contestation of power (Fairclough, 2015). A Foucauldian approach raises related but distinct questions about how institutions establish legitimate knowledge, regulate conduct, and construct individuals as particular kinds of subjects (Foucault, 1977, 1980; Mills, 1997).

The problem addressed in this paper is how institutional and domestic discourse in Case No. 9 represents and reproduces power relations through everyday language. The study examines how questioning, presupposition, evaluative judgment, and appeals to social norms position the survivor as an object of scrutiny. It also considers how the survivor's pursuit of justice contests the discourses that encourage silence and conformity.

❖ **Significance of the Study**

This paper treats Case No. 9 as a discursive site where authority is represented as produced and sustained through language. It applies Foucauldian concepts commonly used to examine institutions, knowledge, and social regulation to a popular television drama (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1980; Mills, 1997). The analysis examines how a limited set of linguistic mechanisms operates across police, courtroom, and family settings. It therefore complements studies of gender representation and discourse in Pakistani television by focusing on the language through which institutional authority and social control are represented (Ahmed & Wahab, 2019; Mirza et al., 2021; Zafar, 2018).

Review of the Literature

❖ **Foucault's Theory of Power and Discourse**

This study draws on four interrelated Foucauldian concepts: discourse as constitutive of social reality, power/knowledge, surveillance and discipline as mechanisms of normalization, and the subject as an effect of discourse. Foucault develops these ideas in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), *Discipline and Punish* (1977), and *Power/Knowledge* (1980). Mills (1997) and Smart (2002) provide accessible discussions of his approach to discourse, social regulation, and subject formation.

Foucault departs from accounts that treat power primarily as something possessed by institutions, governments, or individuals. Power circulates through social relations, practices, and systems of knowledge. It is productive as well as restrictive because it shapes how people understand themselves, interpret others, and conduct their lives (Foucault, 1980; Smart, 2002). Institutions such as schools, hospitals, courts, and prisons become sites where power operates through regulation,

observation, classification, and discipline. These practices can encourage individuals to conform to established expectations without requiring constant physical coercion (Foucault, 1977).

Discourse, in Foucault's account, is more than speech or writing. It involves systems of knowledge and rules that determine what can be said, who may speak with authority, and what counts as legitimate knowledge (Foucault, 1972). Discourse helps constitute social identities and institutional practices by establishing categories through which conduct is judged and claims are evaluated. Mills (1997) explains that this approach directs attention to the conditions under which statements acquire authority and become accepted as meaningful or true.

The concept of power/knowledge describes the relationship between power and the production of knowledge. Institutions establish procedures through which particular claims become authoritative, while the resulting knowledge can be used to classify individuals and regulate their conduct (Foucault, 1980). In legal settings, police reports, courtroom testimony, documentary evidence, and professional judgments can shape the institutional assessment of credibility and guilt. A Foucauldian analysis therefore asks how particular forms of evidence acquire legitimacy and how institutional procedures establish the conditions under which a person's account can be accepted.

Foucault's account of surveillance draws on the Panopticon, a model of observation associated with Jeremy Bentham. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) explains how the possibility of being watched can encourage individuals to regulate their own behavior. Surveillance thus operates through more than direct observation or physical punishment. It can become a disciplinary force when people anticipate evaluation and adjust their conduct accordingly. Rabinow (1984) provides further context for understanding the relationship between observation, discipline, and modern institutional practices.

Discipline also works through normalization. Behavior is evaluated against an accepted standard, and conduct that departs from that standard becomes visible as a problem requiring correction. Individuals can consequently be classified as normal or deviant, credible or unreliable, and acceptable or unacceptable (Foucault, 1977). In domestic settings, expectations about honor, morality, and reputation may

similarly regulate conduct when they are repeated and treated as unquestionable social standards.

The concept of the subject follows from these relationships between discourse, knowledge, and discipline. Foucault does not assume that social identities exist independently of the practices through which people are classified and understood. Individuals become recognizable as particular kinds of subjects through categories that discourse makes available (Foucault, 1972, 1980). In legal and social contexts, these categories may include guilty or innocent, credible or unreliable, and moral or immoral. Surveillance and normalization can encourage individuals to regulate themselves according to such classifications (Foucault, 1977; Mills, 1997).

These concepts provide a basis for analyzing institutional and domestic interactions together. Since power circulates through social relations rather than remaining confined to formal institutions, comparable mechanisms may operate in the police station, courtroom, and family home (Foucault, 1980). The present study uses this perspective to examine how the dialogue of Case No. 9 represents the construction of credibility, the regulation of female agency, and the expectation of social conformity.

❖ Related Studies

Research on Pakistani television drama has examined its representation of social values, gender roles, and institutional relationships. Ahmed and Wahab (2019) examine the representation of women and the tensions surrounding empowerment in Pakistani television dramas. Muneer (2019) addresses the representation of women in Pakistani drama serials, while Saigol (2014) discusses feminist perspectives on Pakistani television drama. These works provide a basis for considering how female characters are positioned in relation to honor, obedience, reputation, and social expectations.

The relationship between gender and legal representation has also received attention. Zafar (2018) examines gender, law, and justice in Pakistani television, making this work relevant to an analysis of the relationship between female agency and institutional authority. Such research provides a broader context for investigating how television narratives portray women's experiences of legal and social institutions.

A smaller body of research applies discourse analysis directly to Pakistani television drama. Mirza et al. (2021) examine discourse and power relations in a Pakistani drama through Critical Discourse Analysis. Rehman et al. (2024) analyze power and ideology in *Ranjha Ranjha Kardi*. These studies demonstrate the relevance of linguistic analysis to the examination of hierarchy, ideology, and social relations in Pakistani television.

Fairclough's (2015) account of Critical Discourse Analysis provides a framework for examining the relationship between language, ideology, and social power. His approach connects the analysis of textual features with broader social practices and structures. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, by comparison, directs attention to the historical and institutional conditions through which knowledge, authority, and social subjects are produced (Foucault, 1972, 1980; Mills, 1997). The two perspectives can therefore inform related questions while retaining different theoretical emphases.

Contemporary discussion of Pakistani dramas has also addressed their capacity to challenge social inequalities while reproducing established assumptions ("Impacts of Pakistani Dramas: A Double-Edged Sword," 2024). Work concerning the relationship between discourse, truth, and power is relevant to this question because it considers how particular claims become authoritative ("An Inquiry on Relation Among Discourse, Truth and Power in Michel Foucault," 2024). These sources require full bibliographic verification before their specific findings can be assessed. The theoretical point, however, is consistent with Foucault's account of discourse as productive: media texts may question established norms while simultaneously using the language through which those norms are maintained (Foucault, 1972, 1980).

This dual possibility is relevant to Case No. 9. The drama depicts the survivor's confrontation with institutional procedures and social expectations. A Foucauldian analysis can examine the discourse through which these relationships are represented without assuming that the drama necessarily endorses every position voiced by its characters.

❖ Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis share an interest in the relationship between discourse and power, but they differ in their principal theoretical concerns. Fairclough (2015) examines how linguistic practices relate to ideology, social structures, and the reproduction or transformation of social relations. His approach connects textual analysis with the wider social practices in which discourse operates.

Foucauldian analysis focuses more directly on the conditions under which knowledge claims become authoritative, how institutional practices classify individuals, and how power shapes the formation of subjects (Foucault, 1972, 1980; Mills, 1997). Surveillance and normalization are particularly relevant when examining how people are encouraged to regulate their behavior according to established standards (Foucault, 1977).

These approaches are not necessarily incompatible. A study may use Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate how a text reproduces a broader ideology and Foucauldian analysis to examine the local mechanisms through which authority is exercised. In the present study, the main concern is how particular utterances in Case No. 9 question the survivor's credibility, define legitimate evidence, and encourage compliance. The emphasis therefore falls on the discursive production of power and knowledge rather than on ideology alone.

❖ Research Gap

Existing scholarship offers insight into gender representation, social expectations, and legal themes in Pakistani television drama (Ahmed & Wahab, 2019; Muneer, 2019; Saigol, 2014; Zafar, 2018). Discourse-analytic research has also examined the construction of power and ideology in Pakistani dramas (Mirza et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2024). However, the specific use of Foucauldian concepts to analyze the representation of surveillance, normalization, and subject formation across legal and domestic settings warrants further investigation.

The gap addressed here concerns the relationship between institutional authority and the linguistic practices through which a survivor is evaluated. The study examines how police officers, legal professionals, and family members are

represented as using questions, presuppositions, evidentiary claims, and evaluative language to regulate the survivor's position. It also considers how the survivor's pursuit of justice contests the expectation that she should remain silent. By applying Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to selected dialogue from Case No. 9, the paper offers a close reading of how these mechanisms are represented within a single television narrative.

Methodology

❖ Research Paradigm and Approach

This paper adopts an interpretivist paradigm, which treats social meaning as constructed through language, interaction, and cultural practices. The approach is appropriate for a study concerned with how identities and power relations are represented in institutional and social settings. It is consistent with the Foucauldian understanding that discourse helps constitute the categories through which people and events become intelligible (Foucault, 1972; Mills, 1997).

A qualitative approach is used throughout, involving close interpretation of selected dialogue from Case No. 9 (Khanzada, 2025). The analysis considers not only what utterances communicate but also what they do within an interaction: question, judge, presuppose, classify, or silence.

The researchers' role is interpretive. The readings are based on the wording of the selected dialogue and the theoretical concepts outlined in the literature review. They represent an analysis of the drama's discourse rather than an objective measurement of actual institutional behavior.

❖ Data Source and Sampling

The primary data source is Case No. 9, broadcast on Geo TV and produced by 7th Sky Entertainment (Khanzada, 2025). The drama was selected because its narrative addresses institutional authority, gender, justice, and social control.

The full series was reviewed to identify dialogue concerning institutional and domestic power. Purposive sampling was used, with particular attention to police-station, courtroom, family, and wider social scenes. These settings were selected

because they present interactions in which the survivor's conduct, credibility, or pursuit of justice is evaluated.

Dialogue was selected when an authority figure or family member questioned, evaluated, instructed, or expressed doubt about the survivor, or when honor, shame, evidence, and credibility became relevant to the interaction. Dialogue that did not meet these criteria was excluded from the analysis.

For a fully reproducible study, the final manuscript should provide the episode numbers, timestamps, and exact dialogue transcriptions for all excerpts analyzed.

❖ Theoretical Framework

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis provides the analytical framework. The analysis is organized around four concepts: discourse, power/knowledge, surveillance and discipline through normalization, and subject formation (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1980).

The concept of discourse is used to examine how the dialogue establishes categories of credibility and acceptable conduct. Power/knowledge informs the analysis of claims about evidence, proof, and institutional authority. Surveillance and normalization guide the examination of institutional questioning and social judgment. Subject formation is used to investigate how the survivor is positioned as credible or unreliable, responsible or blameworthy, and as an individual whose conduct requires evaluation.

These concepts are applied across police, courtroom, and domestic settings to examine similarities and differences in the ways the drama represents power.

❖ Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in four steps.

First, the selected dialogue was grouped by setting: police station, courtroom, family, and wider society. Second, each excerpt was examined for linguistic features through which power might be exercised. These included pronoun use, modality, rhetorical questions, presupposition, negative evidentiality, transitivity, and evaluative vocabulary such as "honor" and "disgrace."

Third, the identified features were interpreted through the four Foucauldian concepts. Presupposition and evaluative judgment were examined in relation to normalization; statements about proof and documentation were considered in relation to power/knowledge; anticipated judgment was interpreted through surveillance; and the categories applied to the survivor were examined as forms of subject positioning (Foucault, 1977, 1980).

Fourth, the findings were compared across settings to identify recurring discursive mechanisms. The comparison produced three principal themes: disciplinary power in institutional settings, normalizing discourse in domestic and social settings, and the panoptic operation of social norms. Resistance and counter-discourse were then considered in a separate subsection.

Scope and Delimitations

The study is limited to a qualitative analysis of purposively selected dialogue from one television drama. It examines verbal discourse and does not systematically analyze paralinguistic features such as tone, pauses, or emphasis, or visual and musical elements. It does not investigate audience reception, conduct quantitative content analysis, or compare Case No. 9 with other dramas. Its findings therefore concern the selected text and are not intended to generalize to all Pakistani television dramas or to actual institutional practice.

❖ Ethical Considerations

The study relies on publicly broadcast material and does not involve human participants, interviews, or confidential information. The research therefore does not involve the collection of primary human-subject data. The use of dialogue should remain proportionate to the analytical purpose, accurately represent the original context, and comply with applicable copyright requirements. Exact quotations should be accompanied by episode and timestamp information where available.

Analysis

This section presents a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of selected dialogue from Case No. 9 (Khanzada, 2025). It is organized around three themes: disciplinary

power in institutional settings, normalizing discourse in social and domestic settings, and the panoptic operation of social norms. A final subsection considers resistance and counter-discourse.

❖ **Disciplinary Power in Institutional Settings**

Disciplinary power operates when institutions regulate individuals by shaping how they behave, identify themselves, and are assessed by others. Foucault (1977) explains that institutional power works through procedures of observation, examination, and classification. In Case No. 9, police-station and courtroom scenes represent settings where authority operates through language that interrogates, evaluates, and categorizes individuals according to legal and social expectations (Khanzada, 2025).

The Police Station as a Disciplinary Space

The police station is an early site where institutional discourse asserts authority over the survivor. In the selected exchanges, an officer invokes the idea that divorce reflects a society's "shamelessness," thereby bringing the survivor's marital history into the evaluation of her credibility. Instead of limiting the interaction to the reported offence, the officer uses a moral judgment to assess the survivor. This represents disciplinary power through evaluation and normalization rather than physical coercion (Foucault, 1977; Khanzada, 2025).

In another exchange, an officer states, "You were the one who invited him." The statement presents the survivor's alleged action as an established fact rather than an account requiring investigation. It also shifts attention from the accused's alleged conduct to the survivor's behavior. Questions about her "honor," the delay in reporting, and the absence of a medical report similarly direct attention towards her credibility and reputation (Khanzada, 2025).

Three linguistic patterns are relevant to these exchanges. The first concerns the second-person pronoun and the grammar of agency. In the statement "You were the one who invited him," the pronoun "you" keeps the survivor at the center of the accusation. The clause attributes the action of inviting to her, while the accused appears as the object of that action. The wording therefore places her conduct at the center of the interaction and assigns her responsibility within the officer's framing

of events. This interpretation concerns the grammar of the utterance; it does not establish that the survivor is responsible for the alleged offence.

The second pattern concerns modality. Statements that a particular finding "will not" be made or that a case "cannot" proceed without specific documentation present institutional judgments as certain. Where such claims are not open to discussion, modality can close down alternative interpretations and restrict the survivor's opportunity to challenge the assumptions underlying the officer's position.

The third pattern concerns rhetorical questioning. Questions about the timing of the report may function as judgments rather than genuine requests for information when they imply that a credible survivor would have acted differently. The focus shifts from the alleged offence to the survivor's subsequent conduct. From a Foucauldian perspective, such interactions can be interpreted as disciplinary practices because they establish expectations against which an individual is evaluated (Foucault, 1977, 1980).

These exchanges represent institutional discourse as a process through which credibility is assessed and social categories are applied. The police station is therefore presented as a site where procedural authority and moral evaluation can become entangled (Khanzada, 2025).

The Courtroom as a Site of Discursive Power

The courtroom extends this pattern through the more formalized discourse of lawyers and judges. Defence questioning repeatedly redirects scrutiny from the accused's alleged conduct to the survivor's character. The questioning invokes expectations about reputation and reporting behavior, while the absence of documentary evidence is used to cast doubt on the survivor's account (Khanzada, 2025).

A judge's declaration that the court accepts only claims established through "legal evidence" represents an institutional boundary between personal testimony and officially recognized proof. From a Foucauldian perspective, this distinction can be examined through the concept of power/knowledge, which concerns how

institutions establish procedures for determining which claims are recognized as legitimate knowledge (Foucault, 1980).

Negative evidentiality is another relevant feature. Statements such as "she has no evidence that can prove this" foreground the absence of corroborating material rather than the substance of the testimony. Such wording can position the survivor's account as insufficient unless it is supported by institutionally recognized evidence. However, the distinction between a fictional representation of courtroom procedure and actual legal standards must be maintained. The analysis examines how the drama presents evidentiary authority; it does not establish whether the depicted procedures accurately represent Pakistani law.

Transitivity also contributes to the construction of authority. When evidence becomes the grammatical focus of a statement, the interaction can be organized around whether the required proof exists rather than around the alleged conduct under investigation. Combined with the judge's reference to "legal evidence," this wording presents the courtroom as a setting where institutional procedures define the conditions under which testimony can be accepted as true (Foucault, 1980; Khanzada, 2025).

The courtroom scenes therefore represent legal authority as operating through more than formal status. It is also enacted through the language that classifies testimony, establishes standards of proof, and evaluates the credibility of the survivor.

❖ **Normalizing Discourse in Social and Domestic Settings**

Normalization operates beyond formal institutions. In Case No. 9, family interactions represent a social setting in which expectations about honor, obedience, and reputation regulate the survivor's choices. Family members use persuasion, reproach, and warnings to encourage silence and to place collective reputation above the survivor's pursuit of justice (Khanzada, 2025).

Foucault's account of normalization provides a framework for examining how conduct is assessed against established expectations and how individuals are encouraged to regulate themselves accordingly (Foucault, 1977). Domestic discourse can therefore be analyzed as a form of social regulation when family expectations are presented as natural or unquestionable.

Familial Discourse as a Mechanism of Control

Family members frame the survivor's decision to report the crime as selfish or damaging to collective honor. Imperatives urging her to remain silent, together with appeals to what "people will say," prioritize social reputation over her pursuit of justice. The language also risks treating the assault as a source of family "disgrace" rather than directing attention towards the alleged perpetrator's conduct (Khanzada, 2025).

These exchanges represent normalization through the repetition of cultural expectations. Silence and conformity are presented as appropriate responses, while reporting the crime is framed as a threat to family standing. Power operates through ordinary speech when such expectations encourage an individual to monitor her conduct in anticipation of social disapproval (Foucault, 1977, 1980).

The domestic setting consequently reproduces a form of social control distinct from the formal authority of the police and the court. Family members do not exercise the same institutional powers as legal officials, but their discourse can still constrain the survivor's choices by attaching moral consequences to resistance.

Discourse of Disbelief as a Disciplinary Mechanism

A related mechanism is the discourse of disbelief, through which family members and other characters cast doubt on the survivor's honesty. Statements that "no one will believe" her present rejection as inevitable and universal rather than as one possible response. Such wording can discourage resistance before the survivor has an opportunity to explain her account or challenge the assumptions directed at her (Khanzada, 2025).

In Foucauldian terms, anticipated disbelief can function as a disciplinary mechanism. Foucault (1977) explains how the possibility of observation and judgment encourages individuals to regulate themselves. Applied to the drama, this concept helps explain how the expectation of disbelief may lead the survivor to monitor what she says, anticipate rejection, or question the social consequences of reporting the assault.

The mechanism does not depend on every person explicitly rejecting the survivor. The expectation of collective judgment can be sufficient to make silence appear safer than resistance. The survivor is also positioned within a stigmatized social identity in which her credibility is treated as uncertain. This interpretation is consistent with the Foucauldian view that discourse helps produce the subjects it classifies (Foucault, 1972, 1980).

❖ The Panopticon of Social Norms

Institutional and domestic discourse in Case No. 9 can be read together as a distributed system of surveillance. Police officers, courtroom actors, family members, and the wider social environment evaluate the survivor's conduct against expectations of morality and honor (Khanzada, 2025). No single observer controls the entire process. Instead, the survivor is represented as subject to overlapping forms of judgment.

Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon explains how the possibility of being observed can encourage self-regulation even when direct observation is uncertain (Foucault, 1977). In the drama, police questioning and courtroom argument represent formal scrutiny, while family warnings about reputation represent informal social judgment. Both can encourage the survivor to anticipate how her conduct will be interpreted by others.

A lawyer's question about why the survivor waited six days to report the assault illustrates this pattern. The question directs attention to the survivor's conduct after the incident and invites an assessment of whether her behavior meets an expected standard (Khanzada, 2025). The delay becomes a basis for scrutiny, while the question's framing places the survivor in the position of having to explain herself.

A comparable logic appears in police questions about the delay and family concerns about reputation. The settings differ in their institutional status and stated purposes, but the dialogue can be examined for a shared mechanism: the survivor is required to account for her behavior in relation to expectations established by others. The panoptic interpretation concerns the representation of this distributed scrutiny, not a claim that the drama's institutions operate as a literal Panopticon.

The comparison suggests that formal and informal discourse may reinforce each other within the drama's narrative. Institutional questioning evaluates credibility, while family discourse evaluates social acceptability. Together, these interactions represent a setting in which the survivor is encouraged to anticipate judgment across several areas of life (Foucault, 1977, 1980; Khanzada, 2025).

❖ Resistance and Counter-Discourse

Foucault's account of power does not treat individuals as entirely passive recipients of social control. Power relations can be contested, and resistance may emerge within the same relationships through which power operates (Foucault, 1980). This perspective makes it necessary to consider whether the survivor in Case No. 9 is represented as challenging the discourses that seek to silence her.

The clearest form of resistance in the selected material is the survivor's decision to report the assault and pursue the case. This action conflicts with family appeals to silence and the warnings that "no one will believe" her (Khanzada, 2025). By approaching the police and participating in legal proceedings, she challenges the expectation that family reputation should take precedence over her pursuit of justice.

Her action does not remove the institutional and social constraints represented in the drama. Instead, it creates a conflict between competing positions: one that frames silence as socially desirable and another that treats reporting as a means of seeking accountability. The survivor's pursuit of justice can therefore be interpreted as a counter-discursive act because it challenges the categories and expectations imposed on her.

The selected material, however, contains more extensive examples of the discourse of authority than of the survivor's own sustained counter-discourse. A fuller assessment of her agency would require systematic analysis of her dialogue, the narrative outcome, and the drama's framing of the conflict. The present findings are consequently limited to the selected excerpts.

Findings

The analysis indicates that discourse in Case No. 9 represents power relations as constructed through language rather than expressed solely through formal authority. In police-station and courtroom scenes, institutional discourse scrutinizes the survivor's behavior and credibility. Questions about her conduct, reporting delay, and documentation shift attention towards whether she satisfies particular expectations of credibility (Khanzada, 2025).

The analysis also identifies a representation of power/knowledge in the courtroom scenes. References to documentary material and "legal evidence" establish institutional standards for the assessment of claims. These exchanges illustrate how the drama represents legal authority as connected to the power to determine which forms of knowledge count as legitimate (Foucault, 1980).

Domestic discourse operates through a related but distinct mechanism. Appeals to honor, warnings about what other people will say, and assertions that the survivor will not be believed encourage silence and conformity. These statements represent social judgment as a means of regulation because they make the anticipated consequences of reporting part of the survivor's decision (Foucault, 1977; Khanzada, 2025).

Across the settings, the survivor's social identity is repeatedly subjected to evaluation. The dialogue positions her as someone whose character and conduct require explanation. This pattern is consistent with the Foucauldian account of subject formation, in which discourse establishes categories through which individuals become recognizable and are judged by others (Foucault, 1972, 1980).

These findings address the two research questions. In response to the first question, the police station and courtroom represent power and surveillance through questioning, presupposition, evaluative judgment, and the selective validation of evidence. In response to the second, pronoun use, modality, rhetorical questions, and honor-based vocabulary help position the survivor as the object of scrutiny rather than solely as an individual seeking redress.

Taken together, the findings suggest that institutional and domestic discourse function as related forms of control within the drama's narrative. The police station

and courtroom represent formal procedures of scrutiny, while the family home represents informal social expectations. Their relationship is significant to the analysis because the survivor is required to respond to both institutional judgments and anticipated social consequences (Foucault, 1977, 1980; Khanzada, 2025).

Discussion

The findings relate to scholarship on the representation of women in Pakistani television. Ahmed and Wahab (2019), Muneer (2019), and Saigol (2014) examine representations of women and the social expectations surrounding female characters. The honor-based language in Case No. 9 provides a specific example of how such expectations are represented within dialogue. The present analysis extends this discussion by examining how evaluative judgments operate in police and courtroom interactions as well as within the family.

The findings also connect with research on gender and legal representation in Pakistani television (Zafar, 2018). The courtroom scenes in Case No. 9 represent institutional knowledge and evidentiary standards as conditions under which the survivor's account is assessed. The analysis does not claim that these scenes accurately reproduce legal practice. Rather, it examines how the drama represents the relationship between institutional authority and the credibility of a survivor.

Earlier discourse-analytic studies of Pakistani dramas have examined how language constructs power relations and ideology (Mirza et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2024). The Foucauldian reading complements this work by focusing on the local mechanisms through which authority is represented: questioning, presupposition, evidentiary claims, and the anticipation of disbelief. These mechanisms can be analyzed as practices that position the survivor and define the conditions under which her account receives recognition.

The distinction between Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis is relevant here. Fairclough (2015) connects textual features with ideology and broader social structures, while Foucault (1977, 1980) provides a framework for examining how surveillance, institutional knowledge, and normalization operate within social relations. The present study uses the latter perspective to explain how authority is represented through particular interactions. This does not mean that

ideology is irrelevant; rather, the analysis concentrates on how power is enacted through the language of the selected scenes.

An important qualification concerns the drama's overall position. Case No. 9 may represent institutional discourse that disciplines the survivor while also criticizing the conduct of characters who exercise authority. These interpretations are compatible. A drama can depict the operation of oppressive discourse without necessarily endorsing it. Determining whether the narrative as a whole challenge or reproduces that discourse would require a separate analysis of its narrative resolution, visual framing, and reception.

The findings also have implications for the study of victim-blaming in television narratives. When questions repeatedly focus on a survivor's reporting delay, character, or reputation, the wording can redirect scrutiny from the alleged offence to the survivor's conduct. This pattern illustrates how victim-blaming may be represented through ordinary language rather than explicit declarations of blame. The finding is relevant to discourse analysis because it identifies linguistic mechanisms through which the survivor is positioned as accountable for explaining herself.

The conclusions must remain within the limits of the data. The study analyses fictional dialogue and cannot establish how Pakistani police officers, lawyers, or judges behave in actual cases. It demonstrates how the drama represents institutional and domestic power, rather than providing empirical evidence about institutional practice or audience effects.

Conclusion

This paper has used Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to examine how power, surveillance, and social control are represented through language in the Pakistani television drama Case No. 9 (Khanzada, 2025). Analysis of dialogue from institutional and domestic settings indicates that authority, credibility, and social identity are constructed through interactions in which the survivor is questioned, evaluated, and encouraged to conform to established expectations.

Police officers and legal professionals are represented as using questions and evidentiary claims to assess the survivor's credibility. Family members use appeals

to honor, reputation, and anticipated disbelief to encourage silence. These patterns can be interpreted through Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power, surveillance, normalization, and subject formation (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1980).

The Foucauldian framework provides a means of examining how these mechanisms operate at the level of everyday interaction. Fairclough's (2015) approach to Critical Discourse Analysis emphasizes the relationship between textual features, ideology, and wider social structures. The Foucauldian approach used here focuses on how institutional knowledge, evaluative judgment, and surveillance are represented as mechanisms through which power operates. The distinction allowed the study to examine how a question about reporting delay or a statement about legal evidence positions the survivor within a particular relationship of authority.

Case No. 9 offers a useful case for this analysis because it places police investigation, courtroom procedure, and family relationships within one narrative concerned with gender, justice, and institutional authority. The study identifies recurring patterns across these settings while recognizing that the drama's representation should not be equated with actual legal or police practice.

The analysis also finds evidence of resistance. The survivor's decision to report the assault and pursue justice challenges the expectation that silence should preserve family reputation. However, a fuller account of her counter-discourse would require a more detailed analysis of her own dialogue and the drama's narrative resolution.

Limitations

The study is limited to selected dialogue from a single Pakistani television drama. Its findings cannot be generalized to other dramas or to actual institutional contexts. As a qualitative study grounded in Foucauldian theory, it offers an interpretive reading of the selected text. Because the analysis concentrates on dialogue that demonstrates the exercise of power, it provides a partial account of the survivor's own counter-discourse.

The study does not analyze audience reception, measure the drama's effects on viewers, or compare the representation with actual police records and court proceedings. It also excludes a systematic examination of visual, musical, and

paralinguistic features. Future work could address these limitations through broader textual sampling and complementary research methods.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could apply Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to other Pakistani dramas that address gender-based violence, legal institutions, and domestic abuse. Comparative studies could examine whether similar mechanisms of surveillance, normalization, and subject formation recur across different narratives.

Combining discourse analysis with audience research could investigate how viewers interpret representations of victim-blaming, institutional authority, and women's agency. Research using non-fictional material, including police reports, court proceedings, news coverage, and social media discussions, could also examine differences between fictional representations and documented institutional practices.

A further direction would be to combine Fairclough's (2015) approach to Critical Discourse Analysis with Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. Such a study could connect close linguistic analysis with broader questions about ideology and social structure while retaining attention to the production of knowledge, institutional authority, and social subjects.

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