



**NARRATIVE CONTROL AND CONFRONTATION: A
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC
ABUSE IN A *GOOD WIFE: ESCAPING THE LIFE I
NEVER CHOSE***

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Abstract

This study explains the manifestation of abuse and violence against women along with all pros and cons in Samra Zafar's memoir *A Good Wife: Escaping the Life I Never Chose*. The study is based on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It examines critically that how language socially shapes and allows patriarchal power and enables resistance and silence within the marital experience of an adolescent child bride. The paper further investigates that how gender, age, culture, economic status, motherhood and wifehood, education and religion intervene to change and influence different vulnerabilities and allows unjustified actions for a male. This is the main focus of the paper to have a check on the physical, emotional, economic and psychological torture and abuse that shape the spouse's life. Fairclough's three-dimensional model guided the study through textual analysis, discursive, and socio-cultural practices. It discloses how socially and culturally ingrained expressions such as "a good and ideal wife" regularize submission and silence. At the same time, the memoir functions as a counter-discourse through the reclamation of agency and selfhood, especially through education and independence. The findings underpin the role of routine casual utterances within the household settings in sustaining gendered violence, highlight the role of cultural and religious discourses in normalizing abuse and violence, and their potential to challenge entrenched patriarchal norms. The study makes a contribution towards understanding the features of Pakistani English, which is a local variety. Moreover, the study indicates the necessity of focused pronunciation training to enhance learners' ability to discriminate the phonemes under discussion.

Keywords: *Abuse, Child-marriage, Critical Discourse Analysis, Patriarchy, Power, Resistance, Three-dimensional model, Violence.*

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1. Introduction

Discourse is initially elaborated as the study of individual meaning in broader social and cultural settings, in which the attributes of power construct identities and social positions that exercise authority to control and restrict. It functions as a social practice that creates reality through the organization of knowledge, the setting of norms, and the legitimization of power. Therefore, it is not simply a neutral medium of communication. Scholars such as Foucault and Fairclough have insisted that discourse does not merely mirror the world, but is also constructed under the controlled narratives of discourse, that is, what is to be said, by whom, and under what circumstances. Thus, meaning is not static or an ultimate goal, but is produced socially, historically, and culturally within particular situations. The discourse of narrative structures and institutional practices normalizes specific ways of thinking through language preferences and marginalizes others. This is a procedure that instills ideology into daily routine communication and is resistant to the hierarchical societal order. The construction of Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough is based on this realization, which presents a construct on which the nature of the interaction between language and power may be critically examined. His three-dimensional model stresses the interaction between textual analysis, discursive practices, and the broader socio-cultural settings. The textual and linguistic analysis, which is the first layer of the model, encodes ideological assumptions in terms of vocabulary, syntax, metaphor, and evaluative expressions. At the second level of discursive practices, texts are created, distributed, and perceived within institutional frameworks of media, education, and the family system. The third and final surface of social-cultural practices is where discourse is highlighted as it is embedded in historical, political, and economic circumstances that construct and limit meanings. Collectively, these dimensions indicate that language perpetuates as well as weakens the power relations of dominance.

In patriarchal societies like Pakistan and other Asian nations, discourse is determining and crucial in upholding gender hierarchies. The patterns of language always connect women with obedience, sacrifice, domesticity, authority, rationality, and leadership, which are attributes of masculinity. Good and ideal wife are not neutral terms but ideological terms, which presuppose the expected conduct and limit female identity and agency. These types of injustices between the genders and the uncontrolled power of males diffused the interactions among families, media representations, and the hierarchy of institutional discourses. Therefore, discourse is a reflection of an effective mode of control. It usually makes subordination a routine issue without applying any physical force. This is a critical and integrated linkage of language and power to understand domestic abuse as portrayed in Zafar's memoir *A Good Wife*. The narrations illustrate the functioning of the patriarchal discourse. It also shows how intimate areas control behavior, downplay opposition, and justify violence. The discursive demands of gender roles slowly

substituted the promises of education and freedom. The routine speeches, abusive comments, and moral decisions are all forms of creating the domestic environment. It is a legitimate, unexplored, and unauthorized area where women can be found. These language practices are presented as control, care, compliance as virtue, and endurance as moral strength.

Abuse is not depicted in the memoir in a few instances. However, rather a continuing process of control supported by physical, emotional, psychological, and financial authorities. All these types of abuse work in an interdependent manner and make a chain, which confines agency, diminishes independence, and reinforces reliance. Physical violence enacts its will, emotional abuse kills self-esteem, psychological control alters the sense, and financial limitation eradicates options. This organized practice repeats the same pattern of tension, violence, apology, and a temporary moment of calmness and tranquility, which keeps hope alive and avoids escape and separation. The cultural discourses reinforce patience, family honor, fear of stigmatization of divorce, and female sacrifice, which contribute to the normality of this unending circle and point out that resistance is unacceptable in the culture. Silence is not a personal failure in this structure but a socially conditioned choice and option. It is the result of resistance and opposition that can be changed to enmity. These are the basic social lessons that women are taught to make suffering their business and perseverance their power. Whistleblowing is perceived as a form of disgrace, whereas obedience is followed by social acceptance. Abuse is perceived as a usual routine problem, unseen, and validated in this regard. The memoir shows how this discursive conditioning postpones the realization and extends damage. It is only when the narrator is exposed to other discourses that she begins to reinterpret her experience, especially by way of education. New concepts like control, coercion, and systemic violence are offered through language and allow one to stop self-blaming and begin to be critical. This mental reorientation is the initiation of resistance.

Harassment and humiliation in public are another way of showing the expansion of patriarchal discourse outside of the family. Divorced women are also placed as being morally uncertain and socially available even after separation. Uncourteous remarks, indecorous propositions, and verbal aggression serve as instruments of social punishment, punishing an independent woman. By reestablishing gender hierarchies, these practices make independence nonconformity. Abuse does not cease with physical separation but transforms into different discursive forms that aim at reestablishing control, as portrayed in the memoir.

Child marriage and huge age gaps between the marrying couple are forms of matrimony that promote inequality and resultantly injustice and oppression. Child marriage creates hurdles for girls' education; primarily, it stops growing emotional maturity. It encourages a culture of dependency from very beginning in childhood and

undermines informed consent. Child marriage is a system of premature domination that ensures permanent subordination in the guise of protection or custom. Marriage ties in childhood limit opportunities and make obedience a social norm. Even before the activation of agency, as described by the narrator in the memoir. These negative factors are obscured by the different attire. Similarly, a big difference in age between the spouses gives power to the older male partners, who can be psychologically in control and restrict resistance by exercising their experience. These practices are always linked with greater susceptibility, lack of education, and a long experience of domestic violence. Forced and child marriages blur the line between cultural tradition and restriction of autonomy. As long as marriage is influenced by coercion, intimidation, or compulsion, it turns into a tool of control and oppression instead of companionship. Another theme exposed in the memoir is how such measures put the authority of the family over the choice of the individual. It further reveals how such institutions place women in strict structures that subdue voice and possibility. These autobiographical experiences are indications of the larger structural tendencies in which patriarchy is replicated. In the memoir, the two forms of language are used as instruments of oppression and as a means to control. Patriarchal authority is sustained not only by employing force but also through discourse that constructs and controls thought, action, and identity. Zafar breaks this silence by narrating her story and reinstates agency. The memoir itself is confronting as a counter discourse, which reveals normalized abuse and the supportive ideological groundworks. In this perspective, domestic violence is not measured as a personal tragedy but as a social phenomenon that is created by the discourse, culture, and power.

The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze and measure the ways and means in which language in *A Good Wife* shapes control, victimhood, and resistance. The analysis shows the reproduction of patriarchal dominance in daily routine language. It also depicts a comprehensive socio-cultural understanding of ideology and power relations. This is the need of the hour to confront gender-based violence, comprehend such discursive processes, and rethink more equal social relations.

1.1. Research Questions

1. How does *A Good Wife* discursively construct power, control, and victimhood in the representation of domestic abuse through everyday language and narrative strategies?
2. How are patriarchal, cultural, and religious discourses mobilized in the memoir to normalize, justify, and silence domestic violence against women?

1.2. Research Objectives

1. To analyze how linguistic and discursive choices in the memoir reproduce and challenge patriarchal power relations associated with domestic abuse, using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework.

2. To examine how cultural and religious discourses shape the normalization of abuse and how the narrative functions as a counter-discourse that enables resistance and agency.

2. Review of Literature

Domestic violence against women (VAW) in Pakistan is known as a highly institutionalized social issue that is entangled with social, cultural, institutional, and legal frameworks. The present research has shown that violence in the domestic setting is neither an isolated and self-structured issue nor it is an accidental phenomenon but a systemic production of patriarchal ideologies that control the autonomy, movement, and social status of women (Jackson & Jones, 1998; Kandiyoti, 1988). Material deprivation, tight control over her movements, and institutional neglect encourage these ideologies. These things ultimately contribute to the normalization of male dominance and the denial of opportunities to seek protection and justice for women. Critical discourse perspectives also provide reasons why language, society, law, and institutional communications generate social realities that authorize gender hierarchies and silence the experiences of abuse to women (Foucault, 1972; van Dijk, 2001; Lazar, 2007). Empirical research throughout Pakistan exhibits that women are regularly subjected to physical, emotional, psychological, and economic mistreatment within marriage and family. This violence has often been rationalized by selective cultural or religious lenses that focus on female compliance, patience, and endurance as moral virtues (Ali & Gavino, 2008; Hussain, 2006). Instead of being discussed as a violation of fundamental rights, domestic abuse is often seen as an intimate family issue, thus protecting offenders without any consequences and deterring survivors in the framework of a lack of social security and nonconformity to the cultural and religious norms. Consequently, most women adopt informal approaches of bargaining and patience or find support in family elders, communal mediation, or moral and religious appeals when the law fails to catch them (Bano, 2009; Schuler and Islam, 2008). These tendencies highlight the narrow scope of formal organizations and the key place of social norms in tackling violence among women.

Legal rules in Pakistan comprise statutory laws like the Domestic Violence Act (2016), which offers the needs of the Maintenance Orders, Protection Orders, and Residence Protection Orders. These laws have a progressive purpose in shaping lives; however, their implementation is poor and uneven. The studies have shown that legal remedies are greatly hampered by bureaucratic slackness, institutional incompetence, insufficient training of law enforcement agencies, and gender biased court proceedings (Ali & Gavino, 2008; Zia, 2018). Courts might also be more concerned with family reconciliation by mediating someone to end the conflicts in the interest of their children and the reputation of the family than with the safety of the survivors. Police responses can often be dismissive. Family honor and marital stability are additional social factors that

deter women from seeking legal justice (Aurat Foundation, 2018; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2019). Such results highlight an ever-present mismatch between the institutional practice and statutory intent, and indicate that legal reform is inadequate unless more structural and cultural change takes place (Jalal, 2015).

The Pakistani society continues to be a dominant organizing force through patriarchy, which is organized through socialization, family structures, and the practices of institutions that control the behavior of women and uphold the dominance of men (Kandiyoti, 1988). Resistance is often stigmatized and seen as troublesome or immoral, whereas endurance, silence, and compromise are encouraged as desirable feminine qualities (Ali, 2016; Shaheed, 1990). Over time, women might learn to accept pain as a part and parcel of being married, which leads to the acceptance of abuse. Social learning theory also elaborates how the family transmission of violence is replicated through witnessing violence in the family, which is exerted by silence and non-intervention, which are culturally supported (Bhatti et al., 2011).

Structurally, the violence against women is perpetuated both by direct acts of violence, and also by failure of the legal, educational, and economic institutions. The structural violence theory focuses on the way in which indirect violence is caused by institutional structures that deprive women of access to resources, protection, and opportunities (Galtung and Hoivik, 1971). Low levels of education, low mobility, and economic dependency in Pakistan make women highly vulnerable to domestic abuse (Pulla, 2014). Such structural inequalities provide situations where the economic and social viability of leaving abusive relations becomes not feasible to many women, and further cycles of dependence and control continue.

Scholars are becoming aware of domestic violence as a multidimensional experience, not only in the physical aspect but also in the psychological, emotional, and economic aspects of abuse. Mental violence and emotional torture disintegrate self-esteem, generate fear, and create a systemic helplessness, whereas economic dependency limits access to income, assets, and power to make decisions (Walker, 2006; Adams et al., 2008). Emotional abuse, such as the use of taunting words, shows of anger, humiliation of tiny things, and isolation, acts as a compelling form of control, which frequently comes before the physical violence or goes hand in hand with it (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Bano, 2009).

Such types of abuse that are not physical are especially hard to record and deal with through legal means, though they are essential in perpetuating the patriarchal domination. These concealed aspects of violence have been illuminated through literary and autobiographical stories. Such memoirs as *A Good Wife* show the interaction of emotional, psychological, and economic abuse in the day-to-day lives of people, revealing the limited agency of women and their implicit survival tactics. These stories anticipate lived

experience and give us an idea of how the experience of abuse internalizes and how power is negotiated in families, and how a person resists being limited by their social space.

Intersectional scholarship also makes the interpretation of domestic violence more difficult by showing that women's experience is defined by intersecting issues including class, education, geography, and social position (Crenshaw, 1991). Less educated, rural, and poor women tend to be compounded as a result of low levels of legal awareness, reduced mobility, and poor institutional outreach (Aurat Foundation, 2018). The cultural practices that concern honor, obedience, and reproduction support male power and instrumentalize the female bodies in marriage (Jawad, 1991; Rashid, 2009). Women are conditioned to believe that men have the right to make all decisions since early years, and marriage and childbirth are often promoted as the main ways to achieve social respect and protection (Alwedini, 2017; Pulla, 2014). Although women can exert some limited influence in the household in terms of emotional or relational influence, it is hardly enough to effect any change to the structural inequalities that are perpetuated in the male dominance.

To address this complexity, researchers propose a complex analytical model, which comprises feminist theory, structural violence, discourse analysis, intersectionality, and family systems theory. Feminist and critical discourse theories illuminate how language, law, and institutional discourse perpetrate abuse and make the suffering of women unnoticed (Foucault, 1980; van Dijk, 1993; Lazar, 2005; Butler, 1990).

Simultaneously, survivor stories and civil society actions show that discourse may serve as a place of resistance by repositioning domestic violence as a social and structural injustice (Aurat Foundation, 2018). Intersectionality reveals the interaction between gender and class, education and geography to produce differentiated experiences of violence, and structural analysis highlights institutional neglect as a producer of harm (Crenshaw, 1991; Bhatti et al., 2011).

Family systems theory also describes how the extended family systems and cultural pressures enforce moral compliance, emotional manipulation and intergenerational acceptance of abuse. Patriarchal bargaining is the idea that women can adhere to dominant norms to gain some protection or social acceptance, despite the fact that the strategies contribute to structural subordination (Kandiyoti, 1988; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2019).

Overall, these perceptions show that domestic violence is a structural process. It is the production of institutions, cultural practices and daily social activities, contrary to the individual acts of someone. Literature and autobiographical works afford necessary and very important complementary vantage point. It provides the subjective and symbolic aspects of violence in real life that are usually missing in legal and sociological analyses. The feminist literary critic focuses on the role of the female narratives as counter-

discourses to patriarchy. According to them, married women share their own life experiences of silence, endurance, and resistance, and confront mainstream representations (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979; Hirsch, 1997). The emotional authoritarianism, institutional ignorance, and cultural intimidation overlap with each other in memoirs like *I Am Malala* and *In the Name of Honour* and resonate with the concept of subaltern silence (Yousafzai, 2013; Guha and Spivak, 1988). Domestic violence is often represented in fictional and autobiographical tales as recurrent and cyclical, characterized by repeated humiliation, forced compliance, and agency denial (Dobash et al., 1992; Showalter, 1985; Shaikh and Hashmi, 2023). *A Good Wife* is a good example of such dynamics, as it contains not only structural opposition, but also some shades of resistance, thus connecting personal experience with the social reality.

Collectively, it can be observed that the literature supports the idea that domestic violence in Pakistan is replicated in the context of interconnected systems of patriarchy, cultural norms, structural inequality, and institutional neglect. Even though there are legal frameworks available, they are compromised by poor enforcement, coercive forces in society, and a lack of awareness. A combination of feminist theory, critical discourse analysis, intersectionality, and family systems theory offers a strong analytical basis to explain how abuse is organized, legitimized, and opposed. Literary works like *A Good Wife* add to such insight by depicting an experience and emotional reality. The understanding of these multi-level processes is critical in the formulation of inclusive and context-sensitive strategies to deal with domestic violence and further the autonomy of women in Pakistan.

3. Methodology

The research design used in this study is qualitative, interpretive, and exploratory based on Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis is based on the three-dimensional model of Fairclough to analyze how domestic violence, power structure, and patriarchal ideology are discursively produced in Zafar's memoir *A Good Wife*. The study does not consist of interviews, surveys, or quantitative measures. Rather, it is based on close textual analysis of the memoir as the main source of data backed by the pertinent scholarly literature. This research is specifically concerned with post-marriage chapters, which tell about the world of domestic violence, coercion, silence, resistance, and the potential power of the female gender. This selective focus makes it possible to emphasize the mechanisms of language in marriage and domestic situations to normalize or question violence. The textual findings are contextualized with the help of secondary sources based on peer-reviewed academic literature and documentation of human rights to provide the interpretive validity.

The analytical framework of Fairclough is used in this research, which is the three-dimensional model that relates the use of language to ideology and social structure. Textual

analysis is the first dimension that focuses on vocabulary, grammatical structures, sentence structure, metaphors, and rhetorical tools employed in the memoir. Emphasis is placed on the lexical choices that are emotionally charged, passive constructions, and culturally charged expressions that influence the depiction of abuse and obedience. The often-used phrase such as good wife is critically examined to show how language captures social expectations and insists on gender hierarchy. Metaphorical imagery used to describe domestic life as a form of restriction. It also demonstrates how individual grief is discursively expressed in the context of larger regimes of power. The production, distribution, and dissemination of the memoir have been emphasized in the second dimension of discursive practice. The memoir is a first-person narrative, which is a counter-narrative that encounters cultural norms of silence about marital abuse. The narrating procedure of stories challenges the patriarchal norms that restrict women from speaking out against domestic violence. The memoir comprises several discursive levels, such as feminist perspectives, newly-immigrant stories, and abuse and violence survivors' narratives. The mainstream literary channels' publishing and release make it a socially concerned text, contrary to a personal confession. The responses of feminist writers, academics, and survivor communities added to the discursive effects of the memoir. These discussions also allow the memoir to act as an intervention to mainstream narratives of endurance and submission. The third dimension, sociocultural practice, places the narrative in broader cultural, religious, as well as institutional contexts. The memoir reflects the patriarchal conventions that dominated Pakistani culture, where the role of women and obedience are considered to be their basic qualities. These standards are supported by selective cultural and religious interpretations, which justify the authority and dominance of the male and silence opposition. Another layer in the memoir is how violence is regularized through intergenerational dissemination and institutional indifference, especially social norms of marriage and honor in the family. Migration into Canada adds another dimension of vulnerability, such as isolation, economic dependency, and lack of access to support systems, which further exaggerate the marginalization of the protagonist. At the same time, the memoir is consistent with the transnational discourses of women's empowerment by education and economic independence, a shift from silence to agency.

The statement of the problem guiding this research that is rooted in the recognition that certain discursive choices may unintentionally soften the structural severity of violence by shaping endurance as moral strength or sacrifice, although *A Good Wife* powerfully underscores abuse and violence. There is a lack of scholarly interest in such memoirs, especially in the form of systematic discourse analysis. This paper fills this gap by critically discussing the role of language in revealing violence and concealing it by exposing the hidden aspects of patriarchal power in daily life conversations.

Two main questions inform the research. First, in what ways does *A Good Wife* carry the normalization and defense of domestic violence through patriarchal language? Second, what role do cultural and religious discourses of the memoir play in perpetuating gender-based violence? In this context, the research has two objectives. The first one is to examine how language options create and reproduce patriarchal domination in the discourse. The second one is to study the use of discursive cultural and religious frameworks to justify or oppose abuse.

The main source of data to be used in this study is the memoir itself, which offers rich linguistic data to be examined in the context of discourse analysis. Being an autobiographical writing, it provides a real-life account of the experience and provides an opportunity to analyze the way meaning and power are produced by the use of words. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports, associated with Critical Discourse Analysis, feminist theory, and gender-based violence in South Asian settings will comprise secondary data. These were available in the already available academic databases like Google Scholar, JSTOR, and other valid academic platforms. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International were used to contextualize the memoir in the larger socio-legal reality. Analysis was completed in a qualitative thematic manner in accordance with Fairclough's model. A few segments of the texts were analyzed to identify patterns, metaphors, and ideological hints, which expose power ties. The cross-referencing of the interpretations with existing research was done to guarantee the consistency of the analysis. There was no human participation in the in-person interview to collect different perspectives, and ethical considerations were ensured by citing and following APA guidelines. The study is not directed towards empirical generalization, but it tries to give a detailed discourse-based insight into the linguistic construction and contestation of domestic violence in a personal narrative.

4. Findings and Discussion

This part summarizes the conclusions of the discussion of the last chapters in *A Good Wife*, and discusses the way that how domestic abuse is normalized linguistically, internalized emotionally, and ultimately challenged by altering narrative control. With reference to Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough, the discussion reveals how Zafar's memoir exposes patriarchal power not just in the form of violence but in the form of everyday language, silences, and moral frames in which women are subjected to oppression. Meanwhile, the memoir records a progressive re-configuring of voice, and resistance is initiated in terms of counter-discourses of agency, education, motherhood, and public demonstration.

Among the key results, there is a fact in the memoir that domestic abuse is perpetuated by a regulated discourse that conditions coercion as duty and endurance as virtue. The linguistic choices once again frame the protagonist as being morally

accountable to save the marriage, even when it is shown to be violated immorally. The motel experience, which she is forced into after being coerced, has turned her into something less than nothing, Zafar says, an expression that refers to mental breakdown and total deprivation of identity in the face of patriarchal claims. The metaphor renounces existence as it is, and this can be seen as the way abuse not just causes bodily harm but also functions to marginalize women of subjectivity.

On the same note, the internalization of blame is observed in the use of words such as “*fiery self-loathing, I don’t want to live, I prayed to disappear*”. These comments demonstrate the discursive shift of violence towards the self: instead of referring to *Ahmed* as a criminal or abuser, the story presents suffering as failure. The most effective form of patriarchal power is one that makes violence taboo, which turns it into shame and self-surveillance. This disciplined story is heightened by the imagery of suicide. The way Zafar describes the imagined death by using first the ruins of impact, *crushing metal, splintering glass*, and the “*last giving up of my body*” places the trauma inside the body, as well as supporting the embodiment of despair. These pictures indicate that the consequences of abuse are not only limited to single events, but constitute an ongoing state of psychological existence, wherein the body itself is the location of patriarchal control.

Other chapters further represent the monotonous and orderly control. In chapter 9, Zafar witnesses, “*Every glance was counted, every word weighed, every gesture checked*” the all-encompassing nature of surveillance in the domestic space. She looks back in chapter 12, and says: *I learned to breathe quietly, to shrink myself*, as internalized self-effacement as a survival mechanism. Verbal terrorization and manipulation are highlighted quite clearly in chapters 7 and 13: “*I was constantly reminded that a good wife suffers silently*” and “*My complaints were twisted into proof of ingratitude*”. These illustrations highlight that domestic abuse does not just serve as a series of violent behaviors. It is actually a sustained linguistic and psychological system that describes perception, identity, and body language.

The marital language, which is often used for legitimization of the women's control, is detected as a discursive technique in the memoir. Ahmed’s words, who asks, “*You are still my wife, right?*” are linguistically a good example of the use of patriarchal authority even after divorce and separation. This statement puts compulsion in the context of a matrimonial right, which subordinates the legal separation to the moral duty. Such cultural ideals, such as patience and endurance, also serve the purpose of silencing, which ideology that is the foundation of the narrative framing of suffering as a moral responsibility. The story of compliance is told as a virtue, and the story of resistance is built initially as a failure. The description of the protagonist's encounter “*shredded every scrap of self-respect*” indicates that he realizes that he is being violated, but the fact that

there is no action taken against it shows that such violations are normalized in patriarchal discourse.

Such terms as “*obedience, duty, and sacrifice*” are repeated in the content of chapters 10-14, which illustrates the use of moralized language that makes violence submissive and hides the immoral aspects of violence. With the repetition of these words in various situations, a language of justification, legitimization, and normalization of abuse is built, and it becomes a part of daily life.

When the manipulated narrative is interfered with through intervention, this results in a major change. The gesture of Cherri with the words “*Look at these two*” works as a discursive turn. Motherhood is no longer thought of as a burden or a responsibility but as a power of protest. This shift of the protagonist takes him off the path of self-destruction into the path of responsibility based on love instead of shame. The first form of resistance is relational, in the forms of solidarity and recognition, and not through direct confrontation with the abuser.

The memoir’s language varies after this intervention. Survival is portrayed as an option, expressed in binary terms, like “*lightness or darkness*”, “*energy or defeat*”, and “*happiness or despair*”, indicating a reaffirmation of agency. The memoir alters its approach of depicting endurance as passive suffering to an active choice, and this is a significant transition of subject position towards the victim and the agent. The next two chapters (15 and 16) support emergent resistance even more: “*I refused to let his words define me*” and “*Even when I felt broken, I whispered to myself that I would rise.*” The first-person declarative statements are indicative of increasing self-authorship and identity negotiation.

Volunteering, teaching, and education are activities that present a new vocabulary of empowerment. Words such as “*purposeful distraction*”, “*scholarships*”, “*promotion*”, and “*graduation*” are used as discursive signs of self-rebuilding, re-replacing the protagonist in the institutional spaces where he/she becomes legitimate and authoritative. Other phrases in chapter 14 reflect less obvious resistance, like “*I found strength in small rebellions*”, “*I learned to say no even when my voice trembled*”, and “*Each step away from his control was a victory*”. These statements support the story that agency is built in an incremental and relational manner.

The other significant conclusion has to do with the challenge of the cultural discourse of the broken family presented in the memoir. Zafar comes out clearly to oppose this description by recounting moments of happiness and wholeness with her daughters. Images of commonplace activities like watching movies, birthday celebrations, and travel build a different story of a family that is not dependent on patriarchal organizations. The memoir collectively redefines, as the denial of stigmatization associated with divorce,

making emotional security and mutual care the key elements of unity instead of permanence in marriage.

The continuation of this discursive strategy is ongoing until chapter 11, such as “*We laughed freely; no one told us how to feel*” and “*Our home was not broken, it was ours*”. These utterances are in direct opposition to the discourses of the society that see divorce as a disaster. It is slightly focused on interpersonal and emotional connections, rather than matrimonial rights. The word “*broken family*” is exposed as a cultural creation, which polices the lives of women in a post-separation context. The memoir challenges patriarchal constructions of success and failure by describing happiness as an act of rebellion against this category, and presents an alternative social script that prioritizes dignity and perseverance.

In the last chapters, the resistance is transferred to the public sphere. The viral spread of the story of Zafar creates a collective discourse of solidarity with the use of words like messages, “*congratulations and thank you for breaking the silence*”. These words mark the transition of solitude to communal acknowledgment, and the emphasis on communal testimony as a strong counter-discourse that turns individual suffering into mass criticism.

This shift also depicts an exchange with Amna. When Amna is abused by words like “*haramzadi, bitch, and whore*” by her husband, Zafar replies with positive words such as *you deserve better and abuse is never okay*. Chapter 16 also emphasizes collective solidarity, like “*Together, our voices shook the walls of silence*”. These illustrations demonstrate how language is used as an intervention, a disruption of cycles of abuse, and a legitimization of resistance.

Later vocabularies used professionally and institutionally in the memoir, such as “*mentor, executive, and Royal Bank of Canada,*” are symbolic of the move by the narrator into arenas of power that are traditionally not accessible to women in abusive marriages. The reemergence of words such as “*damaged goods*” speaks to the internalization of stigmatization, where emancipation is not a straight line, and discursive residual patriarchy still influences the way of seeing oneself. The last interaction with Ahmed is the culmination of the reclamation of the narratives: through the creation of the “*ground rules*”, and dominance of the conditions of communication, Zafar reclaims language. In this context, forgiveness is not submission, but a re-positioning of power in a strategic manner. The statement “*I was free*” implies legal and discursive freedom.

The results directly respond to the research questions that informed this study. The discursive construction of power and victimhood is answered with the help of the first question, in which euphemisms, metaphors, and silences, which normalize abuse and internalize blame, are identified. The memoir shows how ordinary language perpetuates patriarchal rule by making violence seem like a duty and hardship as a virtue.

The second question, with the theme of cultural and religious discourses, is answered by displaying selective interpretations where obedience is much more valued, and issues of justice and compassion are disregarded. The use of religious references to legitimize control is commonly used, but the memoir shows a clear contradiction in the uses and the ethical basis of Islam. Such discriminatory talk is ideological as it supports patriarchy and not spiritual values.

Generally, the memoir, *A Good Wife*, creates the domain of domestic abuse as a discursive system that is supported by means of language, culture, and institutional practices. Resistance is created over time out of relational support, education, testifying in public, and narrative control. The memoir reinvents the concept of survival as an active process of identity and dignity reconstruction rather than passive survival. Revealing how language obscures as much as it provokes violence, the text illustrates how the power of counter-discourse can be used to take on the challenges of patriarchal authority, and rethink the agency of women.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has explored the book *A Good Wife: Escaping the Life I Never Chose* through the three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Fairclough to understand how the construction of domestic abuse, as well as its normalization and resistance, is discursively constructed in an autobiographical account. The main purpose was to explore the way in which the routine language, the methods of narration, and the meanings that are embedded in the culture reproduce patriarchal power and provide points of resistance. Instead of contextualizing domestic violence as a single or personal occurrence, the analysis placed domestic violence in the context of broader cultural, religious, and ideological constructs that naturalize control, silence women, and idealize endurance as a virtue. The analysis of the memoir as an oppressive and resistant site revealed that language is a social practice that constructs identity, power relations, and social reality.

The initial research question was how the authority of patriarchy is perpetuated by the use of everyday language. The outcomes indicated that domination and authority are not limited to physical abuse only. It also works through verbal decisions, narrative framing, and silences, by re-imagining violence as an ethical duty, discipline, or endurance. The use of emotionally charged vocabulary, self-removal metaphors, and passive constructions on the textual level depicted how the narrator, first of all, places the blame on herself and downplays the abuse. These approaches reconstruct gendered hierarchies at the discursive level, wherein male authority is treated as a natural state, and female endurance as a virtue. In a nutshell, the memoir demonstrates that the language is not only a control mechanism but also a tool that legitimizes domestic violence.

The second research question was how cultural and religious discourses influence the normalization of domestic abuse. The discussion identified ideological terms of disobedience, such as selective perceptions of honor, obedience, patience, and biased religious interpretation, which are used to suppress resistance. The protagonist internalizes these discourses, which insist on self-regulation in a patriarchal society. Nevertheless, the integration between these interpretations and the broader moral values of justice and compassion in the memoir also raises a finger against the validity of these interpretations. This two-fold role makes the memoir a commentary and response to dominant ideologies.

One of the key findings in the memoir is that resistance is not confronted directly but arises gradually with changes in narrative voice, tone, and self-positioning. The changing identity of the narrator can be an example of discourse as a negotiation site with a presence of both submission and agency. Selective disclosure, tonal changes, and reflective commentary enable the narrator to take back interpretive authority of her experience. On the sociocultural level, individual suffering is placed in the wider patriarchal framework of the memoir, such as family hierarchies, institutional inertia, and cultural stigma about divorce, but also demonstrates the formation of counter-discourses, through education, professional involvement, and testifying to oneself, that undermine these structures. These results support the claims of Fairclough that discourse reproduces and alters social relations based on the mobilization of such discourse.

The theoretical contribution of the study is also the combination of CDA with the perspectives of feminism, poststructuralism, and intersectionality. The idea of discourse and power by Foucault demonstrates how control is exercised by action, and not through explicit force, and the gender performativity by Butler clarifies how gender roles are created and challenged through the use of language. Feminist discourse theory and intersectionality also show how the oppression of gender intersects with class, religion, and immigrant identity to influence specific ways of resistance.

Overall, the dynamics of discursive and socio-cultural practices that challenge the hegemonic meanings show that these structures of autobiographical narratives are not only passive expressions of victimhood. The research has broadened the context of CDA by preempting the emotional, narrative, and performative aspects of memoirs and highlights how personal narratives can transform gradually. Despite its contributions, the study has limitations and pitfalls. The first flaw of using one memoir and generalizing the outcomes is actually not enough to show a complete picture of the diversity of domestic violence across different contexts. The subjectivity introduced by the interpretation of the CDA and the lack of quantitative indicators confine the possibility of evaluating the popularity of particular forms of discourse. Anyhow, these shortcomings do not reduce the value of the study but provide some directions on how research can be conducted in the future. There are some recommendations based on these findings. Further studies are required to expand

the corpus with several autobiographical works of similar sociocultural backgrounds to enable comparative analysis and increase the external validity. The use of exploratory interpretive mixed-method techniques that synthesize qualitative CDA with quantitative linguistic tools might improve the rigor of analysis and methodological cooperation. Longitudinal research on the evolution of narrative identity would be more convenient for further understanding the interaction of discourse, trauma, and agency. Policymakers, educators, and activists must acknowledge the influence of language on social attitudes and reduce the unequal justification of cultural and religious interpretations.

To sum up, the language used in the memoir *A Good Wife* shows two-fold: a tool of oppression and authority on one side and a solid mechanism of resistance on the other hand. The memoir reveals that personal narratives are able to disrupt cultural and ideological discussions and expose social injustice, reclaim agency, and negotiate identity. The study affirms the importance of language in constructing social realities by explaining how patriarchy works and emphasizing the discursive resistance strategies. The study has added to the current academic debates on gender-based violence, discourse, and identity, and provided a methodological and theoretical framework for future research on the liberatory nature of autobiographical writing.

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