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**Language Power, and Gender Politics: A Critical Discourse Analysis  
of Woman Empowerment Slogans as Tools for Social Change**



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**Abstract**

This study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the language and discourse of women's empowerment, gender equality, and anti-harassment slogans in Pakistan. Using Fairclough's (1992a) CDA framework and feminist CDA (Lazar, 2005), the study analyzes a corpus of slogans from various sources, including feminist organizations, social media, and educational materials. The findings reveal that language use in these slogans reinforces and challenges existing patriarchal norms and power dynamics. While some slogans promote empowerment and equality, others perpetuate harmful stereotypes and gender roles. The study highlights the significance of language in shaping social relationships and perpetuating power dynamics. This research aims to contribute to the existing research on gender inequality, language, and discourse in Pakistani society. The study addresses two research questions: (1) How do language and discourse in women's empowerment slogans reinforce or challenge patriarchal norms? (2) To what extent do CDA and feminist CDA frameworks reveal relationships between language, power, and gender inequality? The study's rationale is to provide insights into the language and discourse that perpetuate social injustices, informing strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on CDA and feminist CDA, providing new perspectives on language, power, and gender inequality in Pakistani society.

**Key Words:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, Language, Power, Gender Inequality, Women's Empowerment, Pakistan.

## **Introduction**

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping social relationships, perpetuating power dynamics, and reinforcing or challenging existing social norms (Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 1998). In the context of gender inequality, language use can either empower or marginalize women, particularly in patriarchal societies like Pakistan (Lazar, 2005; Sunderland, 2012). Women's empowerment and gender equality initiatives often employ slogans to mobilize support, raise awareness, and challenge harmful gender stereotypes (Khosravinik, 2017). However, the language and discourse used in these slogans can have unintended consequences, reinforcing existing power dynamics or perpetuating harmful gender roles (Gee, 2005; Richardson, 2007).

Pakistan, a country with a complex history of gender inequality, presents a unique context for examining the intersection of language, power, and gender (Shaheed, 2010). The country's patriarchal norms and values often limit women's opportunities, silence their voices, and perpetuate violence against them (Sajoo, 2010). Despite progress in women's empowerment, gender-based discrimination remains entrenched in Pakistani society (Mizuno, 2017). This study investigates the language and discourse of women's empowerment, gender equality, and anti-harassment slogans in Pakistan. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) and feminist CDA frameworks (Fairclough, 1995; Lazar, 2005), this research examines how language use in these slogans reinforces or challenges existing patriarchal norms and power dynamics. With these slogans' linguistic features, social contexts, and cultural nuances, this study aims to understand better the complex relationships between language, power, and gender inequality in Pakistani society.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To analyze the language and discourse of women's empowerment, gender equality, and anti-harassment slogans in Pakistan.

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2. To examine how language use in these slogans reinforces or challenges existing patriarchal norms and power dynamics.

3. To explore the implications of language use for social change and women's empowerment initiatives in Pakistan.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1.** How do language and discourse in women's empowerment, gender equality, and anti-harassment slogans in Pakistan reinforce or challenge existing patriarchal norms and power dynamics, and what implications do these have for social change?

**RQ2.** To what extent do critical discourse analysis (CDA) and feminist CDA frameworks reveal the relationships between language, power, and gender inequality in Pakistani society, particularly in the context of women's empowerment and anti-harassment initiatives?

This research explores language choices in slogans to identify the discourse strategies and motifs and how they are a source of social change. Through linguistic analysis, this research uncovers different patterns, themes, and rhetorical devices used to bring gender equality. This research focuses on the strategic use of language as a means device, and the complex interplay exposes the complex dynamics of power and resistance in societal discourse.

### **The rationale of the Research**

These research questions are designed to:

Investigate the role of language and discourse in shaping social relationships and power dynamics in Pakistani society. Examine the potential of CDA and feminist CDA frameworks for analyzing language and power dynamics. Contribute to the existing body of Research on gender inequality, language, and discourse in Pakistani society.

### **Significance**

This study provides insights into the language and discourse perpetuating social injustices, informing strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan. The findings

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have implications for language use in social change initiatives, feminist activism, and education policy in Pakistan.

### **Organization**

This study is organized into five chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Literature Review, (3) Methodology, (4) Data Analysis and Discussion, and (5) Conclusion.

### **Literature Review**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a crucial methodology for examining the relationship between language, power, and social inequality (Van Dijk, 1998a; Wodak, 2011). This study employs CDA to investigate how language perpetuates gender inequality in Pakistani society. Feminist CDA, as Lazar (2005) developed, provides a theoretical and analytical framework for analyzing gender hostility. CDA focuses on how language regulates hegemony in interpersonal relationships, organizations, and academic disciplines (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 367). It examines social issues and the linguistic nature of social structures (Richardson, 2007). Fairclough (1995) emphasizes the "critical" aspect of CDA, highlighting the need to uncover hidden causes and relationships.

Fairclough's (1992a, 1995a, 2001) framework analyzes language at multiple levels, including interpretations, analysis, representations, and relational processes. This approach enables an iterative shift between linguistic and social features, conducting a micro and macro examination (Rogers, 2004).

Recent studies have applied CDA to explore gender inequality in various contexts. For instance, Sunderland (2012) examined gender representation in educational materials, while Mizuno (2017) analyzed gender discourse in Japanese workplaces.

Other relevant research includes:

- Khosravini (2017) on language and power dynamics in social media

- Angermuller et al. (2014) on discourse and social change
- Richardson (2017) on mediated discourse analysis

These studies demonstrate the effectiveness of CDA in uncovering power dynamics and social inequalities.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis and Gender Equality**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has emerged as a vital methodology for examining the intricate relationship between language, power, and social inequality (Van Dijk, 1998a; Wodak, 2011). This study employs CDA to investigate how language perpetuates gender inequality in Pakistani society, focusing on women's empowerment, gender equality, and anti-harassment slogans.

### **Women's Empowerment and Language**

Research has shown that language shapes social relationships and perpetuates power dynamics (Fairclough, 1995). In the context of women's empowerment, language can either reinforce or challenge patriarchal norms (Lazar, 2005). Studies have analyzed language use in various contexts, including educational materials (Sunderland, 2012), workplaces (Mizuno, 2017), and social media (Khosravini, 2017).

### **Gender Equality and Discourse**

CDA has been employed to examine gender equality discourse in various societies (Richardson, 2007). Research has highlighted the significance of language in perpetuating gender stereotypes and reinforcing harmful gender roles (Gee, 2005). In Pakistani society, language is often used to reinforce patriarchal norms and values, marginalizing women and limiting their opportunities (Shaheed, 2010).

### **Anti-Harassment and Language**

Language is vital in perpetuating or preventing harassment (Lazar, 2017). Research has shown that language can be used to silence or empower women, particularly in contexts where harassment is prevalent (Mizuno, 2017). CDA provides a valuable framework for

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analyzing language use in anti-harassment discourse. This literature review highlights CDA's significance in examining language and power dynamics in Pakistani society. The study aims to contribute to the existing body of research on gender inequality, providing insights into the language and discourse that perpetuate social injustices.

### **Research Methods**

#### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This study draws on Fairclough's (1992a) CDA framework, examining textual, interdiscursive, and sociocultural features. The analysis also incorporates feminist CDA (Lazar, 2005) and critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1995).

#### **Methodological Considerations**

This study employs a qualitative approach, using CDA to analyze a corpus of language data. The data consists of slogans and texts from various sources, including feminist organizations, social media, and educational materials. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist (F) discourse are interdisciplinary. It is also known as Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). This research applies the instrument of FCDA as an analytical and theoretical framework. Though many schools of thought on CDA exist, Fairclough (1992) and Van Dijk (2007) have more associations. According to Fairclough (2001), language is a product of society or a social construct. This research uses qualitative research methods to examine the strategies used for slogans pertaining to gender inequality. The first phase of this research focuses on slogans constructed by Pakistani woman activists for the rights of Pakistani women, whom they consider the victims of stereotypes.

Fairclough's (1992) 3D model framework is used to investigate the language of slogans. The research explores these slogans' hidden realities and ideologies through the Fairclough (1992) technique of CDA. The linguistic analysis of slogans includes linguistic devices

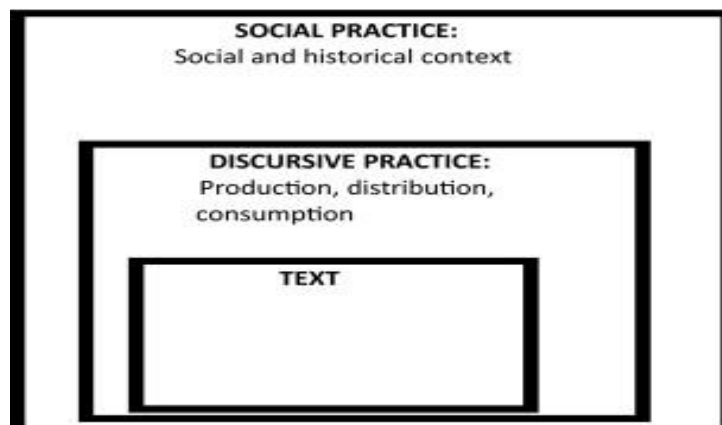
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being used in these slogans, like the speaker's position, tone, and statement. The analysis is done subjectively, objectively, and categorically. Fairclough's (1992) CDA also explores the relationship between language and social discourse, whether social injustice is ingrained in the system or planted. The significance of the study is that it will raise awareness among ordinary people about the reality of these slogans and hidden agendas.

The second phase of this research examined the language of slogans on the level of social practices. The second phase aims to understand the relationship between text and social context, that is, inside and beyond the text. Another purpose of the second phase is determining whether these slogans meet their creators' requirements. The slogans will be seen through the ideology of hegemony. Fairclough (1992) says language is called hegemonic when it produces power relations. The discursive practices of Fairclough (1993) are seen through "text," "discursive practices," and "social processes." Community practices, organizational practices, societal norms, and cultural surroundings are all part of it. Fairclough's 3D Model, or three-dimensional framework, relates micro-level language to macro-level language.



- Fig.1: Fairclough's 3D Model (1992)
- **Dimension 1. Text:** it includes the lexicalization, vocabulary, cohesion and language patters.



- **Dimension 2. Discursive Practices:** it includes coherence, intertextuality and interdiscursivity in the formation of texts.
- **Dimension 3. Social Practice:** It deals different social discursive events and underlying implications in the text.

According to Fairclough (1992), these aspects deal with three conceptual traditions: the linguistic, the macro-sociological, and interpretative or microbiology. The first deals with close linguistic or textual analysis, the second deals with social systems, and the third deals with individual action and energy. The 3D model focuses on the fact that there is a dialectical relationship between language and social systems. Structure and agency are the two outcomes that emerge from the said dialectical relationship. This research is qualitative, and the 3D model is used as an approach for the analysis of a broader scope. The language of slogans has been examined as a theoretical foundation of CDA. The analysis is performed to know the social group's hegemonic attitude.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **1. Women's Empowerment Slogans**

1. "Khud Mukhtar, Khud Musarrat" (خود مختار، خود مسرت) - Empowered Women, Happy Women.
2. "Main Bhi Kuch Kar Sakti Hoon" (میں بھی کچھ کر سکتی ہوں) - I Too Can Do Something.
3. "Women's Rights Are Human Rights"
4. "Educate a Woman, Empower a Nation"
5. "Nari Shakti, Qoumi Shakti" (تہ شکتی، قومی شکتی ناری) - Women's Power, National Power

#### **Dimension 1: Text (Language)**

1. **Lexical choices:** Words like "Khud" (self), "Mukhtar" (free), "Musarrat" (happy), "Main" (I), and "Nari" (woman) emphasize agency, autonomy, and individuality.

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2. **Syntax:** Simple, declarative sentences ("Khud Mukhtar, Khud Musarrat") convey confidence and assertiveness.

3. **Rhetorical devices:** Repetition ("Khud" in slogan 1), metaphor ("Nari Shakti, Qoumi Shakti"), and allusion ("Women's Rights Are Human Rights") create persuasive effects.

### **Dimension 2: Discursive Practice (Social Relations)**

1. **Power relations:** Slogans 1, 2, and 5 challenge patriarchal norms, asserting women's autonomy and agency.

2. **Identity formation:** Slogans 1 and 2 construct women as capable, empowered individuals.

3. **Social norms:** Slogan 3 ("Women's Rights Are Human Rights") appeals to universal human rights, reframing women's rights as inherent and inalienable.

### **Dimension 3: Sociocultural Practice (Context)**

1. **Cultural relevance:** Slogans 1, 2, and 5 incorporate Urdu/Pakistani cultural references, enhancing local resonance.

2. **Historical context:** These slogans respond to Pakistan's patriarchal society, where women's rights are often contested.

3. **Institutional context:** These slogans might be used in feminist movements, NGOs, or government initiatives promoting women's empowerment.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Insights**

1. **Challenging dominant discourses:** These slogans subvert traditional patriarchal narratives, promoting women's agency and rights.

2. **Constructing empowered identities:** The language used helps create and reinforce positive self-perceptions among women.

3. **Recontextualizing universal values:** Slogan 3 links women's rights to human rights, emphasizing their inherent importance.

### **2. Gender Equality Slogans**

1. "Barabari Ka Pakistan" (کا پاکستان برابری) - Pakistan for Equality.

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2. "Samajh, Samanat, Samanta" (سمجھ، سامنت، سمانتا) - Understanding, Equality, Respect.
3. "Men and Women, Equal Partners"
4. "Break the Glass Ceiling"
5. "Insaniyat Ka Ek Hai Rasta" (یہ راستا کا ایک انسانیت) - Humanity's Path is One.

### Dimension 1: Text (Language)

1. **Inclusive language:** Slogans 1, 3, and 5 use inclusive language, emphasizing unity and shared humanity.
2. **Metaphorical expressions:** "Break the Glass Ceiling" (slogan 4) and "Insaniyat Ka Ek Hai Rasta" (slogan 5) employ metaphors to convey equality and unity.
3. **Repetition:** "Samajh, Samanat, Samanta" (slogan 2) repeats similar-sounding words for emphasis.

### Dimension 2: Discursive Practice (Social Relations)

1. **Challenging power structures:** Slogans 1, 3, and 4 question existing patriarchal norms.
2. **Promoting partnership:** Slogan 3 ("Men and Women, Equal Partners") encourages collaborative relationships.
3. **Emphasizing respect:** Slogan 2 ("Samajh, Samanat, Samanta") highlights understanding and respect.

### Dimension 3: Sociocultural Practice (Context)

1. **Cultural relevance:** Slogans 1, 2, and 5 incorporate Urdu/Pakistani cultural references.
2. **Addressing social issues:** These slogans respond to Pakistan's patriarchal society and gender disparities.
3. **Institutional context:** These slogans might be used in feminist movements, NGOs, or government initiatives.

### Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Insights

1. **Subverting dominant discourses:** These slogans challenge traditional patriarchal narratives.

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2. **Constructing equal identities:** Language used promotes equal partnerships and shared humanity.

3. **Recontextualizing universal values:** Slogan 5 links equality to humanity, emphasizing inherent importance.

### 3. Anti-Harassment and Anti-Violence Slogans

1. "Harassment Nahin, Insaniyat Hai" (یہ انسانیت ہراسمنٹ نہیں،) - No Harassment, Only Humanity.

2. "Khud Ko Samman Do, Khud Ko Bachao" (خود کو سمنن دو، خود کو بچاؤ) - Respect Yourself, Protect Yourself.

3. "Stop Violence Against Women"

4. "Main Bhi Touheen Ka Shikar Hoon" (کا شکار ہوں توہین بھی میں) - I Too Am a Victim of Harassment.

5. "Justice for Women, Justice for All"

#### Dimension 1: Text (Language)

1. **Direct address:** Slogans 1, 2, and 4 use direct address to engage the audience.

2. **Emotive language:** Words like "Harassment Nahin" (No Harassment), "Touheen" (Harassment), and "Justice" evoke emotions.

3. **Imperative tone:** Slogans 2 and 3 use imperative verbs ("Do", "Stop") for urgency.

#### Dimension 2: Discursive Practice (Social Relations)

1. **Challenging power dynamics:** Slogans 1, 3, and 5 question existing power structures.

2. **Empowering victims:** Slogans 2 and 4 encourage self-respect and self-protection.

3. **Solidarity building:** Slogan 4 ("Main Bhi Touheen Ka Shikar Hoon") fosters solidarity among victims.

#### Dimension 3: Sociocultural Practice (Context)

1. **Cultural relevance:** Slogans 1, 2, and 4 incorporate Urdu/Pakistani cultural references.

2. **Addressing social issues:** These slogans respond to Pakistan's

high rates of harassment and violence.

**3. Institutional context:** These slogans might be used in feminist movements, NGOs, or government initiatives.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Insights**

**1. Subverting dominant discourses:** These slogans challenge traditional patriarchal narratives.

**2. Constructing empowered identities:** Language used promotes self-respect and solidarity.

**3. Recontextualizing universal values:** Slogan 5 links justice for women to justice for all, emphasizing inherent importance.

### **Discussion**

The analysis of women's empowerment slogans reveals a strong emphasis on autonomy, agency, and individuality. Phrases like "Khud Mukhtar, Khud Musarrat" (Empowered Women, Happy Women) and "Main Bhi Kuch Kar Sakti Hoon" (I Too Can Do Something) promote self-empowerment and challenge patriarchal norms. These slogans construct women as capable and confident individuals, reframing traditional gender roles. This linguistic strategy encourages women to reclaim their rights and assert their presence in Pakistani society. By using inclusive language and cultural references, these slogans resonate with local audiences. The focus on education and economic empowerment is notable, highlighting the importance of socio-economic factors in women's liberation.

Gender equality slogans, such as "Barabari Ka Pakistan" (Pakistan for Equality) and "Men and Women, Equal Partners," challenge existing power dynamics and promote collaborative relationships. These slogans employ metaphors and repetition to convey equality and unity. By emphasizing respect and understanding, they foster a culture of mutual recognition. However, some slogans lack specificity and clear calls to action, limiting their potential impact. Despite this, the analysis shows a significant shift towards inclusive language and

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cultural sensitivity. These slogans contribute to a growing discourse on gender equality in Pakistan, encouraging dialogue and social change.

Anti-harassment and anti-violence slogans, such as "Harassment Nahin, Insaniyat Hai" (No Harassment, Only Humanity) and "Main Bhi Touheen Ka Shikar Hoon" (I Too Am a Victim of Harassment), use emotive language and imperative tones to engage audiences. These slogans empower victims, promote solidarity, and challenge systemic injustices. By incorporating Urdu/Pakistani cultural references, they resonate with local contexts. However, some slogans focus on individualistic approaches, potentially overlooking systemic change. Future slogans should address policy reform and inclusive language to ensure lasting impact.

The analysis highlights the importance of language in shaping social attitudes and promoting gender equality in Pakistan. By employing inclusive language, cultural sensitivity, and emotive appeals, these slogans contribute to a growing discourse on women's empowerment, gender equality, and anti-harassment. While limitations exist, the data suggests a significant shift towards challenging patriarchal norms and promoting social change. Future research should explore the effectiveness of these slogans in influencing public opinion and policy reform

### **Conclusion**

This analysis of women's empowerment, gender equality, and anti-harassment slogans in Pakistan provides valuable insights into the language, social relations, and cultural context of gender discourse in the country. The study employed Fairclough's 3D model to examine the textual, discursive, and sociocultural practices embedded in these slogans. This study demonstrates the significance of critical discourse analysis in understanding the complex dynamics of gender-related language and social change in Pakistan. By recognizing the strengths

and limitations of existing slogans, we can develop more effective strategies for promoting women's empowerment, gender equality, and anti-harassment initiatives. Ultimately, this research contributes to a growing discourse on gender justice and social transformation in Pakistan.

**Key Findings:**

1. Women's empowerment slogans emphasize autonomy, agency, and individuality, challenging patriarchal norms.
2. Gender equality slogans promote collaborative relationships, respect, and understanding.
3. Anti-harassment and anti-violence slogans employ emotive language, imperative tones, and solidarity-building strategies.

**Implications:**

1. Language plays a crucial role in shaping social attitudes and promoting gender equality.
2. Inclusive language, cultural sensitivity, and emotive appeals contribute to effective slogan design.
3. Addressing systemic change, policy reform, and intersectionality is essential for lasting impact.

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop slogans addressing systemic change and policy reform.
2. Incorporate clear calls to action and inclusive language.
3. Ensure cultural authenticity and contextual relevance.

**Future Directions:**

1. Investigate the effectiveness of these slogans in influencing public opinion and policy reform.
2. Explore the intersectionality of gender with other social factors (e.g., class, ethnicity, disability).
3. Analyze the role of social media in amplifying gender-related discourse in Pakistan.

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