

**Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review**

**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

**Online ISSN: 3006-5895**

**<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>**

**NARRATING VIOLENCE, NEGOTIATING POWER: A FEMINIST  
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LEXICO-GRAMMAR IN  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMPLAINTS**



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### Abstract

*The study investigates the lexico-grammatical choices employed in domestic violence complaints submitted to the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women and four police stations in Lahore. It draws on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2014) to reveal sociocultural ideologies and the victimization of women. It examines the complex interplay of gender and power relations, articulated through linguistic choices, such as culturally informed metaphors, extended metaphors, adjectives, and adverbs. These linguistic features are embedded in the grammatical structures and analyzed through transitivity, mood, and modality. The results indicate that the complaints reflect asymmetric gendered practices which are endemic in a deeply entrenched patriarchal society such as Pakistan's, where violence against women is often rationalized and normalized, discouraging women from reporting it, thereby leading them to endure domestic abuse for a long period. The complaints are invested with multilayered sociocultural, economic, and gender-based ideologies, revealed through linguistic features. The findings contribute to understanding the complexities of the real-world use of complaints in discourse, which can help dismantle the ways in which oppression based on gender operates to enable future social transformation.*

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, complaints, FCDA, power relationships, ideology

### Introduction

Domestic violence remains one of the most pervasive and deeply entrenched human rights violations in Pakistan, sustained and reinforced by a patriarchal society that views women as familial property (Manzouri et al., 2025). In many South Asian countries, particularly in Pakistan, the imbalance of power between couples as well as the role of other family members in creating and reinforcing the imbalance and violence are significant factors (Sattar et al., 2022). According to the State of Human Rights in 2025 report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), domestic violence cases totaled 32 in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), 7,084 in Punjab, 467 in Sindh, 597 in KPK, and 237 in Balochistan, with Gilgit Baltistan and AJK not reporting domestic violence as a separate category. Nationally, the consolidated number is at least 4,244 cases, broken down into 1,332 murders and 2,912 battery cases as cited by the National Police Bureau.

In spite of these alarming statistics, the number of reported cases remains shockingly low. The annual report of Sahil, an NGO, warns that the actual scale of gender victimizing cases may be far higher because a huge number of cases remain underreported due to family honor, fear of social stigma and safety concerns. The report recorded 6,543 incidents in Pakistan from January to November 2025, compared to 5,253 cases in 2024, indicating a rise of nearly 25 percent per year. The USSD Human Rights report (2024) stated that the police and judiciary sometimes hesitated to act in domestic abuse cases, considering them to be family matters; therefore, women trying to

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report abuse usually experienced various challenges.

Domestic violence has received extensive research attention regarding its epidemiological prevalence, antecedents, risk factors and legislative developments; however, a smaller but significant strand has examined its representation and construction in media discourse. Existing literature employs text mining to extract abuse typologies and victim injuries from registered complaints (Karystianis et al., 2022), and Kamal (2025) analyzed court case files and judgements to reveal how women complainants are discursively constructed as 'bad' or 'mad' in judicial language.. In the Pakistani media context, discourse analyses of Urdu and English news coverage have shown that language serves as a site of ideological reproduction, with Urdu outlets more consistently reinforcing patriarchal norms in the framing of domestic violence (Mukhtar & Iqbal, 2023). However, a critical gap persists: while institutional responses to complaints and media representations of violence have received scholarly attention, the complaints themselves, as primary, victim-authored texts, have not been subjected to systematic linguistic analysis. The written complaints submitted by domestic violence survivors constitute a distinct discursive genre in which complainants navigate power asymmetries, construct their victimhood, and make strategic linguistic choices under conditions of social and legal constraint. There is scant literature on the critical discourse analysis of Urdu and English domestic violence complaints submitted by complainants in Pakistan, examining the linguistic choices, ideological orientations, and discursive strategies embedded in these texts. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing the linguistic choices employed in domestic violence complaints filed in Pakistan, drawing on CDA to uncover how gender, power, and identity are constructed in the complainants' own words.

The study attempts to answer the following research questions to investigate the asymmetry of gendered power relations sustained and resisted through the discourse of complaint and examine the linguistic choices that underline the intersection between gender and other forms of social identity:

1. How are gender victimization practices discursively represented in the lexico-grammatical choices employed in the selected domestic violence complaints?
2. What recurrent pattern does the linguistic analysis of the complaints uncover across cases?

## **Literature Review**

Domestic violence is an extremely complex issue that is rampant worldwide. It can involve physical attacks, forced subjugation, insulting behavior, displays of power, or taking anger out on someone else, resulting in physical, psychological, and/or emotional abuse (Adebelli et al., 2016; Su, 2025). It is a global human rights issue that violates a woman's body, sense of self, and trust, irrespective of race, age, ethnicity, or nationality (Wendt & Zannettino, 2015). Domestic violence is usually committed against a wife, child, parents, or elders. Studies of the factors contributing to domestic violence reveal that children's exposure to violent environments adversely affects their psyche, so boys are more likely to become violent husbands in the future (Cater et al., 2015; Adibelli et al., 2016; Çaykoğlu et al., 2008; Çaykoğlu et al., 2011; Montalbano-Phelps, 2009; Naughton et al., 2015). The exploration of the physical and psychological dimensions of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) reveals that physical DVA affects an individual's psychological well-being and satisfaction with social support satisfaction (Naughton et al., 2017).

In Pakistan, the power inequality between partners and other family members' role in creating and sustaining that imbalance are important factors (Khan & Hussain, 2008; Nawaz et al., 2024). Other factors responsible for domestic violence are women's lack of empowerment, poverty, religious

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Online ISSN: 3006-5895

rigidity, and the dowry system (Khan et al., 2009; Manzoor et al., 2018; Bhutto & Ramzan, 2021) and the misinterpretation of what constitutes the socio-religious norms of appropriate behavior, leading victims to believe that it was destined to happen and that they should tolerate it (Sattar et al., 2022; Tarar et al., 2017). According to the World Health Organization's statistics (2024) globally, around one-third (27%) of women aged 15-49 have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence at some point in their lives. Research has predominantly shown that domestic violence can result in a wide range of short- and long-term physical, mental, and sexual health problems for females (Dillon et al., 2013; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2002; Jewkes et al., 2002; Sattar et al., 2022) even though they do not perceive themselves as victims or abused (Manzouri et al., 2025; Sonogo et al., 2013).

The Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act (PPWVA) 2022 defines domestic violence in section 2(h) as "the violence committed by the defendant with whom the aggrieved is living or has lived in a house when they are related to each other by consanguinity, marriage, or adoption." PPWVA 2016 and 2022 were much criticized for its one feature, i.e., GPS Tracker bracelets and anklets. Overall, the act was seen as an attempt to go against Shariah law and would lead to the secularization of the Islamic State (Ali, 2016). The resentment against the bill was primarily expressed based on Verse 4:34 of the Qur'an, which states: "Concerning those women from whom you fear *nushuz* (disobedience/rebellion), admonish them, and/or abandon them in bed, and/or *wadribuhunna* (hit them)." The traditionalist interpretation of this verse, especially the imperative 'hit them' means that the use of force is allowed, if necessary and as a last step, to save a marriage. In contrast, according to the reformist interpretation, the imperative merely refers to parting ways in cases where the dispute between spouses is irreconcilable (Chaudhry, 2016). There are many sociocultural factors are responsible for the increase in domestic violence cases. The patriarchal society fosters a conducive space for the perpetuation of such ideas (Ramzan & Khan, 2024a,b). For instance, wife-beating is considered a husband's right if he believes it is required (Hadi & Ullah, 2015). Fikree et al. (2005) explored gender roles within Pakistani culture to explore the interconnectedness between violence and culture. As mentioned earlier, a husband considers that he has subjective beat his wife for her disobedience, which is a subjective interpretation. This perspective represents broader structures of a culture in which men hold dominant positions, so they justify violence as contributing to sustaining their superiority (Zakar et al., 2013). In the Pakistani context, intimate partner violence can help maintain a man's honor; violent behavior establishes his dominance over his wife. Domestic violence is conceptualized as a means of achieving a clear hierarchy in the marital relationship. Moreover, this is likely to be considered acceptable behavior.

The culturally specific ideology of intimate partner violence is not confined to Pakistani men only. Many Pakistani women normalize physical abuse as an expected response if engaged in a heated argument (Aslam et al., 2015; Javaid & Ramzan, 2025). A recent survey investigating Pakistani women's opinions of behavior that they considered to be violent revealed that almost half of the participants considered physical abuse as a violent practice against women, while 8% perceived verbal abuse and 28% considered emotional abuse as acts of violence against women (Madhani et al., 2017). By and large, intimate partner abuse is widespread in Pakistan. However, people in general, and women in particular, refrain from identifying it as abuse. There is little willingness to accept legal support because most women are unaware of their constitutional rights, so they are isolated and presume that there is no option but to suffer in silence in their homes (Hadi & Ullah, 2015).

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Those seeking justice are not provided adequate support from state institutions. Insufficient shelter and healthcare support for victims, lack of cooperation from the police in registering First Information Reports (FIRs) for domestic violence, and time-consuming and expensive judicial procedures are some of the hurdles Pakistani women face (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2013). These factors discourage women from seeking support, thus increasing their vulnerability to domestic violence. Even though efforts are being made, they still lack effectiveness due to unaddressed cultural and social factors (Shahid, 2017).

Domestic violence against women has begun to be considered a serious social problem. A study analyzing the views of married women referred to healthcare facilities in Ahvaz, Iran, indicated that domestic violence damages not only wives but the entire family system and social structure (Shams et al., 2017). First, the prevention and solution to this problem require changing women's attitudes to violence and improving their independence and individuality. The study suggests that women can be empowered by raising their awareness of violence, creating job opportunities, and providing legal protection for victims of violence. These steps can reduce violence against women and help them avoid violent situations (Shams et al., 2017).

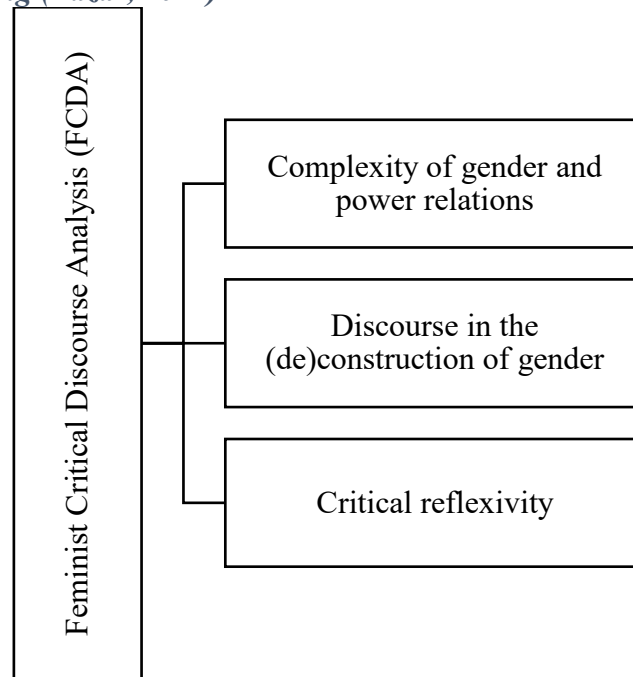
## **Theoretical Framework**

The present study employs Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as a theoretical perspective to critically analyze women's complaints against violence and harassment. Through the linguistic features used, complaints can reveal different forms and levels of severity of abusive gendered practices, thus portraying asymmetrical power relations that abuse women verbally and physically. The textual representation of gender victimization is studied through the lexicogrammatical analysis of complaints by applying Fairclough's *Text Analysis* (1992), one of the three dimensions of discourse.

## **Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)**

This study employed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) (Lazar, 2014) as a theoretical perspective to critically analyze women's complaints against violence and harassment. The language of complaints revealed different forms and severity of abusive practices highlighting the asymmetrical power relations which resulted in the victimization of women through verbal and physical abuse. FCDA studies the unequal power relationships

*Theoretical Underpinning (Lazar, 2014)*



**Figure 1**

between males and females in discourse under five praxes: feminist analytical activism; gender as an ideological construct; the complexity of gender and power relations; discourse in the (de)construction of gender; critical reflexivity (Lazar, 2007, 2014). Since the late 1980s, feminist theories have argued that discussing men and women in universal terms is problematic because gender intersects with other categories of social identity, for instance, ethnicity, geographical location, sexuality, and social positions.

Patriarchy, as an ideological system, interacts with consumer and corporate ideologies in a complex way. Moreover, today, the ideology of gender and unequal power relations are more subtly represented through discursive practices to varying degrees in different communities. Based on empirical studies, FCDA addresses the intricacies embedded in the analyses of different discursive structures and the strategies that emerge in different discursive forms. It reveals the pre-conceived assumptions and hegemonic power relations prevalent in different institutional and cultural contexts, including media agencies such as news and advertising, offices, and international and government organizations which discursively present and reinforce, often in a very subtle manner, the unequal power relations between the genders, allowing them to persist.

**Complexity of Gender and Power Relations**

Lazar (2007) points out that gender is a complex phenomenon, so gender discourse should be studied within its particular culture and time to understand gender roles and images because a "historically and culturally contingent analysis" of gender is needed (p. 148). Moreover, its study examines textually represented gendered practices that can be both produced or resisted discursively.

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## **Discourse in the (De)Construction of Gender**

This praxis deals with how the discourse of social practices uncovers underlying ideologies (Chouliariaki & Fairclough, 2021). It also exposes how gender ideology and gendered power relations are negotiated and contested/resisted through discourse. Lazar's (2014) objective aligns with Derrida's (2002) deconstruction theory in dismantling institutional hierarchies that influence our thinking patterns. However, their theories differ because Lazar seeks to challenge gendered power relations to instigate social change on a broader level. The process of "Doing" FCDA is more than just an academic exercise in the "deconstruction" of texts and discussions. It recognizes that the topics discussed have real-life impacts on specific communities and individuals and is motivated to bring about positive social change (Lazar, 2014, p.185).

## **Critical Reflexivity**

Critical reflexivity, a significant feature of late modern societies (Giddens, 1991), refers to the awareness of the prevailing social practices in their society, which help individuals shape their practices. Reflexivity, a marked feature of late modern societies, is where people increasingly make use of special knowledge of the social practices and processes, which then shape practices that follow (Lazar, 2014). Filing complaints against violence and harassment indicates that Pakistani women are becoming aware that their rights are being violated (at home or in the workplace) and that they need to take steps for positive transformations at both micro and macro levels to occur. Lazar (2007, p. 153) believes feminists need to be critically reflexive of their theoretical positions regarding emancipation and equality. The implications these concepts carry for women may vary according to their contexts, material conditions, and situations – for instance, their ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

## **Fairclough's Text Analysis**

Norman Fairclough is one of the most influential researchers in the domain of CDA and put forward a "pragmatic, problem-oriented approach" (Meyer, 2001, p. 28) based on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (1960). Fairclough (2001) believes that critical language study (CLS), as he calls it, contributes to the general raising of consciousness of the manipulative social relations that can be uncovered through language because power, ideology, and language constitute a unitary system. He sees discourse as the primary domain of ideology and power struggles linked to social norms (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 14-15). Fairclough believes CDA investigates the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other aspects of social practices (Fairclough, 2001, p.123).

Fairclough (1989, p. 26) explains that text analysis focuses on the "formal properties" of the written text, which consider lexical items, transitivity, modality, and theme. The lexical items to be analyzed include intensifiers, nouns, and adjectives, while transitivity analysis, based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (1970), focuses on how people construe their experiences and express them through language; this is an integral part of the text's ideational function, which is realized through six processes: material, verbal, relational, behavioral, mental and existential functions, which express ideologies.

Fairclough's model has three dimensions: "text," "interpretation," and "context." He believes there is a dialectical relationship between language and other social elements, implying that these dimensions overlap and are not distinctly separate.

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## Methodology

### Data Collection

The data used in the study were archival, meaning they existed “prior to the current research, not generated by the current research” (Vogt et al., 2012, p. 86). The Archives’ Terminology (2026) defines archives as material generated or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of affairs and preserved for its enduring value. Archival data may be texts from government or other public official records, data depositories, organization files, and internet sources such as web pages/blogs. This study’s data, comprising 30 complaints, came from the archives of government organizations: the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) and four Police Stations located in Lahore that received a large number of complaints from women: the Women’s Police Station, Gender Based Crime Cell, the Civil Lines Division, Iqbal Town Police Station, and Saddar Police Station, all registered between 2017 and 2018.

In order to ensure homogeneity of the sample, the following criteria were considered while selecting the complaint letters:

**Inclusion.** The criteria for selecting complaints were as follows:

- The complainants were aged between 20-40 years old.
- Complaints were registered in Lahore between 2017 and 2018.
- Complaints were written with a minimum of 100 words.
- Complaints were submitted by the complainant or her lawyer.
- Only complaints about domestic violence from complainants who had been married for at least two years (were not divorced), with or without children, were selected.
- The complaints could be against in-laws, fathers, brothers, sons, and husbands.

**Exclusion.** The following complaints were not considered for the current study:

- Proformas or complaint forms were not selected because they did not provide enough details for textual analysis.
- Complaints of walk-in complainants and those registered through helpline were not considered because organizations on the complainants’ behalf generally prepared them.

### Analytical Framework and Procedure:

The first stage includes analyzing lexico-grammatical choices; the first dimension of Fairclough’s model was used, which includes transitivity analysis (three processes pervasive in the sample: material, mental, and verbal), lexical choice, mood, modality, and metaphor. The second dimension of Fairclough’s model, i.e., interpretation – the analysis of the production and reception processes of the text is outside the scope of this study since the complainants could not be contacted to find out how the complaints were written or how the authorities responded to them as these were confidential documents; it was difficult for their producers and receivers to provide details. Moreover, FCDA praxes were used in place of Fairclough’s third dimension, ‘social analysis,’ for the extensive analysis of unequal gendered research to unveil victimizing practices from the perspective of gender.

In the second stage, the study’s findings were triangulated using quantitative data analysis- Part of Speech (POS) tagging and frequency calculation. POS tagging is the process of assigning a label to each word in a sentence according to its part of speech, such as noun, verb, adjective, or adverb

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(Szudarski, 2020). This is a crucial step in various natural language processing tasks, including text classification, information retrieval, and machine translation. Since in the current study, 80 % of the data was in Urdu, for POS tagging and frequency calculation, Urdu Natural Language Toolkit (UNLT) (accessible at: <https://github.com/UCREL/UNLT>; <https://doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/researchdata/494>) was utilized. The toolkit was developed by experts of NLP and Urdu language at the University Centre of corpus Language Research, Lancaster University, UK (Shafi et al., 2022).

## Analysis and Discussion

The section analyzes the lexico-grammatical choices used in domestic violence complaints. A writer's linguistic choices can help maintain power relations whether the writer intends his/her linguistic choices to function ideologically or merely imply an ideology. Furthermore, linguistic choices must be made, whether or not the writer reveals an intended or surface ideology (Knowles & Malmkjær, 2002).

### *Analysis of Complaints Using Fairclough's Text Analysis*

Domestic violence complaints are analyzed in terms of transitivity, lexical choice, mood, and modality, which can reveal a deeply ingrained ideology related to gender and power relations.

**Transitivity Analysis.** Based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (1985), Fairclough's model (1992) is concerned with the relationship between language and its functions in social contexts. Transitivity analysis reveals the type and intensity of violent practices in the domestic sphere. Also, it shows the relationship between perpetrator(s) and victim and the means used to carry out violent practices.

**Material Process.** The material process is predominantly used in domestic violence complaints of physical violence to establish a physical relationship between the event and the participants involved. Material processes represent actions (Egins, 1994) involving an Actor (the person [or entity] who performs the action) and a Goal (the person or entity at whom or to whom the action is directed). For the analysis of complaints, the clauses selected depict violent action focusing on the Actor (perpetrator), Process (harassing action), and Circumstantial elements (manner and intensity of the act), ultimately affecting the Goal (complainant or her relative). Table 1 shows examples from complaints explicitly depicting violent acts, which underscore the intensity of the abuse. The action is mainly transformative and performed to affect a pre-existing Goal (complainant).

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Table 1

*Material Process: Explicit Depiction of Domestic Violence*

<u>Sr</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Actor</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Process</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>
1		<i>Mera shohar</i>	<i>Mujh per</i>	<i>Tashaddud karta hai</i>	<i>Aaey roz (Extent)</i>
TRANSLATION		My husband	me	Beats up	Quite often/every now and then
2		<i>woh</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>kamray mein band kar deta hai aur washroom bhi nai jaaney deta</i>	
TRANSLATION		He	me	Locked in a room and not let go to the bathroom	
3		<i>Us ne</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Ghar se nikal diya hai</i>	<i>Maar peet ke (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION		He	me	Pushed out	after beating
4		<i>woh</i>	<i>Saila ke ghar mein</i>	<i>Dakhil ho gaey</i>	<i>Zabardasti (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION		they	Complainant's house	entered	By force
5		<i>Us ne</i>	<i>Saila ko</i>	<i>Zodo kob kiya aur farar ho gaya</i>	<i>moqay se (Location)</i>
TRANSLATION		He	complainant	Beat up and escaped	From the scene
6		<i>Woh</i>	<i>Masoom logon ki</i>	<i>Zindgion ko tabah o barbaad kartay hain</i>	
TRANSLATION		He	Innocent people's	Destroy their lives	
7		<i>Mera shohar</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Maarta hai</i>	<i>Har baat pe (Extent)</i>
TRANSLATION		My husband	me	Beats up	Every now and then
8		<i>Mera shohar</i>	<i>Meri bachhi</i>	<i>Chheenna chahta hai</i>	
TRANSLATION		My husband	My daughter	Wants to snatch	
9		<i>Woh</i>	<i>Meri behan se uski bachi</i>	<i>jhagra kar ke ke le gaya</i>	
TRANSLATION		He	My sister's daughter	Took away after fighting	
10		<i>Woh</i>	<i>Mujh per</i>	<i>Tashaddud karta hai</i>	<i>Munshiat ke istamaal ki bina par (Cause)</i>

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TRANSLATION	He	me	Beats up	Due to his drug usage
11	<i>Us ne</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Jaan se maarnay ki koshish ki hai</i>	<i>Aaj raat</i>
TRANSLATION	He	me	Tried to kill	tonight
12	<i>Mera shohar</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Zehar ke teekay aur asliha le kar aata hai aur maarta hai</i>	<i>ghar mein (Location)/ sangion se baandh kar (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband	me	Brings poisonous injections and weapons	home/ after tying me up
13	<i>Meray shohar ne</i>	<i>Mujh pe</i>	<i>Bohat ziadti ki hai</i>	
TRANSLATION	My husband	(upon) me	Inflicted violence	
14	<i>Us ne</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>nikaal diya</i>	<i>Shadeed (Manner)/ tashaddud ka nishaana bana kar; zewrat cheen kar aur tamaam saman-e-jahaiz hathhiya ghar se (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION	He	me	thrown away	Severely/after beating up, snatching jewelry and confiscating dowry items/from home
15	<i>Mera shohar</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Bahir gali mein le aaya aur ghonson aur mukon se maarna shuroo kar diya</i>	<i>Baalon se khench kar (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband	me	Dragged out in the street and started punching me	By the hair
16	<i>Meray shohar ne</i>	<i>Meri qameez</i>	<i>Phaar di</i>	<i>Saamnay se ahl-e-muhalla ke saamnay (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband	My shirt	torn	From the front in front of the neighbors
17	<i>Meray husband ne</i>	<i>Mujhey/samaan</i>	<i>Nikaal diya/maara bhi hai/bechna shuru kar diya hai</i>	<i>Ghar se (Location)</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband	Me/luggage	thrown out/beat up as	Of the house

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			well/started selling	
18	<i>Meray shohar ne</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Peeta hai</i>	<i>Bari bayrehmi se (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband	me	Beat up	Very brutally
19	<i>Mera shohar</i>	<i>Saaila ko</i>	<i>Jismaani tashaddud ka nishaana banaata hai</i>	<i>Badkaari se inkaar karnay pe (Cause)</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband	complainant	Makes target of physical violence	Upon refusing to commit adultery
20	<i>Mera beta</i>	<i>Mujh per</i>	<i>Tashaddud kar chukka hai</i>	<i>Kai baar (Extent)</i>
TRANSLATION	My son	me	Has beaten up	Several times
21	<i>Meray khawand ne</i>	<i>Meri chhaati pe</i>	<i>thhuda maara</i>	<i>Daaein jaanib boot se (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband	(On) my chest	kicked	With boot on my right side
22		<i>Chhati per</i>	<i>Zarb lagi aur khoon nikalna shuru ho gaya</i>	
TRANSLATION		chest	Got injured and started bleeding	
23	<i>Saaila ke sussar ne bhi</i>	<i>Saaila ko</i>	<i>Jootiyan maarin aur thappar maaray</i>	
TRANSLATION	The complainant's father-in-law too	complainant	Hit with shoes and slapped	
24	<i>Saaila ke dewar bhi</i>	<i>Saaila ko</i>	<i>Baalon se pakar kar ghaseettay rahay jis se us ke baal jar se ukhhar gaey</i>	
TRANSLATION	The complainant's brothers-in-law	complainant	kept dragging me by the hair	
25	<i>Saas aur nand ne</i>	<i>Saaila ki chhati per</i>	<i>Zarbaat lagaain</i>	<i>Saamnay se (Manner)\ wiper ki chharri se (Manner)</i>
TRANSLATION	Mother-in-law and siter-in-law	the complainant's chest	Hit brutally	From the front with wiper stick
26	<i>Meray khawand ne</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Maara peeta aur maarnay ki koshish</i>	<i>Is buri tarah/ gala daba kar (Manner)</i>

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TRANSLATION	My husband	me	Beat up and tried to kill	Very brutally by strangulation (Manner)
27	<i>Meray khawand ne susraal walon ke saath mil kar</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>Mera sar mondha aur kapray phaar diey</i>	
TRANSLATION	My husband along with my in laws	me	Shaved my head and tore my clothes	
28	My husband	me	Kept in circuit house harassing	Till late night (Extent) from different angles (manner)

Table 1 (above) contains excerpts from the complaints that describe the abusive and violent practices that the complainants encountered. Transitivity analysis reveals that the in-laws are the actors who used physical force against the complainant (Material process) "*aaey roz*" (sometimes) "*har baat per*" (on every trivial matter) (Circumstances) to express these violent practices.

In Pakistan, domestic violence cases are rapidly increasing. The survey by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) showed that 3,860 women reported domestic violence in 2025 (State of Human Rights in Pakistan in 2025). Domestic violence involves extreme forms of violence ranging from beating and punching to acid throwing. Common injuries include sore muscles, sprains, black eyes, and scalp lacerations (Fikree & Bhatti, 1999). LaBore et al. (2021) found that the most common types of violence reported were slapping (17.2%) and pushing, shaking, or throwing (11.2%). The complaints under analysis also describe violent acts of inflicting physical injury on the complainants. Violent practices were described as "*tashaddud kia*" (inflicted violence), "*huri tarah maar peeta*" (being hit brutally), "*zod-o-kob kia*" (being beaten up), "*baalon se pakar kar ghaseeta*" (dragged by the hair), "*jaan se maanay ki koshish ki*" (tried to kill me), "*gala dabaya*" (almost strangled), "*sangio se bandh kar maarta hai*" (beat me up after tying me up), "*zarab lagai*" (hit), "*chhati pe boot se thudda maara*" (kicked me in the chest with his boot on), "*saamnay se qameez phaar di*" (tore the shirt at the front) and "*sar mondh diya*" (shaved the head) (See Table 1: 1, 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 16 & 18-27). In other examples, physical violence took a different form, which led to mental distress, e.g., locking the complainant in a room and not letting her go to the bathroom, and so on. Almost 70 % of complainants were thrown out of the house after being brutally beaten. In Pakistani culture, domestic violence is not confined to wife-beating but also involves mental and physical torture from in-laws. The complaints have numerous mentions of physical violence inflicted by in-laws (See Table 1:23, 24, 25 & 27).

**Verbal Processes.** Domestic abuse refers to a broad spectrum of damaging and coercive behaviors using controlling strategies, including physical, sexual, verbal, economic, and emotional abuse. These controlling tactics may include verbal abuse, humiliation, threats, and isolation which may be physically nonviolent but extremely damaging (Robinson et al., 2016).

Since verbal processes involve communication between a Sayer and an Addressee, where some message, the Verbiage, is communicated associated with the dissemination of information in the complaints under analysis, the nature of verbal abuse or persecution is explored, and analyzed

through the study of verbal process. In domestic violence cases, “coercive control” (Stark, 2013, p.17) can be exercised through various behaviors and strategies, which are highly gendered. Stark (2013) argues that patterns of coercive control that directly or indirectly compel compliance and obedience in a relationship may include nonviolent acts such as intimidation through stalking and other types of threats, isolating a victim from social support, and stopping a victim from maintaining their independence (Stark, 2013). In particular, the process can include saying, commanding, asking, and offering, as well as physical actions such as screaming and shouting. The complainants use verbal processes to describe how they were verbally persecuted by their husbands, in-laws, or other relatives.

**Table 2**

*Verbal Process: Verbal Violence*

Sr	#/	Sayer	Target	Receiver	Verbal Process	Verbiage	Circumstances
1		<i>Mera khawand</i>		<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Kehta hai</i>	<i>Ke tum per tezaab phenk dun ga</i>	
	TRANSLATION	My husband		me	says	I will throw acid at you	
2		<i>Susraal waalay</i>			<i>Kehtay hain</i>	<i>Khud bhi aur is bachay ko le kar mar jaao</i>	
	TRANSLATION	The laws	in		say	Go to hell with your kid	
3		<i>Us ne</i>		<i>Saaila ko</i>	<i>Dhamkiya deen aur kaha</i>	<i>Agar tum ne dobara ghar jaaney ki koshish ki ya kisi raqam ka mutalba kiy tu goli maar dun ga</i>	
	TRANSLATION	He		the complainant	threatened	If you tried to come home once again or demanded money, I will shoot you.	
4		<i>Woh</i>		<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Pagal khanay jaaney ki dhamkiya deta hai</i>		

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

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TRANSLATION	He	me	Threatened to send to a mental asylum		
5		<i>Beti ko</i>	<i>Gaalian deen</i>		Gandi
TRANSLATION		The daughter	Took names		Very bad
6	<i>Mera khawand</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Kehta rehta hai</i>	<i>Paisay mungwaanay ka</i>	Ghar se/ jism pe ciggarett laga ke
TRANSLATION	My husband	me	Keeps asking	on to bring money	From my (parents') home (Location)
7	<i>Mera shohar</i>		<i>Matalba kar raha hai</i>	<i>Ke apni waaldain ki jaaidaad aur ghar meray naam kar do</i>	
TRANSLATION	My husband		Is demanding	To have my parents' property and house in his name	
8	<i>Us ne</i>		<i>Dhamki di</i>	<i>Ke tumhein aur tumhaaray bachhon ko maar dun ga</i>	Aaj subah/pistol nikaal ke (Manner)
TRANSLATION	He		threatened	To kill me and my kids	Today morning/holding a pistol
9	<i>Woh</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Kehta hai ke</i>	<i>Ghar se jaa kar paisay le aao</i>	
TRANSLATION	He	me	says	To bring money from your home	
10		<i>Mujhey</i>	<i>Dhamkiyan de raha tha</i>	<i>Sangeen nataaaj ki of dire consequences</i>	
TRANSLATION		<i>Me</i>	<i>was threatening kaha</i>	<i>Agar yeh ghar khaali na kiya</i>	
11	<i>Meray dewar ne</i>	<i>mujhey</i>			

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

				<i>tu tumhaaray cheray per tezaab phenk kar huliya bigaar dun ga</i>
TRANSLATION	My brother-in- law	me	said	If you do not vacate the house, I will scar your face by throwing acid.
12	<i>Mera Khaawand</i>		<i>Kehta hai</i>	<i>Tumhein aur bachon ko bech kar Masqat chala jaun ga</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband		says	That he would go to Masqat after selling me and the kids
13	<i>Meray khaawand ne</i>		<i>Lalkaara maara</i>	<i>Isko jaan se Aatay hi maar do</i>
TRANSLATION	My husband		Shouted threateningly	Kill her As he entered
14	<i>Meray susraal walay</i>	<i>mujhey</i>	<i>Dhamkiya detay hain</i>	<i>Tum jo kar sakti ho kar lo hum dekh len ge</i>
TRANSLATION	My in-laws	me	threaten	Do whatever you can; we will see you
15 (English)		me	threatening	To experience grave consequences

Ali & Bustamante-Gavino (2007) found that married Pakistani couples reported verbal and physical abuse associated with financial disputes. Keeping with these findings, low wealth or poverty is a common cause of lifetime abuse (Zakar et al., 2016) (See Table 1: 6, 7, 9 & 11). The findings of the current study also align with Madhani et al.'s (2017) study, which reported that participants regarded verbal abuse, controlling behavior by the husband, conflict with in-laws, being overburdened with domestic work, and husband threatening to leave or remarry, as forms of domestic violence.

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

Moreover, the verbal process is linked to the material process because the complainants reported verbal abuse, which generally took the form of threats of physical torture and murder. The verbal process is also connected with the mental process, as verbal abuse is exemplified in abusive language and threats of throwing acid, scaring the face, and other grave consequences.

**Mental Process: Emotional and Psychological Abuse.** Dutton and Goodman (2005) also believe that partners can establish coercive control without resorting to physical violence; for instance, partners can create fear of negative consequences, exploit the partner's weaknesses, weaken a partner's resistance, and facilitate and take advantage of emotional dependency. Mental processes involve sensing. The process of sensing may be interpreted as emerging from a person's consciousness or affecting it (Halliday, 1985). The mental process represents the experience of the world of our consciousness. Halliday categorizes mental process verbs into cognition (verbs of knowing, thinking, understanding, and affection (verbs of liking, fearing, and perception (verbs of seeing and hearing). There is always a conscious participant, a 'sensor' in a mental process. also called the experiencer, who perceives, knows, or likes. The other participant is the "phenomenon" perceived, known, or liked (Downing, 2006, p.102).

**Table 3**

## *Mental Process*

Sr #/Translation	Senser	Mental process	Phenomenon	Circumstances
1	<i>Saila ke bhai ko</i>	<i>Majboor kar ke</i>	<i>15 lacs liey</i>	<i>Mukhtalif heelay bahaanon se</i>
Translation	The complainant's brother	Was forced	to give 15 lacs	through various means (Means)
2	<i>Mein</i>	<i>Zehni dabao min reti hun</i>		<i>Har waqt (Extent)</i>
Translation	I	Am under mentally pressured		All the time
3	<i>Mein</i>	<i>Zaleel-o-ruswa hui</i>		<i>Tamaam logon mein</i>
Translation	I	was humiliated		In front of all the people
4	<i>Mujhey</i>	<i>Majboor kiya ja rahah hai</i>	<i>Doston se badkaari pe</i>	<i>Raqam ke ayewaz</i>
Translation	I	Have been forced	To commit adultery with his friends	For money (Cause)
5	<i>Mujhey</i>	<i>Jaani aur maali khatra hai</i>	<i>Apney shohar se</i>	
Translation	I	Life and money are in danger	From my husband's threats	
6	<i>Mein</i>	<i>bardaasht karti rahi</i>	<i>Zulm</i>	<i>Apnay bachon ki waja se</i>
Translation	I	Kept tolerating	oppression	Due to my kids

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

7	<i>Mein</i>	<i>Tang hun</i>	<i>Badsalooki se</i>	<i>Apnaey shohar aur saas</i>
Translation	I	Am upset	By mistreatment	From my husband and mother-in-law

---

The effect of domestic violence is not limited to physical marks. Studies of Pakistani women who experienced domestic violence from intimate partners associated it with poor mental health (Hassan & Malik, 2012; Zakar et al., 2016) and a heightened risk of depression (Zahidie & Jamali, 2013). In 2018, around 28% of married women reported experiencing emotional violence, whose most common forms included insulting or making them feel bad by hurting their self-esteem (23.6%) and humiliating them in front of others (21.7%) (LaBore et al., 2021).

As the relationship between gender and power relations is, complex economic factors can exacerbate the plight of DV victims. Women of varying degrees and from all socioeconomic groups can be vulnerable to domestic violence (Amir-Ud-Din et al., 2018). Even though the nature of violence endured by women from the lower strata of society is almost the same as that experienced by the upper middle-educated class, how they describe violent events is different. Complainants from lower, lower-middle, or middle classes described the nature of violence and resulting injuries they experienced vividly. Educated, upper-middle-class women were comparatively more subtle; for instance, a complainant wrote that her husband harassed her from “different angles to withdraw from the family suit. He also sent messages from my phone to my father.” Instead of detailed descriptions or quoting the verbal abuse, she used generic phrases with several possible interpretations referring to physical, emotional, or psychological abuse. However, all the complainants experienced mental stress and had a sense of insecurity. All classes used phrases such as “*zehni dabao* (mental pressure),” “*jaani aur maali khtra* (threat to life and money),” “*zillat aur ruswaai* (humiliation)” “*badsalooki se tang* (upset by mistreatment)” and held the perpetrator responsible for any harm that befell the complainant.

Few financial resources or poverty commonly cause domestic abuse (Zakar et al., 2016). In almost 50% of complaints, poverty, and greed were identified as the major causes of physical and psychological abuse. Fifty percent of abusive husbands forced their wives to either get money from their parents or transfer their property into their names. Complainants stated that “*mujhey kehta hai ghar se jaa kar paisay le aao* (He asks me to bring money from my parents’ home),” “*Jism pe cigarette laga kar kehta hai ke paisay mungwau ghar se* (He demands I bring money from my parents’ home and threatens me by inflicting cigarette burns)” and “*Apney waalidain ki jaidaad meray naam kar do* (Transfer your parents’ property into my name).” Chowbey’s (2017) study of South Asian victims of domestic violence also revealed that abusive husbands exploit women’s resources and jeopardize their long-term financial security. In some cases, economic factors are involved indirectly e.g., “*Mein tumhein aur bachon ko beich kar Masqat chala jaun ga*” (I will go to Masqat by selling you and the kids), and “*Mujhey apney doston se paison ke iwaz badkaari karnay per majboor karta hai* (He forces me to have an illicit relationship with his friend in return for money).” Hence, economic factors, to varying degrees, can contribute to the incidence of domestic violence.

**Lexical Choice.** Complainants choose the appropriate words to explicitly describe the nature and intensity of the violent practices they experienced. The most frequently used noun

# Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

is *tashaddud* (violence), used 28 times in the complaints. As complainants were intimidated by their husbands or in-laws and complained that their lives and money were in danger e.g., “*sakht khatra*” (serious threat) or “*jaani aur maali khatra*” (threat to life and wealth) are examples of frequently used noun phrases, indicating that complainants felt compelled to report these cases because of the extreme violence that threatened their lives. The most frequently used nouns for perpetrators were “*Ayyaash*” (lewd), suggesting the perpetrator’s lousy character and domestic violence are interrelated. The following tables list adjectives describing perpetrator and abusive practices in English and Urdu complaints:

**Table 4**  
***Adjectives Describing Perpetrator Used in Urdu Complaint***

Sr.#	Adjectives	Translation	Frequency
1	<i>Zaalam</i>	Cruel	15
2	<i>Khatarnaak</i>	Dangerous	12
3	<i>Zaleel</i>	Cruel	7
4	<i>Jhoota</i>	Liar	5
5	<i>Sarkash</i>	Unruly	1

**Table 5**  
***Adjectives Describing Abusive Acts Used in Urdu Complaint***

Sr.#	Adjectives	Translation	Frequency
1	<i>Shadeed</i>	Extreme/very	10
2	<i>Buri (tarah)</i>	Atrociously	5
3	<i>Ghaleez</i>	vulgar	4
4	<i>Jaali</i>	Fake	3
5	<i>Sangeen</i>	Serious	2

Table 5 shows a list of adjectives that describe the intensity of physical violence experienced by the complainants. The adjectives used for verbal violence were “*fahash (gaalian)*” (vulgar, abusive language), “*ghaleez (gaalian)*” (vulgar, abusive language), and “*sangeen (nitaaij ki dhamkiyan)*” (threats of severe consequences).

The complainants used adverbs to express the severity of mistreatment and violent acts that led them to file a complaint. The adverb "be rehmi se" (meaning ruthlessly) was frequently used to describe the intensity of violence, while "aksar" (meaning frequently) was commonly used to indicate the frequency of such violent acts.

**Table 6**

***Adjectives Describing Abusive act used in English Complaints***

<b>Sr.#</b>	<b>Adjectives</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1	Inhuman	3
2	Brutal	2
3	Atrocious	2
4	Serious	5
5	Extreme	4
6	Cruel	3
7	Harsh	4
8	Harassing	2
9	Insensitive	1
10	Dangerous	2

**Table 7**

***Adverbs Used in English Complaints***

<b>Adverbs used in English Complaints</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Brutally	2
Barely	4
Bitterly	1
Very	6
Frequently	5

Hence, the lexical choices focused on the violence and the description of its intensity, severity, and ferocity. Physical violence is explicitly depicted in minute detail, including the instruments of violence (chain, stick, gun, and poisonous injections) causing the injuries and bruises. Overall, the language used is direct, not figurative, without any metaphors of cultural significance.

**Modality.** Modality refers to factors constraining meaning (Quirk et al., 1985). Modal expressions in Urdu are not lexically but constructionally formed by combining a verb, a certain type of subject, and a particular morphosyntactic form of the embedded verb (Bhatt et al., 2011). In the Urdu

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

complaints, the phrases like "mar dun ga" (will kill) and "dekh lun ga" (will see you) utilize deontic modality to express a strong prohibition and indicate severe consequences if the prohibited action is taken. However, this language can reinforce negative gender power dynamics. Using threatening language involving violence or defamation to exert control or maintain power over others, especially in gender relations, creates a fearful, intimidating, and subordinate environment. It can promote harmful stereotypes and power imbalances between genders, leading to the oppression and marginalization of individuals. The examples of deontic modality that was used to indicate the perpetrators' threats are as follows: "*Agar tum ne Gujranwala meray ghar jaanay ki dobara koshish ki aur kisi raqam ka mutaliba kiya tu jaan se maar dun ga*" (If you try to go back home to Gujranwala or ask for money, I will kill you); "*Woh kehta hai ke tumhein aur bachon ko bech kar Masqat nikal jaan ga*" (He said that he would go to Masqat after selling me and the kids'); "*Aaj subha us ne pistol nikal kar dhamki di ke tumhein aur tumhaaray bachon ko maar dun ga*" (Today morning, he threatened me at gun point, 'I will kill you and your family'); "*Woh kehta hai ke main tum per tezaab phenk dun ga*" (He says, 'I will throw acid at you'); "*Woh kehta hai talaaq dun ga aur haq mehar bhi nahi dun ga*" (He said that he would give me divorce and will not pay haq mehar either)." Some complainants quote threats from their in-laws e.g. "*Mujhey dhamkiya detay hain ke tum jo kar sakti ho kar lo, hum dekh lein ge*" (They threatened me by saying 'Do whatever you can; we will see to it'); and "*Agar tum ne yeh ghar khaali na kiya tau mein tumhaaray chehray per tezaab phenkwa kar tumhaara huliya bigaar dun ga*" (If you do not vacate the house, I will scar your face by throwing acid). These phrases convey a sense of authority, determination, and a warning of consequences.

he complainants also expressed a future possibility that they would feel grateful by using a phrase typically found at the end of a complaint, such as "*Ain nawazish ho gi*" (I will be grateful to you); and "*Mein janab ki shukur guzaar hon gi aur janab ki buland iqbal aur umer darazi ke liey dua go rahun gi*" (I will be grateful to you and will pray for your success and long life)." In English complaints, the modal verb "will" is used to make the reader (the authority appealed to) aware of the consequences if no action is taken against the perpetrator. For example, "If any harm happens to me and my family, Mr. ABC will be responsible, as he has links to some of the gangsters," or "(If anything happens to me, my husband will be responsible)." Thus, the authority is urged to take action against the complaine. The modal verb "will" is used in this way to quote threatening remarks made by the perpetrator to make the complainants aware of the threats of grave consequences, to draw the relevant authorities' attention to the dire consequences of taking no action against the perpetrator. Finally, the modal verb is used as a goodwill gesture, expressing the hope that the complaint will be addressed.

Another modal verb, '*sakta*' (can) is used to show the ability to carry out an action e.g. "*Dau naamalum musallah afraad jin ke saamnay aanay per saaila aur ghar ke deegar afraad shanakht kar saktay hain*" (Two unknown armed men, whom I and my family members can identify); and "*Aur bachon ka kharcha meray zimma hai jo keh mein bardaasht na kar sakti hun*" (I am responsible for financially supporting my kids, which I cannot now do); "*Mein ab us ke saath nai reh sakti; mujhey insaaf chaahiey*" (I cannot live with him now; I need justice)." The epistemic modal verb 'may'; is used to express the possibility of getting justice e.g., "*Un ke khilaaf sakht se sakht kaarwai amal mein laai jaey taa ke saaila ko insaaf mil sakay*" (The strictest possible action must be taken so that the complainant may get justice)." Another deontic modal verb '*chahti*' (want) is used to express the wish for divorce e.g., "*Meri bachi mujh se chheenna chahta hai jis ki waja se*

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

*mein us se talaq lena chaahti hun* (He wants to take my daughter away due to which I want him to divorce me); *"mein qaanooni taur per apnay shohar se alag hona chaahti hun"* (I want to be legally separated from my husband); *"Mujhey insaaf chahiey. Mein uske saath nahi rehna chaahti hun"* (I need justice; I don't want to live with you).

**Mood.** Mood is a grammatical verbal category expressing the relationship between an action, or situation, and reality. Like harassment complaints, in domestic violence complaints, three grammatical moods - indicative, imperative and subjunctive are mainly used. The most frequently used mood is indicative because the incidents lead women to seek help from the police stations and the organization. The analysis follows:

**Indicative Mood.** The indicative presents an action or event as a fact (Khomutouva, 2014). Domestic violence complaints are replete with instance of the indicative mood, from the description of social status, number of children to minute details of physical and verbal violence. Examples of the description of physical violence include *"Yeh mera shohar aye roz mujh per tashaddud karta hai....meray susraal walay bhi saaray us ke saath milay huay hain aur mujh per tashaddud kartay hain"* (My husband beats me up quite frequently... my in-laws also support him and beat me up)". *"Meray bachay ko bhi jaan ka khatra hai* (My child's life is also at stake)." Other examples relate to the description of the perpetrators as frauds such as *"Mulzimaan mazkoora baala ne saaila aur us ke ghar walon ko dhoka diya"* (The above mentioned accused deceived me and my family)", *"Mulzimaan fraudiey hain jo ke shareef logon ke ghar mein apnay larkay ko kanwaara zaahir kar ke fraud-o-dhoka dahi kar ke raqam batortay hain"* (The accused are frauds who pretend their son is a bachelor to rob innocent people). Generally, the indicative mood is used to describe the atrocities the complainants were subjected to *"Jab se shaadi hui hai yeh insaan mujh se achha salook nahi karta har waqt mujhey dhamkiyan deta aur tashaddud karta rehta hai"* (Ever since I got married, my husband has never treated me well and has always threatened me and beaten me up), *"Ab mujhe ilzaam iliyah apny doston kay sath raqam ky iwaz badkaari par majboor kar raha hai aur inkaar ki soorat mein qatal karny ki dhamkiyan day raha hai"* (Now he is forcing me to commit adultery with his friends in lieu of money and threatens to murder me if I refuse).

**Imperative Mood.** The imperative mood expresses a request, caution, order, and warning. There a few examples of complainants using imperatives to quote orders, such as *"Khud bhi aur is bachay ko le kar mar jao* (Go die along with your child) and *"Is ghar se isi waqt dafa ho jao"* (Get out of the house right away). Imperatives are mostly used as requests for immediate action and help such as *"meri maddad karein"* (Help me).

**Conditional Mood.** The conditional mood represents a fact as an imaginary act whose accomplishment depends on a condition which is either expressed or implied. The conditional mood can refer to a fact related to the future whose realization depends upon a condition. Most conditional sentences express the perpetrators' threats as quoted by the complainants, like *"Agar tum ne Gujranwala meray ghar" jaanay ki dobara koshish ki aur kisi raqam ka mutaliba kiya tu jaan se maar dun ga*

(If you try to go back home to Gujranwala or demand money, I will kill you)" and *"Agar yeh ghar khaali na kiya tu tumhaaray cheray per tezaab phenk kar huliya bigaar dun ga"* (If you do not vacate the house, I will scar your face with acid). The conditional mood can also be cautionary to make the authorities aware of the gravity of the situation: "If I or my family come to any harm, Mr. XYZ (General)/ Assistant Director in the ABC office will be responsible."

Hence, grammatical mood in the domestic violence complaints is mainly used to describe the

complainants' plight and the perpetrators' ill-treatment, including their remarks which exacerbate the complainants' situation.

### **The Recurrent Linguistic Patterns in the Complaints**

The complaint texts have recurrent linguistic patterns of lexical items and grammatical structures. Since the complaints are requests for action against violent practices, transitivity analysis shows that they are replete with references to material processes, and the recurrent verbs (actions) were “*zau do kob kiya*” (beat up), “*tashaddud kiya*” (inflicted violence), “*maara peeta*” (thrashed) and “*gala dabaya*” (strangled). In the complaints of domestic violence, the complainants were concerned about the humiliation suffered by their husbands (Chatha & Ahmed, 2020; Chuemchit et al., 2018; Sharma et al., 2019).

Recurring adjectives used in the complaints described the violent act or the perpetrator. The most frequently used adjectives to describe the act in Urdu complaints were shadeed (extreme), *ghaleez* (vulgar), *fahash* (obscene), *sangeen* (severe), and *naa jaiz* (illegal) (See Table 4.6), while in English complaints, *intimidating*, *immoral*, *torturous*, and *painful* (See table 4.8) were the main adjectives used for describing the act. On the other hand, the frequently used adjectival phrases for describing the perpetrators in Urdu complaints were *jhootay* (liar), *zaalim* (cruel), and *sarkash* (besmirching). In addition, the noun phrases used were *munshiat farosh* (drug dealer), *badmaash* (rascal) and *jaraim pasha* (criminal). In English complaints, the recurrent adjectives used were *cruel*, *criminal*, and *powerful*. The most frequently used word to describe the intensity of violence was *zabardasti* (by force), which refers to the authority and power the complainants were subjected to.

The recurrent use of the indicative mood (also called the fact mood) means that all the complaints were stated as facts to build and strengthen their credibility. In contrast, imperatives were used to refer to the perpetrators' warnings or intimidating remarks. Likewise, the interrogative mood was used to challenge the complainants as to whether they could report the case to the police, while the conditional mood was also used to refer to the threats made to the complainants.

FCDA is interested in how gender ideology and gendered power relations are represented in a text through the depiction of the prevalent social practices and social relationships. The recurrent use of specific lexical items depicts how gender relations are represented in the text. These lexical choices highlight the plight of the female complainants in the public and private spheres of life, illustrating the asymmetrical power relations between women and men in specific contexts, according to Connell's gender order theory which refers to how the intersection of institutional structures, “gender regimes,” and individual identities produces social arrangements which indicate the dominance of one gender over the other socially, economically and politically (Zajdow, 2011, p. 258). The main perpetrators in all the complaints were men. In only a few instances, women played a part either as supporting agents, mostly in harassment cases, or as inciters or collaborators, particularly in domestic violence cases, as mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law.

### **Conclusion**

Domestic violence complaints are invested with multilayered sociocultural, economic, and gender ideologies. The complaint discourse attempts to persuade the authorities concerned about the need for redress; therefore, the complaint text unwraps the deeply rooted gender constructs embedded in sociocultural ideologies. In the discourse of complaints, males are described as coercive, cruel, and

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Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

authoritative individuals who exert hegemonic control over vulnerable women. Their portrayal of men reinforced their stereotypical image of patriarchal masculinity. In 80% of domestic violence complaints, close male family members, especially in-laws, were involved in abusive practices, which reinforced the image of male family members as perpetrators. In domestic violence complaints, adverbs of time also highlight the severity of prolonged violent practices, thus, enhancing the aim of the complaint to persuade and convince. The period over which violent practices had been recurring also indicates how the women felt compelled to only report the abuse after enduring a long period of suffering because keeping family relationships intact is considered very important in Pakistani society (Rasool, 2011, 2015) even at the cost of physical and mental suffering. Abuse in the home is also considered a family matter by the police and judiciary, who are reluctant to take action in such cases (USSD Human Rights, 2025). Lack of response by the authorities responsible and also the abuse suffered by the complainant at the hands of the police (Jamal et al., 2025) also constrain women from reporting any abuse suffered.

The current study, through linguistic investigation of the discursive representation of the abusive practices, highlights overt and subtle forms of physical and verbal abuse. The study expands the purview of CDA, particularly FCDA, scholarship by shedding light on the conflict between coercive and dominating discourse and the exercise of individual agency. Since reporting the abuse is a critical reflexive practice, the current study unveils how women raised their voices against the abuse despite the stigma and threat associated with the abusive practices. Women's harassment and domestic violence complaints underline the need to dismantle and destroy gender oppression to bring about societal transformation. This study has allowed the researcher to convey the complainants' concerns about gender-based abuse to a wider audience to enhance their understanding of the phenomenon in the Pakistani context.

The study emphasizes the need to curb/control abuse and domestic violence, not only by ensuring proper implementation of women's protection laws but by making people aware that these issues are not 'private matters' or 'stigmatizing issues' but must be reported, condemned, and punished appropriately to pave the way for a society where such gender-based abuse is no longer acceptable.

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