



CONSTRUCTING FEMALE VICTIMHOOD: A FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENDERED NARRATIVES IN PAKISTANI SOCIAL MEDIA (2025)

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Abstract

This paper discusses how Pakistani social media spaces construct women as victims in 2025 when there is greater exposure to gender-based violence and harassment on social media. Based on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study examines the influence of linguistic, and platform-based affordances in the fostering of representations of female victimhood on Twitter/X, Facebook, and Instagram. The sample used to analyze in terms of Fairclough three-dimensional framework involved 12 publicly available posts on high-profile incidents. The results indicate the repetitive discursive patterns such as prediction of women as passive victims of violence, avoidance of the perpetrators by use of passive structures, and use of emotive and moralizing words to support the discourses of vulnerability, honor, and blame. At the same time, there also appear counter-discourses that are resistant to patriarchal norms and feminist solidarity is organized. The paper identifies the importance of platform affordances in the mediation of such constructions and shows how digital discourse and the wider socio-cultural ideologies in Pakistan interact. The study advances the Critical Feminist Discourse Studies field and provides suggestions to gender-sensitive policy, digital media literacy, and control of online content.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, victimhood, Pakistani social media, gender discourse, Textual Analysis

1. Introduction

With the fast proliferation of digital communication technologies, social media has become a key location of the generation and negotiation of gendered identities and power relations in Pakistan. Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, and Tik Tok have become very effective discursive spaces where especially those that relate to harassment, violence, discourses about women and public scandals are created, distributed, and argued over.

In this framework, the victimization of women as a socio-discursive phenomenon has become eminent. Victimhood is not a disinterested concept; it is constructed with the help of language, multimodal resources, platform affordances, and the socio-cultural ideologies in general (Fairclough, 2015; Lazar, 2005). A number of high-profile cases about women safety and cyber

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harassment were popular in 2025, creating antagonistic discourses of empathy, victim-blaming, moral judgment, and feminist resistance. These dynamics show that social media reproduces patriarchal norms and at the same time provides a counter-discourse, which disrupts these norms.

Even though the research on digital misogyny and online harassment in Pakistan is on the rise (Mahmood, 2021; Naeem and Bhatti, 2022; Zubair and Zia, 2020), the focus has not been on how women are discursively made as victims on various platforms during a particular socio-political time like 2025. This difference is substantial as every platform works using different communicative methods in the form of text-based interaction on Twitter/X, lengthy narratives in Facebook, visual storytelling on Instagram, and algorithm-based video content on Tik Tok (KhosraviNik, 2017; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2021). Such environments need to be analyzed comparatively and multimodally to comprehend how these spaces constitute representations of victimhood as well as represent larger ideologies of patriarchy, honor, and morality within Pakistani society.

The representations of women through the media have been traditionally associated with the larger gender, power and cultural arrangements (Lazar, 2005). Such portrayals often place women in the context of vulnerability, honor, and victimhood in Pakistan, which echoes deep-seated patriarchal traditions (Zia, 2021). These narratives are now beyond the traditional media and are constantly generated, shared and challenged in digital platforms with the emergence of social media (Banaji and Bhat, 2020).

By 2025, more than 70 million people actively use social media in Pakistan, and their number of female and younger users is also growing (Digital Pakistan Report, 2024). This growth has increased the noticeability of gender-based violence and cyber harassment and misogynistic discourse. Women-related incidents tend to go viral, turning personal charges into mass-disseminated accounts where women are routinely positioned as victims (Shahid & Ali, 2023).

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, such representations are not merely descriptive but constitutive. The linguistic and multi-modular characteristics like lexical usage and hashtags, images and framing of the narratives, are instrumental to creating women as helpless, honorable or blameworthy (Fairclough, 2015; Ullah and Amin, 2022). These structures are able to support stereotypes and to legitimize misogyny, but also to support, raise awareness and resist.

Even though the previous studies in Pakistan have investigated the issues of cyber-harassment, feminist activism, and online misogyny (Mahmood, 2021; Naeem and Bhatti, 2022; Zubair and Zia, 2020), no comparative and cross-platform studies have been conducted on the discursive construction of victimhood within a specific time frame, like 2025. As platform affordances vary between Tik Tok, Twitter/X, and Facebook, this analysis is crucial to comprehending the perceptions of gender, justice, and social responsibility using digital discourse.



1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although more efforts are paid to the rights of women and gender-based violence in Pakistan, the perspectives of the discursive construction of women as victims on social media have not been sufficiently investigated. The gender ideologies, moral judgment, and socio-political contexts shape online accounts of victimhood, which affect the social perception and reactions.

Nevertheless, current studies have failed to adequately look at:

It addresses (1) the ways in which women are being made victims by various social media platforms based on linguistic and multimodal aspects; and (2) how the socio-political world in 2025 influences these constructions.

The comparative analysis, which is offered in a platform-based analysis, would restrict our knowledge regarding the role of digital discourse in strengthening or weakening patriarchal norms. It also inhibits the formulation of informed media literacy, gender-sensitive communication and policy intervention strategies to deal with online harassment.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

1.2.1 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the linguistic strategies used to construct women as victims across major social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube).
2. To identify dominant narrative frames (e.g., helplessness, honor, moral blame, empowerment, injustice) used in online discussions about women in the 2025 Pakistani social media context
3. To compare platform-specific discursive patterns and examine how technological affordances shape victimhood representation.

1.2.2 Research Questions

1. How are women constructed as victims in Pakistani social media content during 2025?
2. What platform-specific differences exist in constructing narratives of female victimhood across Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, and TikTok in 2025?
3. How do broader socio-cultural ideologies such as patriarchy, honor, morality, and gender norms interact with digital discourses to shape the representation of women as victims?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The research adds value to the literature by combining Critical Discourse Analysis, Multimodal CDA and social media discourse theories to analyze the digital gender representation. It builds upon previous studies by pointing out how victimhood is created not only in language but also in visual and platform-specific interactions (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016).

It is an empirical study with a unique cross-platform analysis of the Pakistani social media discourse on women as victims in 2025, which can be of great value to researchers in digital media, gender studies, and discourse analysis studies.



In practice, the results can be used in informing gender-sensitive content moderation, formulating policies on online harassment, and educational campaigns to encourage responsible online citizenship.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review discusses the discursive way of framing women as victims in Pakistani social media, and specifically how events unfolded in 2025. It conglomerates theoretical insights into victimhood and victimization discourses, cross-national studies on gender-based digital violence, and the Pakistani literature of media representations and online harassment. Moreover, it relies on NGO reports and high-profile cases that were spreading on online platforms.

The review finds such common patterns in linguistic options, strategies of framing, and power relations that define the representations of women as victims. It places Pakistani scholarship in the context of more general arguments about discourse, agency, and media framing, and ends with an identification of critical gaps in empirical and methodological research that is used to study the current research.

2.2 Theoretical Approaches on Victimhood and Discourse

2.2.1 Discursive Construction, Victimhood, and Subjectivity

Discourse-based theories, such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), social constructivism, and post-structuralism, theorize such a concept of victimhood as a socially constructed category, instead of a neutralizing term (Fairclough, 2015; Lazar, 2005). In this context, language, media practices and institutional power create identities in the sense that they construct the way individuals are positioned and viewed in the discourse of the masses.

Scholars in victim studies highlight that discursive practices may either humanize victims or diminish them to passive, stigmatized objects, thus constraining their agency. Furthermore, the recent studies indicate the significance of Intersectionality and show that gender, class, regionality, and cultural traditions determine which types of victimhood are accepted as valid and worthy of empathy.

2.2.2 Media Framing, Moral Panic, and the “Ideal Victim”

The media framing theories give more insight on the construction and assessment of victimhood. The core concepts presented in the literature include newsworthiness (Galtung and Ruge) and moral panic (Cohen) in which the media selectively amplify some narratives. The concept of the ideal victim, as proposed by Christie (1986) is still highly influential as it suggests that people who are viewed as weak, respectable, and blameless are more likely to be sympathized in the



community, and those who are considered to be deviants of social norms are usually blamed or ostracized.

These dynamics are heightened in the digital world. Social media make the sympathetic and hostile narratives spread quickly, whereas such affordances as virality, algorithmic amplification determine which representations become visible (KhosraviNik, 2017). Research indicates that the framing of either the perpetrators or the behaviour of victims or structural factors has a major influence on the social perception and policy debate.

2.2.3 Digital Misogyny, Disinformation, and Gendered Harassment

The emergence of digital misogyny as a common characteristic of online spaces is emphasized in the contemporary scholarship (Banaji and Bhat, 2020). Gendered harassment often takes the form of trolling, doxxing, image-based abuse, and coordinated disinformation campaigns aimed at silencing women or discrediting their public presence.

These practices do not only cause material and psychological damage, but also create discursive frames that blame victims or discredit them. Within the Pakistani context, NGO reports and new research report on the strategic use of gendered disinformation to discredit women activists, journalists, and creators of content in support of more generalized patriarchal norms.

2.3 International Perspectives on Digital Victim Construction

Cross-national research shows that social media has a two-fold role in the formation of victimhood discourse. On the one hand, digital platforms offer a platform where survivors can share experiences, develop solidarity, and organize support. Conversely, they help to propagate discourse of victim-blaming, harassment, and moral policing quickly.

Studies are unanimous in their finding that there are recurring patterns of the narrative such as sexualization, moral judgment, and honor-based framing that determine the empathy or blame responses of the audience. Such studies highlight that the interaction between the audience, platform dynamics and cultural ideologies co-constructs victimhood. These insights are specifically applicable in the Pakistani context, where the digital discourse is influenced by the same socio-cultural rationales.

2.4 Pakistani Media and Digital Realities

2.4.1 Representation in Print and Broadcast Media

Historical analyses of Pakistani print and broadcast media reveal persistent issues in reporting violence against women, including sensationalism, emphasis on victims' behavior or attire, and neglect of structural causes such as patriarchy and weak legal frameworks (Zia, 2021). Although some improvements have been noted over time, victim-blaming narratives remain prevalent.



These patterns provide an important foundation for understanding both reproduces and transforms earlier media discourses by social media.

2.4.2 Cyber-Harassment and Online Violence in Pakistan (2018–2025)

The prevalence of online harassment of women in Pakistan is a topic of a growing literature (Naeem and Bhatti, 2022). The abuse can be in the form of stalking, threats, sexual harassment, and the unauthorized distribution of personal content. The qualitative interview, surveys and discourse analysis studies have all indicated substantial psychological effects such as anxiety, fear and self-censorship.

Notably, studies show that women defying conventional expectations, such as by engaging in mass communication or having visible internet presence are disproportionately targeted. The coordinated harassment and disinformation campaigns against women occupying public positions are also reinforced by NGO reports, including the Digital Rights Foundation.

2.5 Discursive Victims Construction in Pakistan

The process of synthesizing the existing literature shows that there are some patterns of how women are constructed as victims in Pakistani social media discourse.

To begin with, female leaders in the spotlight, like activists, journalists, and content creators are usually depicted as non-ideal victims. Discourses often focus blame on their lifestyle, appearance, or decisions, thus putting responsibility on perpetrators (Shahid and Ali, 2023). This redefinition lessens the sympathy of the people and makes accountability difficult.

Second, sexualization and honor-based discourse often influence victim narratives. The practices of shaming women focus on their morality, reputation, and family honor, which can be seen as culturally ingrained practices. These stories are exaggerated with memes, edited images, and comment threads that go viral, and in many cases result in secondary victimization.

Third, there is also emerging evidence of a connection between online discourse and offline implications. In severe instances, digital shaming and exposure has also been linked to actual violence, highlighting the material effects of discursive constructions.

2.6 Methodological Practices in Existing Research

Studies on gendered discourse and victimhood in Pakistan use various methodologies.

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is popular to analyze language, ideology, and representation within media and social media texts (Fairclough, 2015). Patterns of hostility and hate speech at scale have been identified by application of computational techniques such as sentiment analysis and topic modeling.



Qualitative research methods, including interviews and narrative inquiry, are able to reveal the lived experiences of the victims, including the psychological and social effects of web-based discussion. Also, mixed-method case studies are a combination of textual analysis and digital data collection to study viral incidents in context.

2.7 High-Profile Cases and Digital Amplification (2024–2025)

The dynamics of digital victim construction can be exemplified by recent high-profile incidents in 2024/2025. To illustrate it, the killing of a teenage TikTok influencer sparked a lot of discussion, and its discourse was both critical of the murderer and critical of the victim in terms of her online activity. Equally, honor-based violence viral cases evoked heated protests as they revealed the underlying tensions on morality, justice, and accountability.

These instances show how social media increases both positive and negative accounts, which tend to re-victimize people and mobilize the masses. These events furnish important empirical contexts in which discursive patterns are analyzed in the real-time.

2.8 Synthesis of Main Findings

The literature reviewed implies a number of general lessons:

1. Victimhood is created by a fusion of linguistic, visual, and platform-specific practices, as opposed to singular texts.
2. The social factors like classes, region and the social visibility are very important in determining whether the women will be framed sympathetically or blamed.
3. The affordances of platforms influence the discourse, yet cultural histories of honor and morality are at the core.
4. An online harassment and disinformation may have real offline implication, emphasizing the stakes of online discourse.

2.9 Research Gaps

Although gendered discourse and online harassment in Pakistan have received significant academic interest, there are still some gaps.

To begin with, comparative, cross-platform studies comparing the ways in which victimhood is created on various platforms like Tik Tok, Twitter/X, Facebook, and Instagram are absent.

Second, intersectional analyses are not thorough, especially when it comes to the manner in which class, region, and ethnicity influence the narratives of victims.

Third, the lack of focus on perpetrator- versus victim-centered framing has been a significant issue, which is very important to comprehend accountability and justice.



Lastly, additional studies are required to include the voices of the survivors, which will help link discursive analysis with experience.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design used in this study is qualitative, interpretive, as it is aimed at analyzing the discursive construction of women as victims in Pakistani social media. Since the study is devoted to meaning-making, representation, and ideology, the qualitative approach is best suited, as it will allow exploring in depth linguistic analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

The study is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and, which offers a powerful analytical tool to explore how language, and platform affordances help to construct gendered identities (Fairclough, 2015; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2021). This method helps studying insight into the ways in which victimhood is constructed and communicated not only through textual but also through visual and interactional attributes typical of a social media setting.

3.2 Research Approach and Theoretical Orientation

The analysis falls within the context of Critical Feminist Discourse Studies (CFDS) which combines the feminist theory with critical discourse analysis to understand how power relations that are gendered are reproduced and challenged through discourse (Lazar, 2005). According to this view, language can be understood as space of ideological struggle where gender, victimhood, and agency meanings are negotiated constantly.

To analyze a discourse, power, and social structures, CDA as formulated by Fairclough (2015) is utilized. It allows the determination of linguistic practices that normalize victimhood, blur agency, or promote patriarchal ideologies.

3.3 Data Sources and Sampling Strategy

Twelve (12) online social media posts were purposively selected from three major platforms.

- **Facebook (4 posts)**
- **Instagram (4 posts)**
- **Twitter/X (4 posts)**

To make sure that the chosen data is applicable to the research aims, a purposive sampling strategy was used (Patton, 2015). The posts were chosen according to the following criteria:

- Direct relevance to the events related to women as victims.
- Correlation with the Pakistani socio-cultural background (2025)
- Both textual and/or visual content are included.



- Critiques of social interaction (e.g., shares, comments, or responses)
- Public domain access (no secret and hidden material)

The choice of a narrow focused data corresponds to qualitative CDA research that is more focused on depth of analysis than breadth, as it enables in-depth analysis of discursive patterns and ideological meaning.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The sampling method was the hand picking of posts on the chosen platforms that were publicly available. All posts were recorded with pertinent contextual information, such as:

- Platform source
- Timestamp
- Textual content
- Associated hashtags
- Visual (where needed) elements.
- Interactional context (e.g. user comments or reactions, where applicable)

The information was then sorted and coded to process the information in a systematic way. In order to achieve analytical consistency, posts were distinguished by platform and analyzed within a set of identical analytics.

3.5 Analytical Framework

The article is analyzed using a three-dimensional model of CDA by Fairclough (2015), allowing the analysis on various levels:

3.5.1 Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

This tier is interested in linguistic characteristics in the case of individual posts, such as:

- Words (e.g., helpless, abused, shameless)
- Transitivity (modes of agency and action)
- Voice (active vs. passive constructions)
- Modality (expressions of certainty, obligation or evaluation)
- Metaphors, evaluative language

3.5.2 Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

Investigates production, distribution, and consumption of social media content (e.g., who posts it, who comments, how it goes viral).



This level explores production, distribution, consumption of social media content (e.g., who posts it, who comments, how it goes viral):

- Trending topics and hashtags.
- Patterns of engagement (reacting, commenting, sharing)
- Platform-specific communicative elements (e.g., brevity in Twitter/X, visual focus in Instagram)

3.5.3 Social Practice (Macro-Level)

The analysis at this level understands the influence of the broader socio-cultural ideologies on discourse such as:

- Patriarchy and gender norms.
- Honor and morality systems.
- Social views on the presence of women in a society.
- Cultural discourses of victimhood and blame.

3.6 Analytical Procedure

The systematic analysis was done in an iterative manner. The posts were analyzed one by one through the CDA framework and compared across platforms to find common patterns and variations.

To begin with, textual and multimodal features were named and coded. Second, these features were decoded concerning the discursive practices, such as the circulation and viewership patterns. Lastly, the results were put into perspective in the bigger social and ideological frameworks.

The stratification method allowed identifying the prevalent discursive strategies, such as the creation of women as victimized subjects, the absence of agents, and the existence of moralizing and judgmental discourses.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The experiment complies with the online research ethics (Townsend and Wallace, 2016). Only publicly accessible data were used and no personal and unrestricted information was accessed. The identities of the users are anonymized to maintain privacy.

The analysis is done with sensitivity and sensitivity to prevent re-victimization or sensationalism since gender-based violence is a sensitive issue. The work is about discursively patterns and not about personal identities.



4. DATA ANALYSIS

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): Text-Level Linguistic Analysis

Theme: “Women as Victims in Pakistani Social Media Posts (2025)”

The analysis follows the same analytical model as in the uploaded file, focusing on lexical choices, transitivity, voice, modality, metaphor, and sentence structure. Each post is examined individually, maintaining scholarly rigor and interpretive consistency.

I). TWEETS (4 POSTS)

Tweet 1

Timestamp: 12 Feb 2025, 8:21 PM Text:

“Another woman dragged outside her house in Lahore over a petty dispute. When will society stop treating women as punching bags?” Hashtags: #ProtectWomen #ViolenceAgainstWomen #Pakistan

Tweet 1 Analysis

Tweet 1 is structured by using lexical options that are highly charged (dragged, petty dispute, punching bags, etc.), and which in combination encode violence, trivialization, and habitual abuse. The foreground of the female victim is indicated by the word another woman in which the determiner another indicates the repetition and normalization of such cases. The clause woman [was] dragged] is transitive and has the material process, but does not mention the actor, indicating background agency. This is in line with the passive voice usage which downgrades the perpetrator and foregrounds the affected party. In terms of agency and participant roles, the woman is placed in the Goal (affected entity) and the Actor is implicit. It is not an evaluative adjective that comes out clearly in the tweet, but the metaphor and rhetoric frames strongly evaluate. The expression of treating women as punching bags dehumanizes women and normalizes violence. Modality is not explicit but implicit, and the rhetorical question When will society stop...? has an obligation and moral urgency without modal auxiliaries. Plural pronouns and abstract pronouns (women and society, respectively) are used, which indicates generalized pronouns and reference and makes them collective. There is a combination of a declarative clause and an interrogative, which forms a flow of description and then a moral critique.

Tweet 2

Timestamp: 3 March 2025, 5:40 PM Text:

“Heartbreaking video shows a girl in Karachi crying for help while bystanders just film. Is this what we’ve become?” Hashtags: #Shame #WomenNotSafe #Karachi



Tweet 2 Analysis

Tweet 2 uses emotionally charged lexical elements, especially such an evaluation adjective as heartbreaking, which initially positions the discourse on the affective plane. The female victim is manipulated as vulnerable in the form of a girl crying to help where the word girl refers to the youth and frailty. Two processes are contrasted in terms of transitivity: the behavioral process, which is crying on the part of the victim and the material process, which is the film on the part of the bystanders. This opposition brings out disparity in terms of agency and role of participants where the weak (victim) is the Sensor/Behaver and the bystanders are the Actors whose reaction has been shown to be wanting morally. The phrase bystanders just film is in the active voice, giving them the agency without downplaying their efforts in the adverb just. The evaluation in the tweet is implicit beyond the adjective by means of a moral contrast. No metaphorical turn of phrase is used, but the evaluative framing is robust. Indirectly, the realization of modality takes place in terms of moral inquiry and not modal verbs. The rhetorical question of Is this what we have become? is an appeal to collective responsibility, which is supported by the use of the inclusive pronoun we, showing high use of pronouns and the reference to building up a shared identity. The juxtaposition in the sentence structure is a descriptive declarative sentence followed by an interrogative sentence that gives a transition between narration and ethical consideration.

Tweet 3

Timestamp: 18 March 2025, 3:10 PM Text:

“A student harassed in broad daylight at the Rawalpindi Metro Station. She literally begged people to intervene.” Hashtags: #Harassment #Rawalpindi #WomenDeserveSafety

Tweet 3 Analysis

Tweet 3 makes use of salient lexical words like harried, broad daylight and begged, which amplify the presence of the incident and its intensity. The social construction of female victim as a student creates her as a socially legitimate and vulnerable individual. With respect to transitivity, the passive sentence A student [was] harassed] codes a material process with an omitted Actor, a suppressed agency, and the following active sentence She literally begged people to intervene] foreshadows the action of the victim. This shows the change of agency and roles of participants, with the victim being the Actor in the second clause, which correlates with desperation. This contrast is supported by the alternation of passive and active voice. The adverb literally is an evaluative intensifier and it enhances authenticity. No metaphorical expression, but lexical strong experiential meaning is expressed. The modality is not explicit but manifested by urgency instead of modal auxiliaries. The tweet does not have a rhetorical question, instead, it uses declarative force. The use of a personalized reference by the use of the pronoun she and generalization of the non-responding people by use of people. The sentence is made up of two declarative clauses where the second one expounds the first one, thus enhancing the description of vulnerability and lack of action.



Tweet 4

Timestamp: 29 March 2025, 11:47 AM Text:

“Why do women always have to justify their presence? A girl was slapped for ‘arguing’ with a shopkeeper today. Unbelievable.” Hashtags: #Misogyny #EndAbuse #Pakistan

Tweet 4 Analysis

Tweet 4 is featured by critical word selection, the terms justify, slapped, arguing, which are put in quotation marks, to indicate challenged meaning. The female victim is a dual-level victim construction, as the female victim is depicted as a collection of women (women), and as an individual (a girl). Transitivity wise, was slapped codes a material process where the Actor is absent and we can see that there is agent suppression. This comprises an asymmetric agency and partaking of the victim which is foregrounded and that of the perpetrator which is background. This emphasis on the affected participant is supported by the use of passive voice. The adjective unbelievable is an apparent evaluative adjective, which is a moral outrage. Although there is no protracted metaphor, the quotation marks of the word arguing carry a certain evaluative point of view. Modality is achieved by use of the interrogative Why do women always have to justify their presence? which implies obligation and criticism without modal verbs. This rhetorical question makes assumptions of systemic inequality, and always serves as a generalizing device. Strategic use of pronouns and reference is seen in the plural and singular forms. The tweet structurally, fuses an interrogative and declarative clause to create a movement of generalized critique to a particular instance, enhancing its argumentative power.

II. FACEBOOK POSTS (4 POSTS)

FB Post 1

Timestamp: 14 Feb 2025, 6:18 PM

“A young woman in Islamabad was verbally abused by a traffic officer today for asking why she was stopped. She posted the video crying, saying she felt ‘humiliated and helpless.’” Hashtags: #Islamabad #WomenAbuse.

FB Post 1 Analysis

The lexical selections used in FB Post 1, including verbally abused, traffic officer, and humiliated and helpless, create a semantic area of institutional authority and pain. The foregrounding of both gender and age in the expression of the female victim as a young woman plays upon vulnerability in a publicly regulated realm. Regarding the aspect of transitivity, the clause was verbally abused, codes a material/verbal process wherein the Actor (traffic officer) is explicitly stated, partially foregrounding agency roles and participant roles; the officer is the Actor and the woman the Goal. This is however followed by a clause which uses passive voice, she was stopped, thus hiding the



initial causality. Switching between active and passive voice indicates changing priorities between the institutional power and victim experience. Humiliated and helpless are very potent evaluative adjectives, which enhance affective meaning. There is no extended metaphor, though the evaluative lexis is rather loaded with interpretation. The modality is realized in reported affect (she felt) and does not use modal auxiliaries. The post lacks the use of a rhetorical question and uses declarative reporting. The personal reference is preserved by using the pronouns like she, whereas the institutional authority is generalized by using the institutional noun, traffic officer. The sentence is composed of complex declarative clauses that have a reporting clause within them, which is a complex saying she felt, hence resulting in a layered story with both description of the event and an emotional commentary.

FB Post 2

Timestamp: 1 March 2025, 11:40 AM

“A mother carrying an infant was shoved aside in a government hospital queue in Sialkot. People around her just watched.” Hashtags: #Sialkot #HumanityCrisis

FB Post 2 Analysis

FB Post 2 makes use of the succinct, but effective lexical choices that can be identified, such as mother, infant, shoved aside, etc., which are, taken together, forming the vulnerability and physical aggression. The culturally relevant role of care and dependence invoked by the portrayal of the female victim as a mother with an infant enhances moral salience. With regard to transitivity, the sentence was shoved aside is a material process that is manifested in the passive voice where the Actor is absent and this denotes suppressed agency. This act of omission prefigures the victim as Goal and backgrounds responsibility. The second line, which says People around her just watched, turns to active voice, by explicitly attributing agency and participant roles to bystanders who are not simply passive participants in the action but whose passivity is the subject of moral judgment. Just as an adverb, the word just is an implicit evaluative signifier, downplaying action and heightening criticism. There is no evaluative adjective or metaphor, but assessment comes about through opposition. Modality is implicit and expressed in the form of factual assertion and not modal verbs. The post does not use a rhetorical question but is declarative. Personalizing the victim (e.g., using pronouns like her) and generalizing collective actors (e.g., people), also reflects the use of strategic pronouns and reference. The sentence pattern consists of two brief declarative sentences and this forms a sharp contrast between violence and social apathy.

FB Post 3

Timestamp: 9 March 2025, 9:05 PM

“A university student wrote she fears going to campus after three male students followed her for days. She shared screenshots of threatening inbox messages calling her ‘weak.’” Hashtags: #CampusHarassment #WomenSafety



FB Post 3 Analysis

Layered lexical options, including, but not limited to, fears, followed, threatening, and weak, create an atmosphere of continued harassment and psychological intimidation in FB Post 3. The identity of female victim as a university student underlines the aspect of legitimacy and social normalcy thus increasing the perceived injustice. Regarding transitivity, there are several processes involved: the mental process of fears positions the victim as Senser with the material process of followed being the agency attributed to three male students as Actors. This overt identification prefigures gender power relations and role of participants. The statement she shared screenshots is in the active voice, which puts the victim in the role of a documenter, and being followed (implied) is a sign of experience vulnerability. The weak is an evaluative adjective, which encodes the derogatory judgment based on the gender ideology. The metaphor is not very long, and lexical assessment is high. The mental verb of fears is used to express the modality and subjective probability and emotional certainty. The post fails to use a rhetorical question, and it is based on declarative exposition. Individualized reference is upheld by using pronouns like she and her, whereas perpetrators are identified using an impersonal pronoun, three male students. The sentence structure is also convoluted, as it includes reporting clauses, including those of writing and sharing, and embedded information, thus forming a multi-layered narrative of experience and evidence.

FB Post 4

Timestamp: 22 March 2025, 2:15 PM

“A woman reported being locked inside a shop in Hyderabad by two men demanding her number. She said she ‘thought she would die.’” Hashtags: #Hyderabad #ViolenceAgainstWomen

FB Post 4 Analysis

The lexical choices used in FB Post 4 include powerful lexical terms like locked, demanding, and die, to develop a discourse of coercion and extreme danger. The way the female victim is shown as a woman preserves the role of generality with the focus on gendered vulnerability. Transitively, the sentence about being locked inside a shop partially encodes a material process with explicit Actors (two men), therefore, foregrounding agency and role of actors; the men are the Actors and the woman is the Goal. The participial clause of the sentence when she is asked to provide her number also gives the intentionality and coercion of the perpetrators. The construction is a mix of active and passive voice with passive forms accentuating the status of the victim as the victim, and active forms accentuating the action of the perpetrator. The sentence she thought she would die brings on board the extreme affective assessment; the word die is not an adjective, but it comes out in a strong evaluative exercise. There is no metaphor involved explicitly, but the intensive use of lexicon has a similar effect. The modality is achieved by using the modal auxiliary would which indicates the perceived inevitability as perceived by the victim. There is no rhetorical question in the post, so it is in the declarative mode. The use of personalized reference is supported by the use of pronouns like she and her, and the agency is indicated by two men. The structure of the sentences



is more complex declarative with reported clauses and transfers between description of the event and the subjective experience thus heightening the discourse as a whole of fear and victimization.

III. INSTAGRAM POSTS (4 POSTS)

IG Post 1

Timestamp: 16 Feb 2025, 4:50 PM

“No one helped me after the rickshaw driver pushed me out. I felt completely powerless.”
Hashtags: #WomenInPakistan #VictimExperience #Lahore

IG Post 1 Analysis

IG Post 1 is built up with salient lexical decisions like crying, broken shopping bags, pushed and powerless, which together create a semantic field of physical disturbance and emotional instability. The first person narration (me) of the female victim is individualized and supported by the image of a woman on a footpath hence prefiguring material as well as affective suffering. The statement the rickshaw driver pushed me out is transitive and comprises of a material process that has an explicit Actor (rickshaw driver) and Goal (me), with the proper distinction between the agency and the participant roles. This is then succeeded by No one helped me wherein the Actor is generalized and negated, creating collective inaction. Active voice is used mostly in the post and it foregrounds both action of perpetrators and neglect in the society. The adjective phrase is a powerful evaluative phrase that operates as an adverbial phrase, completely powerless. Just no metaphor is used, but the image of broken shopping bags symbolically creates the image of disruption and loss. The modality is achieved by experiential certainty and not modal auxiliaries because the declarative statements give events as facts and irrefutable. It does not contain a rhetorical question, and it is straightforwardly narrated. The first-person pronouns are used (me, I) which creates a very personal system of reference. The sentence is structured in the form of two declarative sentences, which proceeds through the external event to the inner emotional state, thus strengthening the causality between the action and the emotion.

IG Post 2

Timestamp: 25 Feb 2025, 12:12 PM

“They kept touching me and laughing. I couldn’t even see who did it.” Hashtags: #Harassment #Bazaar #UnsafeSpaces.

IG Post 2 Analysis

IG Post 2 is based on the distasteful lexical decisions like touching, laughing, and could not see, which create a scenario of harassment as a form of physical and psychological violation. Personalizing the female victim is once again done by using the first person address (me) and the



supporting image of disguise (face cover) is another example of vulnerability and anonymity. On the transitivity, the same sentence is coded with material and behavioral processes where they are Actors and I am Goal, and thus, the roles of agency and participants are well defined. Repetition is enhanced by the iterative aspect that is kept touching. The phrase I could not even see who did it adds a mental/perceptual process of which the victim is the Senser, and the Actor is unknown, which can be considered a process of diffused agency. The post is written in an active voice, but the responsibility is generalized by the pronoun they and does not highlight the specific person(s). The evaluative adjective is not explicitly stated but the evaluation is suggested by disturbing nature of verbs. No extended metaphor is present. Modality is manifested by the modal auxiliary “couldn’t which shows impossibility and powerlessness. The post is not written in the form of a rhetorical question, but uses declarative force. Pronouns (they, me, I) are a main focus in developing a relational dynamic and exhibit strategic pronouns and reference. The sentence is composed of two coordinated clauses (declarative clauses) the latter describing the limitation of perception, thus enhancing the feeling of helplessness.

IG Post 3

Timestamp: 6 March 2025, 3:22 PM

“Had a panic attack after being harassed outside my tuition center.” Hashtags: #Anxiety #WomenHarassed #StudentLife

IG Post 3 Analysis

IG Post 3 anticipates psychological influence by using specific lexical means like panic attack and harassed that do not only rely on clinical but also on the personal register. The youth, normalcy, and personal space are highlighted by the depiction of the female victim as a girl and the first person possessive pronoun my tuition center. The transitivity of having a panic attack implies a behavioral/experience process that has an implied first-person subject whereas being harassed is a passive form that encodes a process of materiality that has an omitted Actor and thus agency and participant roles are suppressed. The preeminence of passive voice in being harassed prefigures the feeling towards the harasser. No explicit evaluative adjective is given, but there is a strong evaluative connotation on the clinical word panic attack, which indicates the severity. There is no metaphorism, only the literalized medicalized language is impactful. The modality is implicit and the declarative structure tends to present the incident as a fact and causatively related. No rhetorical question is present in the post which keeps the story to the point. Minimal but implied pronouns are used (I, my) to keep personal reference. The sentence is a one-run compressed declarative clause, having a causal adjunct (after being harassed), which creates a direct and more vivid connection between the two variables: harassment and psychological consequence.

IG Post 4

Timestamp: 18 March 2025, 9:30 PM Image Description: Hospital waiting area selfie with tear streaks visible. Caption:



“She was hit by a motorbike while crossing the road. People just stared at her.” Hashtags: #AccidentStory #WomenIgnored #Pakistan

IG Post 4 Analysis

IG Post 4 develops a two-fold discourse of physical injury and social apathy using key words tactfully like hit, motorbike and stared. The female victim is alienated by the use of third-person reference (she, her) which can make the experience universal and less immediate. Regarding transitivity, a passive voice that encodes a material process (such as being the victim of a motorbike), with an Actor who is either non-human or background, restricts the ability to clearly attribute agency. People just stared at her, in its turn, uses active voice, clearly stating the roles of the participants: people, who, as Actors, are morally important because of their inaction. The adverb just is some form of an implicit evaluative marker but there is no explicit evaluative adjective. No metaphor is used and the contrast between injury and indifference creates great evaluative meaning. The absence of modality is not explicit in that the statements are made as factual. There is no rhetorical question in the post and it is declarative reporting. Referential cohesion is created by the use of pronouns (she, her), whereas a generalization of the social group is achieved by the use of pronouns and reference by people. The sentence is made up of two simple declarative sentences, which contrasts the action of harm and reaction of bystanders thus reinforcing the discourse of societal neglect.

Concluding Observations

In all the twelve posts, there is a pattern of discourse that is consistent. Women are largely built as an Objective of material processes, whereas the perpetrators are often left in the passive voice. It is a linguistic strategy that systematically previews victimhood and previews responsibility. Lexical options are highly focused on vulnerability, fear, emotional distress, which is frequently supported by evaluative adjectives and expressions of emotion.

Additionally, the repetition of rhetorical questions and subjective modality indicates an emergent moral discourse which criticizes apathy in the society. The recurrent lack of agents, objectification and powerlessness metaphors, are part of a greater ideological framing, where women are framed as structurally vulnerable subjects in Pakistani social media discourses of 2025.

5. Findings and Discussion

The comparison of twelve social media posts in Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter/X shows that there are systematic and ideologically based patterns in the discursive construction of women as victims within the Pakistani digital spaces. Based on Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2015) and Critical Feminist Discourse Studies (Lazar, 2005), the results show how the linguistic and multimodal resources continually predict the vulnerability of women and downgrade agency and responsibility.



One of the most commonly used patterns is the focus on material processes wherein women are the Goals, and perpetrators are not mentioned at all or vaguely mentioned. Passive forms like dragged, harassed, and shoved: the Actor is hidden, which makes the focus on responsibility less prominent and strengthens the image of women as the only passive receivers of violence. This is in line with CDA views that linguistic structures can naturalize power imbalances and deny agency (Fairclough, 2015).

The selection of lexicons also stabilizes this depiction by a semantic domain of vulnerability and emotional distress with terms like helpless, humiliated, begged, and powerless. This kind of language heightens the emotional involvement and at the same time recreates gendered notions of weakness and dependency (Lazar, 2005). Moreover, symbolic objectification of women is enhanced by metaphors (punching bags) and labels (weak) that strengthen the hierarchical ideologies on gender.

The discussion also brings to the fore the place of modality and rhetorical questioning in making moral discourses. The interrogative forms (e.g., When will society stop.?) reveal the general concern and the moral judgment, making the audiences the morally engaged spectators. Although this may create awareness, it is usually event-focused and fails to address structural determinants like patriarchy, legal inefficiency, or institutional failure adequately.

The construction of victimhood is further framed by platform specific differences. Twitter/X encourages brief and intensive moral commentary; Facebook encourages more narrative framing; and Instagram encourages personal, affective, and experience-based accounts. Regardless of these differences, each of the platforms replicates a hegemonic discourse where women are declared as manipulated objects in a wider socio-cultural context, which is influenced by honor, morality, and gender norms.

These patterns at the macro level suggest discursive reproduction of patriarchal ideologies in which violence against women is both denounced and normalized at the same time. The repetitive use of back grounding of perpetrators and the focus on suffering of women helps to naturalize the victimhood discourse. Nevertheless, the existence of critical and sensitive voices also indicates that social media is an area of contention, those discourses of predominance can both be reinforced and confronted.

6. Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

The research has valuable theoretical and practical implications as well as sheds light on the direction of future research.

Theoretically, it builds upon Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Feminist Discourse Studies by showing how victimhood is constructed through the interplay of linguistic features, multimodality, and platform-related affordances. The cross-platform methodology offers a deeper



insight into digital discourse, in the way that technological settings influence the expression of gendered identities.

In practice, the results emphasize the importance of more responsible and gender-sensitive communication practices on the Web. Discourse should be promoted that prefigures responsibility among media practitioners and social media users instead of concealing the culprits. These insights can also be applied to help policymakers and digital platforms to establish a framework of dealing with online harassment as well as encouraging ethical content moderation. Also, the paper emphasizes that critical digital literacy should be an integrated aspect of education so that individuals can identify and confront the destructive gendered discourse.

In spite of all these contributions, there are some limitations of the study. The comparatively limited dataset, although in line with qualitative CDA, restricts the applicability of results. It is centered on the analysis of the text, and the analysis of the audience reception and amplification by the algorithms is not explored to a large extent. In addition, being an interpretive study, findings will be influenced by the analytical perspective of the researcher, but reflexive practices were used to improve rigor.

Future studies ought to overcome these limitations by using larger and more varied datasets, intersecting analysis (e.g., class, region, ethnicity), and exploring audience reactions and patterns of engagement. The longitudinal and mixed-method research would be an addition to the knowledge about the development of discursive constructions over time and their interaction with the actual results. This type of research is crucial towards building a more in-depth insight into digital victimhood and its socio-cultural consequences in Pakistan.

7. Conclusion

This paper shows that the portrayal of women victims in the Pakistani social media is not only descriptive but discursively produced as a systematic and systematic linguistic and multimodal practice. The repetitive nature of passive forms, affective language use, and moralizing talk prefigures the frailty of women and obscures agency and responsibility, which enforced more general patriarchal ideologies.

Simultaneously, social media becomes a dynamic and contested space of discourse, within which the dominant narratives of victimhood co-exist with critical voices, which support and promote awareness and change. As much as these platforms bring the problems of gender-based violence to the limelight, they also endanger to create reductive and disempowering portrayals.

This work, with its cross-platform, CDA-informed analysis, is an addition to the current scholarly discussions on gender, discourse and digital media. It emphasizes that we are in dire need of more balanced, responsible and empowering portrayal of women in the online world, especially in those socio-cultural spheres where the language of the discourse has real material implications.



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