



MATRIARCHY IN SERVICE OF PATRIARCHY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF POWER, CLASS, AND GENDER IDEOLOGY IN THE PAKISTANI DRAMA SERIAL NOOR JAHAN

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Abstract

The Pakistani television dramas are strong cultural discourses through which the ideologies of gender, class and power are actively built and reproduced in the language. The Pakistani drama serial Noor Jahan is used as a text to explore the issues of power, class and patriarchal ideology in the analysis of its female characters in this study using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by the three-dimensional model of Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995). Three central aspects of the study are explored: the diverging linguistic approaches of the two most prominent female characters, the social class of subordinate female characters and their linguistic space and voice, and the construction of son-preference ideology in the dominant female discourse. 12 scenes were selected from the 33 episodes of the drama, where the female characters interacted or negotiated their power directly. The data were analyzed at three levels: textual, discursive and social practice at Fairclough's. The results show that the dominant female characters use imperatives, possessive pronouns and declarative speech acts to assert themselves, and subordinate female characters are linguistically marginalized through the use of hedging, silence and the lack of dialogue. Voice and linguistic space in the drama is directly related to social class. Additionally, the study reveals that the central character, Noor Jahan, while being a matriarch, is also very active in the propagation of patriarchal ideology in her discourse on sons, thus revealing that not only men but also women who are ideologically conditioned by patriarchal systems are active in the propagation of these systems.

Keywords: *Class, Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough's Model, Gender Ideology, Noor Jahan, Pakistani Drama, Patriarchy, Power Discourse.*

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1. Introduction

In the cultural and social life of Pakistan, television dramas are playing a pivotal and dominant role. Pakistani drama serials have the ability to shape, negotiate, and propagate social norms, gender roles, family dynamics, and ideology to millions of viewers from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, as they are broadcast during prime time hours.

In recent years, a number of scholars have been focusing on Pakistani drama serials via the lens of CDA. Mirza et al. (2021) studied power relations in *Ehd-e-Wafa* and showed how producers develop dialogue in a conscious way to communicate ideological position and power relationships in the interaction of characters. Arslan et al. (2022) employed the dimensional model of Fairclough to examine the interdiscursivity in four Pakistani drama serials, and found that the patriarchal hegemony is a recurring and structuring discursive force which consistently marginalizes the female characters in the serials through language and narration. Fatima et al. (2022) adopted Fairclough's three dimensional approach to the analysis of the discourse of *Dil Mom Ka Diya*, a female character, in all the three dimensions to reveal the subtextual social values and ideology that she signifies through her linguistic acts. Similar to this, Rehman et al. (2024) used CDA to analyze the language used in *Ranjha Ranjha Kardi* to comprehend the linguistic construction of mental health stigma, and Ullah (2024) showed the reinforcement of patriarchal power in *Mere Pass Tum Ho* by consistently portraying women in subservient roles. Ghaffar et al. (2025) carried out the most extensive study recently, an investigation that combined the Fairclough's model with Feminist CDA in several Pakistani drama serials, which has led them to determine that the patriarchal ideology is linguistically normalized through imperatives, interruptions, and lexical choices related to honor and shame. The same theme of the importance of authority discourse in family context was explored by Fareeha et al. (2026) in their study of *Parwarish*. No prior study has applied CDA from this perspective to *Noor Jahan* (2023-2024).

Unlike most Pakistani dramas in which power is exercised by male characters, *Noor Jahan* centers a powerful female figure whose matriarchal authority does not oppose but actively reinforces patriarchal ideology. The present study aims the following research purposes:

1. To examine the different linguistic approaches that are used by the dominant and educated female characters to create and negotiate power in *Noor Jahan*.
2. To analyze the allocation of linguistic space and voice of female characters in the drama according to the social class.
3. To explore the process of the central character *Noor Jahan*'s narration of and reenactment of the patriarchy and construction of the son preference and male lineage.

1.1. Research Questions

Guided by the above objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Noor Jahan and Noor Bano employ contrasting linguistic strategies to construct and negotiate power despite belonging to similar class positions?
2. How does social class determine the linguistic space and voice of female characters Safina, Noor Bano, and Sumbul in the drama Noor Jahan?
3. How does Noor Jahan's discourse reflect and reproduce patriarchal ideology through her linguistic construction of son preference and male lineage?

2. Literature Review

The most comprehensive and recent study in this field was done by Ghaffar et al. (2025) who integrated the three dimensional model of Fairclough with Feminist CDA by Lazar (2005) to study the construction of patriarchy discourses in a purposive sample of prime time Pakistani drama serials. They found that imperatives, interruptions, and honor-coded lexis naturalize male supremacy as common sense.

Critically Anwar et al. (2025) ask whether current depictions of empowered women signal genuine change, or constitute 'hidden patriarchy', however, the study asks if current depictions of empowered women in Pakistani dramas mean Pakistanis are moving towards a strong, independent position for women or are they witnessing 'hidden patriarchy', where the appearance of empowered women is utilized instrumentally to police and reinforce patriarchal values instead of eradicating them. Tariq and Husnain(2025) show that female assertions of autonomy or personal agency in Pakistani dramas are coded as transgressive disruptions of domestic order rather than legitimate claims to personhood.

Despite being less well explored as a specific area of study, the class–voice link is an interesting thread that emerges in the existing scholarship on Pakistani dramatic discourse. It has been demonstrated that class position not only affects the characters' content but also their linguistic space, their ability to express opinions and whether their opinions are validated or rejected by other characters (Arslan et al., 2022; Ghaffar et al., 2025). Lower class characters in the Pakistani dramatic texts have been consistently depicted with limited discursive space in which they use hedged, tentative, and apologetic language, whereas upper class characters are depicted with maximum discursive space who use assertive, declarative, and unhedged language (Fatima et al., 2022; Fareeha et al., 2026). No prior study has applied CDA, or any other discourse analytical framework, to Noor Jahan.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretivist research design. CDA is always an activity of interpretation, as Fairclough (1992) stresses, and it involves the researcher in reading the language at multiple levels simultaneously and relating the surface level with

linguistic features to the deeper levels of meaning, social practice and ideology. The main data source of this study is the Pakistani drama serial 'Noor Jahan' aired on Hum TV, in 2023-2024. The drama is comprised of 33 episodes of about 45 minutes per episode.

The following purposive selection criteria were used for the selection of 12 scenes from the 33 episodes of Noor Jahan: (1) the scene must be a scene of verbal interaction between two or more female characters, (2) the scene must address at least one of the three research questions, (3) the selected scenes must represent the five main female characters of the drama, Noor Jahan, Noor Bano, Safina, Sumbul, and Maha at least one scene each, and (4) the selected scenes must be spread across the various episodes of the drama, its early episodes, its middle episodes, and its late episodes, in order to ensure representativeness of character development and ideological positioning. The scenes that responded to more than one of the research questions were selected as they are the most analytically rich data points for this study.

Research Question	Scene Focus	Characters Involved	Min. Scenes
RQ1: Power strategies of Noor Jahan vs Noor Bano	Direct interaction or indirect power negotiation	Noor Jahan, Noor Bano	3-4
RQ2: Class and linguistic space	Group scenes or parallel scenes showing voice distribution	Safina, Sumbul, Noor Bano	3-4
RQ3: Son preference ideology	Scenes involving discussion of male heir, sons' decisions, Safina's pressure	Noor Jahan, Safina, Hunaid	3-4

Table 1. Purposive sampling criteria by research question.

The data collection process was done in two phases. In the first phase, all 33 episodes of Noor Jahan were thoroughly watched, and scenes that fit the purposive selection criteria described above were documented with the help of a scene documentation table. The second phase involved verbatim transcription of the dialogue for each selected scene in Urdu, and an English translation was also provided for each dialogue to make the dialogue internationally readable and for analysis purposes. Transcription adhered to standard conventions for spoken discourse, with special emphasis on pausing, overlapping, interrupting, and abeyance (silence), which are analytically meaningful at the discursive level of Fairclough's analysis of spoken discourse.

At the textual level, the specific linguistic aspects of each character's speech were analyzed: lexical choice and vocabulary (the use of words that represent power, submission, gender and class); grammatical mood (imperative, declarative, interrogative);

use of pronouns and possessive constructions; modality and hedging markers; sentence length and completeness; patterns of interruption, turn taking and pauses/silence.

The social relations of dialogue production/consumption in each scene were analyzed at the discursive practice level, focusing on who initiates and responds to the dialogue; who echoes, restates, or incorporates others' speech; who has speaking time or discursive space; how intertextual references to previous conversations and cultural discourses occur; and how silence works as a discursive strategy of submission, resistance, or exclusion.

The social practice level was linked at the micro level to the larger ideological frameworks of gender, class and patriarchy in Pakistani society and culture. This level focused on the ideological implications of the linguistic and discursive patterns identified in the previous two levels, considering the patterns' naturalization of class hierarchy, the reproduction of son-preference ideology, and how it supports patriarchal power through the discourse of a seemingly empowered female character.

Several measures were taken to ensure trustworthiness and analytical validity of the study. First, throughout the analysis, the specific and observable characteristics of the transcribed dialogue dominated the analysis, and interpretive claims were justified in terms of textual evidence rather than impressionistic judgment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4. Analysis

4.1. Episode 9 Characters: Noor Jahan, Hunaid, Safina, Doctor, Nurse

4.1.1. Textual Level

Noor Jahan opens with a demand framed as a desire: "Tm toh bs aaj mujhe khushkhabri la kr do". The term "khushkhabri" (good news) is already ideologized, loaded, it presupposes that only one outcome, a son, qualifies as good news. The assumption is never explicitly announced but is totally implicit in the wording. Linguistically reduced, Safina is only able to respond in a single word: "Bata dein".

Upon hearing the doctor say "Beti hai Mashallah", Safina's response is: non verbal, stressed, shocked, pondering and afraid. She cannot voice her fear because doing so would mean acknowledging it. The stream of consciousness of Noor Jahan is linguistically extraordinary, in fact, it is "Hmry khandan mein sirf bety hoty hain, beti nae hoti, mera beta pota ho ga, larki nae ho gi. The constructions "hoty hain" and "nae hoti" as well as "ho ga" and "nae ho gi" declare certainty and make it a biological destiny and family law, not a preference. There is no hedging, no modality of uncertainty, it is presented as fact. Hunaid's first words after the appointment, 'ama ka baar baar phone a rha h, mjhy unhy khushkhaberi deni h" reveal that the real recipient of the news is not his wife, but his mother,"

4.1.2. Discursive Practice Level

Noor Jahan talks with Hunaid as if Safina is not present. Hunaid only speaks to Safina, to pass on what his mother tells him. The doctor talks to Safina for a while, but even his words "Next time beta ho jye ga" is an implicit confirmation of the ideology of son-preference. Safina's absence and collapse are the strongest expressions that she gives. Her body speaks the things which her voice cannot utter.

4.1.3. Social Practice Level

The scene is the drama's most prominent Hunaid representation of son-preference ideology. Noor Jahan's utter conviction that her family only gives birth to sons renders patriarchy as "nature", and not ideology. This is the process of naturalization that Fairclough (1992) identifies as ideology's most powerful operation. She faints, not because she is weak, but because the body will not accept the words that can't be spoken.

4.2. Episode 10 Characters: Noor Jahan, Mukhtar Shah (Noor Bano's father)

4.2.1. Textual Level

The interaction is at the textual level and utilises the lexical element 'nasal' (lineage/bloodline) as the key point of contention in an aggressive ideological duel. To show up Noor Jahan as a woman of lesser value, Mukhtar Shah makes use of her background and the decision of her husband to marry "down" ("Kam tr Khandan") to suggest that she is somehow tainted by her bloodline. Noor Jahan's decisive rejoinder, "Ap fatejama rkheye meri nasal chlye gi toh sae bhagy gi nae," is an ideologically totalizing counter-offensive that is based on a point of intertextuality of violence. She uses the verb "bhagy gi nae" (will not run away) which introduces a localized presupposition directly attacking Mukhtar Shah's private trauma of his wife leaving him, and thus levels his class-based attack. In addition, the historically gendered possessive meri nasal (my lineage) is an important linguistic subversion, for although she was rejected as a lowerclass outsider by this aristocratic family, she puts herself, not as just a compliance officer of the patriline, but as its sole custodian and source.

4.2.2. Discursive Practice Level

Mukhtar Shah uses the old and the new categorisations of class and the purity of his own blood to wield power and to squelch the voice of his opponent. Noor Jahan, on the other hand, takes an opposite approach with her use of a subversive linguistic approach, which redirects the meaning of authority from class-based to relational and behavioral power. Through a mocking of Mukhtar's failure to keep his wife and manage his household, she constructs a space for discourse in which she more credibly occupies the position of the patriarch, successfully appropriating the linguistic space by refusing to accept responsibility for the past but to set the course for its future.

4.2.3. Social Practice Level

The scene at the social practice level replicates and sustains entrenched social, gender and class hierarchies that shape the social value of the characters. Noor Jahan's

high investment in "nasal" gives a linguistic basis to her ideology of sons being the real currency of cultural continuity, while daughters are seen as the ones who scatter it. Her hard policing of her sons' marriages is discursively redeemed as a sacred duty of protection, so as to keep the women she brings into the family intact and never "run away" as Mukhtar's wife did.

4.3. Episode 10 Characters: Noor Jahan, Sumbul, Hunaid

4.3.1. Textual Level

The excitement and independence of Sumbul's account of her getting a job can be seen in the following lines: "When I came back from the interview I found that there was a job offer for me at another school, I was very happy about that, and no one else was there to listen to me. The subordinate clause *Ikhn ap sun hi nae rhin thi* is a subtle, but strong, accusation, made in a generally deferential narration.

Noor Jahan's response pivots immediately to control: *kisni ijazat di tmhy job krny ki?*' and then, louder: *'kiski ijazat sy gai tm interview deny ky liye?'* The shift to raised voice signals ideological alarm: employment threatens the domestic order she governs. The monologue constructs domestic contentment as feminine virtue (*sharif*) and positions employment as humiliation rather than empowerment; it closes with the expulsion formula *'Apny chacha ki trf chly jna,'* making exclusion from the household a routine disciplinary tool.



4.3.2. Discursive Practice Level

Noor Jahan speaks and it doesn't matter whether Sumbul pays attention or not, and it doesn't matter if Sumbul replies, she ends by saying, "Ab khri kyu ho? jao", Why are you still standing? The imperative *jao* (go) completely silences Sumbul, who cannot respond; she is asked to go. Sumbul's only possible reply 'G?' is the textbook example of discursive marginalization: any answer she gives is structurally wrong within Noor Jahan's ideological framework.

4.3.3. Social Practice Level

The most extensive expression of Noor Jahan's ideology of patriarchy in the drama comes in this monologue, uttered by a woman. It incorporates such concepts as honour (sharif), space at home, financial reliance and the absence of men in one complete package. What's important is the merger of honour with domestic happiness; the woman who wants to become economically independent is depicted as being disobedient and dishonourable. This is important because of the lack of a male ("ghar ka mard") which makes Noor Jahan the proper alternative authority in his place, not another type of authority.

4.4. Episode 10 Characters: Sumbul, Safina, Hunaid, Noor Jahan, Shehnaaz (Helper)

4.4.1. Textual Level

In the kitchen, the exchange is achieved at the textual level by means of the use of supportive modal expressions and a morally declarative attitude that creates a brief momentary focus of female solidarity that opposes an oppressive domestic order. Sumbul starts this interaction by using the cooperative form of speech "Ap chorein na, sb kuch mai kar lun gi...", making herself a protector and alleviating Safina. Safina's short, off-target rejection; "Nae, sb kuch ho gya h", lexically illustrates her profound emotional wall and her systematic conditioning to be modest and humble. The tone changes completely when Sumbul openly rebukes the hostile boycott of the household by Noor Jahan because of Safina giving birth to a daughter saying: "Mai toh sirf yeh kehny wali thi ky koi aur khush ho ya na ho, apko apni beti sy khush hona chiye. This speech is an extreme discursive denial of a son-preference ideology that was never voiced, but was present and dominant, namely from Noor Jahan's son. In this case, male authority is naturalised as a linguistic command, 'Shehnaz, Noor mama ko bula do', that goes through a subaltern servant intermediary. After Noor Jahan refuses to sit on the table, it disrupts the harmony of the family and the family is suddenly consoled with Bua's passive religious consolation, "Dulhan, Allah sb kuch theek kr dy ga. The formulaic use of 'Allah' gives the domestic suffering a cosmic dimension, discursively preempting any other words the women can use to express their pain and protest.

4.4.2. Discursive Practice Level

The text brings to light the distribution of conversational floor-time, turn-taking opportunities and vocal autonomy at the level of discursive practice, as a result of the different structural positions in the household. When it comes to the kitchen, an exclusive domain for women, Sumbul is able to offer some advice to Safina through turn sharing and empathetic hedging ("toh", "na") in the presence of the matriarch's gaze. But this tenuous alliance is immediately broken at the dinner table, where power is played out by speaking with a degree of ambiguity and omission. Despite her actual absence, Noor Jahan is a powerful force in the discursive world, changing the format of the table's conversations

such that Hunaid's answers become feeble and short, "Bhook nae h", "Kmry mai jaa rha hun". In this strictly hierarchical communicative system, the maid Shehnaz has only instrumental language space, and is used to serve as a voice in the mouth of the upper class family. The kitchen's fluid, supportive interdisciplinary dialogue is contrasted with the fractured and silent dialogue of the dining room, to show that the voice of the female, even in the presence of the male's voice is fractured and highly policed when it enters into the formal spaces of the patriarchal voice.

4.4.3. Social Practice Level

At the social practice level, this scene not only replicates and reinforces a sociolinguistic stratification which regulates women's voices, but also serves as a means of neutralising opposition. The first thing that becomes clear is that the text shows that solidarity between women is de-spatialized and ghettoized, it can only be spoken in the kitchen, never in the formal spaces of the household, the living room or dining room, where patriarchal authority structures speech. Secondly, the scene illustrates the way that religious discourse is used as an instrument of political control by de-politicizing and taking in female suffering.

4.5. Episode 14 Characters: Safina, Noor Bano, Sumbul, Murad

4.5.1. Textual Level

The scene starts with a 'proverb-like' statement: "Fitrat nae badlti nah. Bs jb tk adat ho tb tk ka rola hai. The word fitrat (nature/innate character) brings to mind an essentialistic framework; Noor Jahan's behaviour is not something that can be altered because it is a part of her nature. This is a resignation, meaning that there is no system change. The first thing Noor Bano says is "Jo cheez takleef deti ho uski adat nae ho Skti Safina. She is against using adaptation as a way to survive. The exchange communicates a basic ideology difference between the two women, Safina has survived by accepting accommodation, Noor Bano cannot accept accommodation as a general rule.

Safina's sentence "Agr ab aag mai kood hi gy ho toh usky tapish bardast krna b seekho" is a great metaphor which is not aimed at self-reflective utterances but aimed at Noor Bano. The image of fire, destructive and inescapable, appears as a situation of personal defeat, but also as an inescapable reality; one has come into the fire and has to learn to bear its heat. When Sumbul enters the discussion and Safina asks Noor Bano "Mtlb ky yeh mwjhy yeh baat smjh nae ata ky tm mein unki aesi Konsi gerz hai ky tmpr woh itna mehrban hain," the analytical register changes quite a bit. This is not an expression of jealousy or of 'self-competition'. The choice of the word gerz (need/purpose/interest) is ideologically at the centre, it implies that there is an underlying need, a purpose, an interest for Noor Jahan to be so warm towards Noor Bano. The interrogative structure 'Konsi gerz hai?', as a discursive strategy, is a means to challenge the apparent kindness of the matriarch, and to question Noor Bano to "decode" her. Sumbul's critique is not jealousy

but a reading of Noor Jahan's concealed agenda around Murad. Sumbul thus brings in a double-layered discursive critique, one of Noor Jahan's motives and the other of Noor Bano's discursive positioning of Murad, making it a form of critical political consciousness which does not allow for Safina's resignation and Noor Bano's principled but incomplete resistance.

4.5.2. Discursive Practice Level

In her absence, the three females have much more to say and express their emotions openly. This is another confirmation of the mode set up in the kitchen picture: The woman's voice swells up without the watch of the patriarchy.

4.5.3. Social Practice Level

This scene shows a more complex ideology at work than just the separation of men and women. The three women have very different but interconnected positions of critical consciousness with regards to Noor Jahan's system. Safina, the most experienced of the three, decodes Noor Jahan's warmth toward Noor Bano as calculated rather than genuine. The scene does not, in doing its social practice, however, fragment female solidarity, but rather its most complex and politicized expression.

4.6. Episode 15 Characters: Noor Jahan, Noor Bano, Hunaid

4.6.1. Textual Level

This scene is focused on a struggle for naming/identity. Noor Jahan starts off with a call to action: "Bano mujhe zara chae daal do" ("Bano, pour me some tea"). The choice of "zara" (just a little) is deceptively softening, the grammatical mood is definitely imperative. Her response, "Ab mai tumse bari hun is umer mein mera naam toh nae badal sakta", is an ideology based on age and seniority for erasing the other woman's identity. The opposition of Noor Bano is very well formulated. She does not use any interrogatories or any other sentences except declarative sentences like "Mera naam apni daadi ke naam par rakha gaya tha, ek legacy hai" and "Noor Bano hi rahey gi, ap mera naam nae chein sakhti mujhse." She uses the terms 'legacy' and 'roots' which are class-marked terms of education and self-awareness. In the absence of explanation, the Eldest Son's reply, "You're right," is a way of affirming his mother's stance linguistically, in the form of silence or a short statement, thereby linguistically upholding patriarchal authority.

4.6.2. Discursive Practice Level

Noor Jahan starts and manages a dialogue. She initiates the discussion on the name, controls the conversation and tries to wrap up the discussion in an authoritative way with a finality. Noor Bano rejects submission and Noor Jahan takes it to the next level: "Kyunki yeh mera ghar hai", claiming an ownership over the other as the ultimate discursive weapon. Most importantly, Noor Bano doesn't want to be silenced. She can utter the longest and most complex utterances in the exchange unlike Safina and Sumbul in other scenes. The most stereotypically political statement in the scene is made by Noor Bano at

the end: "Nae Hunaid bhai, mai Safina aur Sumbul ki tarah ap logon ki puppet nae ban sakhti. She gives the system its name, she names the other women as victims of the system and she does not enter the system. This is the most evident instance of conscious feminist counter-discourse in this drama.

4.6.3. Social Practice Level

Noor Jahan's demand to change Noor Bano's name is not merely about lack of clarity within the household, it's a claim that a female who steps into this house has to give up her former name, and accept a new one based on Noor Jahan's symbolism. This name is a metonym for the self. Noor Bano's resistance is a threat to patriarchy which can come from educated and class equal women. The linguistic mechanisms used to discipline Safina and Sumbul, imperatives, shame, silence, withdrawal of affection, won't work on Noor Bano. After all, she has cultural capital, the means by which she is able to name and refuse the system.

4.7. Episode 24 Characters: Noor Jahan, Safeer

4.7.1. Textual Level

The words Noor Jahan said, "Phala pata chaluao usky han beta h ky beti", make it obvious that "beta" (son) comes before "beti" (daughter), as the expected and desired outcome. "Meny Tmhy usy milny ki ijazat nae di, sirf pata chalany ka keh rhi hun ky usky han beta ho rha hai ya beti." Noor Jahan's response to the pregnancy news is control, not celebration.

4.7.2. Discursive Practice Level

This is a short scene but the discursive significance is related to the information control that it reveals. Noor Jahan doesn't see herself as part of the group of people who should be the ones telling her, nor does she consider herself to be part of the group who should be telling her mother, she sees herself as the gate keeper of pregnancy information, and the choice about when, how and to whom to pass it on is hers. The permission system applies to all emotional access, including that between individuals.

4.7.3. Social Practice Level

This scene is an extension of the son-preference ideology into anticipatory discourse, that is, the conditioning of the ideology starts before a gender is known. The question 'beta h ky beti' is framed so that the hierarchy of outcomes is already presupposed."

4.8. Episode 25 Characters: Noor Jahan, Noor Bano, Sumbul, Safina

4.8.1. Textual Level

Noor Jahan begins with stating something out as an explanation: "Tm tino ko mny isliye bulaya hai ky Maha ki toh abhi abhi delivery hui h toh usy toh ghar ka kam nae deta. Dusra bacha b usy busy hony ki ijazat bilkl nae deta. The word 'ijazat nae deta' (does not permit) is quite interesting, because it is the unborn child, not Noor Jahan, who is

grammatically placed as opposing Maha's permission. Noor Jahan places her authority on the biological necessity and she will seem to control her own authority rather than impose it. Her words "toh Maha ka aur bachy ka jitna b kam ho ga, is ky room ki safai, bachy ki dekhbaal, sb tm kro gi Sumbul" is a command without negotiation or question but one of labour, an assignment that has been assigned as fact. Safina gave a nod and Sumbul said "mom!".

On hearing 'No' from Sumbul, Noor Jahan immediately replies 'Han, kyun tmhy 'mery potey ka kam krny mein koi aiteraz hai?'. Ideologically loaded possessive "my grandson" (mery potey), in an attempt to re-assert the possession of the child and the domestic labour around him, she refers to the child as her grandson, rather than her nephew. The longest speech that Noor Jahan makes in this scene is a breath taking exercise in discursive control: "Apny kam tm ksy manage krti ho yeh tmhara msla hai. Is ghar ki bahu ho isliye is ghar ky kam tmhy krny hi hain. Han, Apna kam khtm kr ky tm azaad ho. Jahan jana chaho jao shkti ho... usky baad tm chahey apny bap ki zamen smbhalo ya karobar. Koi tmhy kuch nae kahy ga. Lakin is ghar mai jo tmhy mny kaha hai wo tmhy krna ho ga.

Noor Bano's hedged response, "itna zayada time nae hota" is the only resistance in the scene, and Noor Jahan immediately invokes Safina's silence as the normative model Noor Bano should follow".

4.8.2. Discursive Practice Level

The majority of this scene is taken up by Noor Jahan. The three daughters-in-law are called, not invited and they respond in a reactive, cagey way. Before a word is uttered the power relation is acted upon by the positioning of the structure. The shortest possible protests are Sumbul's "mom!" and "No". In the case of Noor Bano, there is no resistance beyond that but even her speech is responsive and not agenda setting. Safina is mute, her only way of communicating is by nodding.

4.8.3. Social Practice Level

This is the ideology that a woman's first identity is that of a domestic servant, which is reproduced in this scene. Noor Jahan's promise of freedom once domestic duties have been fulfilled, seems to grant her the humanity she deserves, but at the same time it is structurally always deferred to Noor Bano's.

4.9. Episode 26 Characters: Noor Jahan, Sumbul

4.9.1. Textual Level

The scene opens with an interrogation with the accusatory 'Kiski ijazat sy tmny job Shuru ki hai?'. The word "ijazat" (permission) presupposes that Sumbul requires sanction to work, employment is a right contingent on permission, not an inherent entitlement. Sumbul's answer 'Ap kiski ijazat sy meri sotan ko ghar pr lai hain', is an emphatic, structurally parallel response to the counter-attack. She reproduces exactly Noor Jahan's

questioning, and sums it up to Noor Jahan's wrong doing. This is the oppressed's rhetorical response that is linguistically advanced and that wields the oppressor's own rhetorical tools.

In the escalation of Noor Jahan's "Sumbul, yeh mera ghar hai. Yahan pr mera faisla chly ga", she is taking refuge in the ownership claim and following the same ideology that she embodies in Episode 15. Here Sumbul's possessive structure is identical with Noor Jahan's possessive structure except that she is employing it on herself instead of property. The words of Noor Jahan "Ruko. Agr is ghar sy baihr qadam nikala nah toh wapis is ghar mein nae a sako gi" (expulsion threat) is the latest in domestic disciplinary power. The conditional construction 'agr... toh' makes it look like it's Sumbul's decision, putting Noor Jahan's force on Sumbul's shoulders.

4.9.2. Discursive Practice Level

This is one of the most symmetrical and balanced sections of power in the drama in terms of scene lengths and length of turn. Noor Jahan's utterances are mirrored next to each other by Sumbul, and she uses the same grammatical structures. Ultimately, however, Noor Jahan has the final word, through her expulsion threat, which Sumbul cannot linguistically address, since this is a physical, not an argumentative, threat.

4.9.3. Social Practice Level

This scene confronts the ideology of the economic dependence of females. Noor Jahan's demand for permission to work reinforces the patriarchal system, in which women's working has to be sanctioned by the male members of the household. Sumbul's defiance is the assertion of her economic "personhood" (the right to work) as the right to exist as a subject and not an object.

4.10. Episode 30 Characters: Noor Jahan, Noor Bano



4.10.1. Textual Level

Noor Jahan: " Mery muhabbat ki shaadi ko mery liye gali bna deya toh mny bhi uski beti ki shaadi ko usky liye gali bna deya. Hisab brabar. Kiya bura keya mny. Hisab barabar (accounts settled) is a phrase that diminishes the value of a human relationship and marriage to a monetary exchange. Noor Jahan frames the destruction of Noor Bano's marriage as reciprocal justice as "Hisaab brabar". The rhetorical question "Kiya bura keya mny" (what wrong did I do?) does not request any answers, it is a moral certainty statement is a devastating logic of Noor Jahan's. Noor Bano takes up Noor Jahan's exact words and turns them back on their source. Here lies the strongest point of the language counter-ideology of the drama.

4.10.2. Discursive Practice Level

In the drama, for the first time, the two characters, Noor Jahan and Noor Bano have equal discursive space in terms of length, structure and rhetorical power in their statement. Noor Bano's appropriation of the language of Noor Jahan is a judo of words, she uses her opponent's weight against her.

4.10.3. Social Practice Level

This scene reveals the morality of Noor Jahan's transactional justice framework, which she uses in all of her human relationships in this drama. The logic is true of Noor

Bano's own family, when she uses the same argument for Noor Jahan's family she can't prove her wrong; the logic works for her.

4.11. Episode 30 Characters: Noor Jahan, Murad

4.11.1. Textual Level

The phrase "Bahun ghar ko jorny ky liye lai jati hain" (daughters-in-law are brought into hold the house) is in the passive voice; women are brought, not welcomed; they are a means to the social function, not a person existing independently. It is a metaphor that empowers and confines women, 'ghar ka sheraza' or 'the light/harmony of home' should brighten the home, not be a disruption.

Two words of devastating authority "Talak do usy" (Give her a divorce) She does not offer up any justification except her will. If she gets challenged, she raises up a voice: "Asa hi ho gaye kyunki yeh mera faisla hai, tumhari Nooru mama ka faisla. The personal tone in the third person (tumhari Nooru mama), the transmission of will as institutional authority, is a rhetorical device that is used to transform personal will into institutional authority: she isn't a mother who has an opinion, she's an office that issues a decree. He is using a modal which softens it, "zarori toh nae" (it's not necessary), instead of a direct refusal. His threat to leave with his wife comes in a conditional: "Agar meri biwi is ghar mein nae reh skhti, toh mai b nae rhunga.

4.11.2. Discursive Practice Level

It's a one-way street, Noor Jahan is in all control. She opens up the discussion, establishes the conditions, states the judgment, and brings the discussion to a close. Murad is a respondent all throughout; he responds, but doesn't initiate. But his longest statement is still a 'if' phrase, not an 'is'. This scene's structural placement (Noor Bano, who is the most impacted by the divorce, is present in the background ; her divorce is being handed down by her mother-in-law , and the husband who is the least impacted) is discursive erasure: the woman being the most affected by the divorce has no voice on this scene.

4.11.3. Social Practice Level

This is a pivotal moment of the central ideological contradiction of the drama, a woman wielding patriarchal power over other women. The phrase "ghar ka sheraza bkerny ky liye nae" is of great ideologically significant as this metaphor sees a women's role in the household as being fully justified (service and harmony) and any deviation from this as transgression that demands expulsion.

4.12. Episode 31 Characters: Sumbul, Noor Jahan, Safeer, Maha

4.12.1. Textual Level

Sumbul comes in throwing her wedding card on the table, a gesture without words, Sumbul enters by throwing her wedding card on the table, a non-verbal act that ruptures her established submissive register. She starts out on an accusatory note with an emotional tone: "Bethny ka toh zahri baat hai ap kahein gi nae. Isliye mai khud beth jati hun. Her

extended monologue is a long stretch of speech for Sumbul in any scene we're going to have, and it is linguistically striking for the change in Sumbul's speech from her usual hedged, minimal speech. She makes direct address (Begum Noor Jahan Sahiba), rhetorical questions (Kush toh ap deakh nae skhin, Lakin kya karain bhai majbori hai) and moral indictment (Yeh jo apky bety hain jinka apko bht zoom hai, jinhy ap mard kehti hain, mujhy nae lgta yeh mard hain).

The contestation of the "mard" (man/manhood) has a significance of ideas. Sumbul denies Noor Jahan's sons their title of "man", deprives them of the patriarchy that Noor Jahan has created for them, and which she relies on to support her power. In all of the scenes, Noor Jahan's reply is 'Shut up' which is the shortest command and the most revealing one. She is not able to beat Sumbul's argument on a linguistic level. The English "shut up" in Urdu talk is a register shift that indicates loss of discursive control or when ideology is not supported, then authority resorts to the silencing. Despite this command Sumbul went on, "Tameez sy. Mai ab apki bahu nae hun jisay jab dil chaha sir pr betha liya aur jab dil chaha zameen pr patak diya. The contrast of "sir pr betha liya" (placed on the head) and "zameen pr patak diya" (thrown to the ground) is a strong binary statement which conveys the arbitrary and capricious nature of Noor Jahan's power over daughters-in-law: elevation and humiliation serve her as her instruments.

4.12.2. Discursive Practice Level

This scene is the most disruptive of all the scenes transcribed, in terms of discourse. Sumbul, usually the most linguistically marginalized female character, takes up the conversational floor, and doesn't give it up even when specifically told to remain silent. She performs her turn through Noor Jahan's "shut up", is able to finish her speech and leaves on her own terms. Noor Jahan issues one two-word command and for the only time in the scenes she is not the last to speak.

4.12.3. Social Practice Level

It is a scene in which the naturalized order of power relations is marked, that is, in which it is openly challenged and momentarily unsettled, in Fairclough's words, discursive struggle. Sumbul's speech act is the assertion of her disaffirmation from the ideological system which has been her way of life in the house of Noor Jahan. The title "Begum Noor Jahan Sahiba" (formal, remote) implies that she is not part of a family but speaks to one, but outside of it. This language formality makes a refusal. The scene is also a reminder, however, of the restrictions of this resistance. Her resistance is powerful but structurally contained. The drama acknowledges this moment of rupture without resolving it institutionally.

5. Conclusion

In this research, Fairclough's (1992, 1995) three-dimensional CDA model has been used to examine a purposive corpus of 12 scenes of the Pakistani drama serial 'Noor Jahan'

to find out how the power and class construction and the patriarchal ideology are discursively constructed through the female characters of this serial. It is concluded from the analysis that the strategies through which Noor Jahan exercises her authority are imperatives, possessive pronouns, high-modality declarations, and monologic control of conversational space. In Episode 30, Noor Bano enacts the most complete counter-discourse in the drama, echoing Noor Jahan's own rhetorical logic back at her. The linguistic space of social classes becomes apparent as a direct determinant of their linguistic behavior: Safina and Sumbul can only engage in silence, hedging and minimal speech, the suppression of which is grammatically encoded, while Noor Bano's educational capital is a kind of armor for language that the other characters do not have. Noor Jahan's son-preference discourse establishes the primacy of male lineage as a fact of nature and secures it with the certainty of statement, which is consistent with the process of institutionalization of patriarchal gender bias described by Qureshi (2026) in the context of the use of everyday Pakistani language. Qualitative and interpretive nature of the sample, limited use of one analytical framework and the lack of audience reaction data are the limitations, while future research can be conducted by pairing CDA with other analytical approaches such as Feminist CDA (Lazar, 2005) or reception studies and extend the comparative analysis to other dramas in Pakistan with dominant matriarchal characters. The study pioneers the category of 'matriarchy in the service of patriarchy' in Pakistani media discourse scholarship, a configuration in which female institutional power naturalizes rather than challenges patriarchal ideology, and whose theoretical implications extend beyond this drama to the broader question of how gender ideology reproduces itself through women as much as through men.

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