



A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENDER REPRESENTATION IN THE PAKISTANI DRAMA SERIAL *ZINDAGI GULZAR HAI*

Ijaz Ahmad ijazlink35@gmail.com	MPhil Scholar, Department of English, University of Okara, Okara, Pakistan.
Shumaila Shumaylchohan5@gmail.com	MPhil Scholar, Department of English, University of Okara, Okara, Pakistan.
Yasmeen Khatoon khatoon.yasmeen2018@gmail.com	Lecturer in English, School of English, Minhaj University, Lahore, Pakistan.

Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the discursive construction of gender identities, gender roles and patriarchal ideologies in the Pakistani Television Drama, *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, with the help of the Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed by Norman Fairclough. The study uses a qualitative research design and analyzes purposively selected dialogues of the main characters, focusing on how language constructs, reproduces, negotiates and challenges gendered power relations. The results show that femininity is defined in terms of education, resilience, self-respect, and moral responsibility, whereas masculinity progresses from a patriarchal privilege to empathy and mutual respect. Family relationships are important discursive contexts that reinforce and renegotiate traditional gender roles. The analysis also shows that the ideology of the patriarch is reproduced in the face of everyday discourse but is challenged in education, dialogue and through the agency of the female. The study finds that *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* is a powerful cultural text which has a significant role in shaping the public perception of gender, power and social change in the Pakistani cultural context and thus Fairclough's CDA proves to be useful in analyzing the discourse of media in the Pakistani context.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender Representation, Pakistani Television Drama, Patriarchy, Zindagi Gulzar Hai.*

Corresponding Author: Ijaz Ahmad (MPhil Scholar, Department of English, University of Okara, Okara, Pakistan)
Email: ijazlink35@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Television dramas are one of the most powerful means of mass media, not only in terms of entertainment, but also in terms of popularizing the image of social reality, popularizing cultural values and social identity. Dramas, with the repetition of plots, dialogues, and characterization, develop definitions of masculinity and femininity which can become normal or desirable behaviors of the audience. Television is not only a reflection of society; it also plays an active role in the production and reproduction of social ideologies in discourse. Media discourse is a highly influential arena in which social norms about gender, family, authority and identity are negotiated and legitimised in this respect. Theories of representation hold that meanings are socially produced via language and symbolic activities, and that television dramas are important cultural texts in depicting how gender ideologies circulate in society (Hall, 1997; Butler, 1990; Fairclough, 1995).

Television dramas hold a special place in the Pakistani culture as they are watched by different ages, social classes and geographical regions. Due to the introduction of the private television channels in early 2000s, Pakistani dramas have grown from being simple family stories to complex stories about the education of women, their professional careers, domestic violence, inheritance, marriage, divorce, and empowerment of women. Nevertheless, despite these forward-looking trends, numerous dramas carry a continuation of patriarchal assumptions, and depict women's success in the context of traditional family norms. Thus, Pakistani television is not only a medium for social change but also serves as a tool for maintaining a dominant culture that reinforces the notions of gender and family relations.

There is an agreement that gender is a social and cultural construct, and not just a physical one. Through ongoing socialization processes, societies set expectations of appropriate behaviors, responsibilities, and identities for women and men. The family, educational, religious, and mass media institutions reinforce these expectations. Judith Butler (1990) states that gender does not exist as a biological fact, but rather it is constantly produced by repeated social performances. Likewise, Hall (1997) describes that representation does not just represent the real, it makes the real. Thus, television dramas are crucial cultural spaces in which gender identities are continually produced, reproduced, re-negotiated and even re-imagined through the use of language and visual symbolism as well as through the use of narrative patterns.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a thorough analytical approach to analyzing the creation and justification of unequal social relations through discourse. For Fairclough (1995, 2015), discourse is a social practice that interweaves ideology and power in ordinary language. CDA is not only a study of content, it is also one of the broader institutional and cultural power of the linguistic choices that make up content. Similarly, it is important to note that discourse plays a part in the reproduction of social dominance,

as it affects people's knowledge, beliefs and ideologies (van Dijk, 2008). By analyzing the dialogues, character relations, narrative structure, and imagery of TV dramas, CDA can be used to investigate how gender identities are shaped and social expectations are normalised.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis also builds on this view, focusing on the role played by language in the reinforcement or challenge of the patriarchal ideology. Lazar (2005) suggests discourse frequently normalizes gender inequality by rendering unequal social practices as "natural" or "cultural norm". In Feminist CDA, the role of identifying assumptions of power, gender roles, authority and identities in media texts becomes a central theme. In the context of Pakistani television, this is especially useful as dramas often end up representing women as empowered individuals as well as protectors of conventional family values, leading to conflicting discourses of femininity, motherhood, marriage, and work identity (Lazar, 2005; Sunderland, 2004).

Current research shows that the portrayal of women's social roles and identities in Pakistani television dramas has profound impact on the viewers. Research has shown that, although modern dramas are becoming increasingly about educated and successful women, women in modern dramas are still bound by the patriarchal family system and cultural norms. Women's independence is often affirmed only in terms of the eventual enhancement of family unity, subservient behavior and conventional values. The multiple images create two opposing stories of empowerment and submission, echoing the ideological conflicts that exist in society.

Recent studies have also shown that language is an integral part of developing gender identity in Pakistani dramas. Female characters are frequently depicted as ones that have sacrificed, are patient, emotionally strong, and have domestic duties; male characters are ones that have authority, rationality, decision-making, and economic power. The strength of women's status in society is often judged based on their moral responsibilities to their motherhood, marriage and family honor, even when they are in a powerful position. Therefore, discourse not only signifies the gender, but also controls the acceptable gender – “femines” and “males” – too.

The chosen drama, *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, offers a rich source to explore these ideological processes as it offers a complex depiction of gender, class, education and power in the present-day Pakistani society. The play is about Kashaf Murtaza, a smart young woman from a lower middle-class family, whose life story uncovers the intersections of gender discrimination, socioeconomic inequalities, educational mobility and patriarchal expectations. In contrast to Zaroon Junaid, who is privileged, educated in modern times, and embodies traditional views of the male gender. Zaroon Junaid is the antithesis: educated in modern times, he is a privileged male who embodies traditional views of the male gender. The drama depicts through interaction, family relationships, and

changing perceptions how discourse builds femininity, masculinity, authority, marriage and social mobility in Pakistani culture.

Zindagi Gulzar Hai is not a typical modern drama, which has emphasized predominantly on domestic issue but in this the issues that are highlighted are women's education, professional identity, class differences and dealing with patriarchal values in the public and private realms. It is a drama that tells the story of an educated woman, who becomes an agent of change by achieving a good education and performing well in her job, and who is also dealing with cultural expectations on marriage, family and gender roles. Themes of conflict and inter-relatedness make the drama very appropriate for Critical Discourse Analysis since they show how language, dialogue and the organisation of narrative reproduce and challenge the dominant gender ideologies.

There are several studies that have explored women's presence in the Pakistani media, but few studies have involved a detailed Critical Discourse Analysis of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* that have examined the relationship of the language, ideology, power, gender and class using Fairclough's 3-Dimensional Model. While content analysis or treatment of general themes of women's empowerment were used in most of the previous studies, none of them systematically examined the construction of competing ideological positions within the drama. Thus, there is a need for a discourse-oriented investigation that is able to explain the contribution of linguistic choices, character interaction and narrative structures in the production and negotiation of gendered identities and power relations.

In this backdrop, the present study carries out a Critical Discourse Analysis of gender in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* with the help of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Discourse. Language, dialogue, character interaction and narrative structures are examined in terms of how they build femininity and masculinity, authority, class identity and power and how they promote or critique dominant gender ideologies. This study draws on theories of representation, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's model to understand how *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* operates as an ideological arena for the constantly produced, negotiated and reshaped representation of gender identities, class relations and social power. The results are expected to influence the discourse studies, media linguistics, feminist media studies, and Pakistani television scholarship in a way that will give a complete picture of how one of Pakistan's most influential television dramas influences the perception of the Pakistani public about gender, class, education, and social power.

1.1. Research Objectives

- 1) To critically examine how gender identities, gender roles, and gender relationships are discursively represented in the Pakistani television drama *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*.
- 2) To investigate how the discursive practices in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* reproduce, negotiate, or challenge patriarchal ideologies and gendered power relations using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis.

1.2. Research Questions

- 1) How are gender identities, gender roles, and gender relationships discursively represented in the Pakistani television drama *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*?
- 2) How do the discursive practices in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* reproduce, negotiate, or challenge patriarchal ideologies and gendered power relations according to Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis?

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study is important as it fits into the vast literature on gender representation, media discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the Pakistani context. The language, dialogue, characters, and storylines of the television drama "*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*" are explored in this research to illustrate how they are used to construct, reinforce, negotiate, or contest dominant gender ideologies and patriarchal power relations in the drama using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis.

The findings will also contribute to discourse studies, media linguistics, feminist media studies, cultural studies and Pakistan's television scholarship by offering deeper understanding of the impact of one of the most popular television dramas in Pakistan on the perception of femininity, masculinity, family relationship, social class, education and authority in Pakistan. Given the gendered, class-differentiated, educational mobility, and feminist aspects of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, the study also advances the knowledge on the changing media discourses in relation to values of Pakistani society today.

Moreover, the study provides valuable information to media producers, script writers, educators, policy makers, and media researchers interested in the promotion of a more balanced and inclusive gender representation of electronic media. It also lays groundwork for a further analysis of Pakistani television dramas using the Critical Discourse Analysis and comparison with other South Asian media regarding gender construction.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

There were a few limitations in this study. First, the results of this study cannot be extrapolated to the overall media landscape of all the Pakistani television serials, as the study focussed on one Pakistani television drama, *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*. Secondly, the analysis is limited to the textual and visual discourse of the selected drama and does not take into account audience reception, production processes, script writers' interpretation or viewers' interpretations. Third, the meaning of discourse, in the sense of Critical Discourse Analysis, is always researcher interpretation, but it is guided systematically with the aid of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, for research credibility, consistency and analytical rigor.

1.5. Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited to the Pakistani Television drama "*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*". It emphasises only the depiction of gender identity, gender roles, gender relations, class differences and patriarchal power relations as created in discourse. It is analyzed directly with reference to the research objectives, through selected dialogues, character interactions and story episodes in the light of the Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Norman Fairclough. Other aspects of the drama such as cinematography, reception, commercial success, production techniques and psychological impact on the audience are not considered in this study.

2. Literature Review

The use of gender representation is one of the most widely researched aspects of media and communication studies as media text shapes and moulds social reality. Representation, Stuart Hall (1997), is an act of meaning making as language, symbols and images generate specific understandings of reality. Television dramas can thus be considered as cultural texts that influence viewers' images of the feminine, the masculine, the family, and power, in addition to representing them. In the same way, Judith Butler (1990) takes the idea of the performative turn a step further and defines gender as a "repetitive, social practice" continually generated by "repeated acts of social interaction" and discourse. This way of thinking indicates that television stories play a key role in the development and acceptance of gender identities because they regularly show specific behaviors and roles as "normal".

The role of media within society has gained more significance in the study of the upholding and opposition of patriarchy in modern society. In television dramas, dialogue and character description, visual symbolism, and the organization of the story are all used to create social meanings regarding women and men. Feminist media scholars claim that gendered portrayals of women tend to focus on stereotypical roles that involve caring for others, emotional labour, sacrifice and domestic duties, while men are depicted as decision makers, protectors, and authority figures (Lazar, 2005; Sunderland, 2004). The portrayal of female characters in recent media productions has been improving, with successfully-achieving women successfully-achieving autonomy and independence, but the characters are still trapped within a traditional cultural framework that focuses on the importance of marriage, motherhood and family honor over their own autonomy. Thus, modern media often creates mixed images with progressive and conservative gender ideologies.

CDA is appropriate for the study of these ideological processes as it treats language as a social praxis, which is closely related to power and inequality. Norman Fairclough (1995, 2015) sees discourse as both reflecting and constructing social structures through the legitimation of specific points of view. Through his three-dimensional approach, discourse is analysed at the textual level, the level of discursive practice and the level of

the sociocultural context, allowing the identification of language choices that perpetuate or contradict dominant social relations. Similarly, Teun A. van Dijk states that discourse plays an important role in the reproduction of social dominance by shaping public knowledge, beliefs and ideologies (van Dijk, 2008). Dialogues and interactions between characters, in turn, can be considered as significant sites in TV dramas where gendered power relations are naturalized.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis builds upon the classical CDA, but rather addresses the link between language and gender inequality. According to Lazar (2005) the patriarchy is often naturalized in the day-to-day talk and can be seen as unquestioned social norms. CDA is not limited to looking at overt discrimination: Feminist CDA looks at subtle linguistic strategies that favour certain gender identities and marginalise others. Its use has gained significant sway in the field of media studies as it exposes the ways in which television narratives are also reinforcing and challenging prevalent perceptions of femininity, masculinity, authority and family relations. This analytical approach is especially apt to be used for the interpretation of Pakistani dramas as modern aspirations often clash with traditional and entrenched patriarchal values on TV.

There has been a recent scholarship that says that Pakistani television dramas still have a profound influence on public opinion regarding the gender roles and social identity of the populace. Recent research indicates that even in dramas, educated and successful women are more and more being represented, but their roles tend to be confined to patriarchal family structures and expectations. Studies also reveal that discussions of women's empowerment are often accompanied by ideas of women's subservient roles, sacrifice and family values, which can lead to contradictory images of women's agency. The study findings indicate that more studies analyzing recent Pakistani films using Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis are required to understand the construction of opposing gender ideologies through the use of language in the altered socio-cultural environments.

In recent years, some scholars have started to investigate the representation of gender in Pakistani TV dramas using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), and media representation theory. Recent researchers have paid increasing attention to the ideological function of discourse in the construction of gender identities and the legitimization of patriarchal power structure, while earlier research was mainly based on content analysis. This change is linked to the idea that language, dialogue and framing of narratives are important aspects in comprehending the effect of TV dramas on public attitudes about femininity and masculinity as well as social power. Researches conducted from 2020 to 2026 suggest that Pakistani Television is playing an important role in the reproduction, negotiation and contestation of traditional gender norms.

Aisha Arshad Chaudhry, Rana Imran Ali and Zakia Aslam (2021) used the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach of Fairclough to examine women's representation in Pakistani TV dramas. Their research showed that in spite of their female protagonists appearing educated, confident and professionally competent, their identity is always contained within a traditional and patriarchal view. There is a social sanction against women who deviate from gender norms, and a narrative sanction for women who demonstrate obedience, sacrifice and commitment to the domestic sphere. There is social punishment for women who challenge gender norms and narrative punishment for women who demonstrate their obedience, sacrifice and commitment to the domestic sphere. The researchers found that in contemporary Pakistani dramas, a hybrid discourse is portrayed where modern female identity is intermingled with the entrenched patriarchal ideology.

Later research has corroborated these results and shown that Pakistani television has become a more gradual depiction of women's empowerment with more and more cases where empowerment is limited rather than total. Shahzadi (2023) pointed out that women characters are restricted to narrow occupational and social positions even though they are shown as educated professionals in the Pakistani TV dramas used for analysis in her study by adopting Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Semiotics. Women are still subordinate to family responsibilities and obligations even when they are holding a high position in their jobs. The study also revealed that often, narrative closure does reinforce conformity to traditional gender expectations rather than true independence, subtly reinforcing patriarchal norms through ideological means.

Lately, research focusing on discourses has also emphasized that language plays a significant role in sustaining unequal gender relations. Noor, Khattak, and Khan (2022) analysed the Pakistani drama *O Rangreza* using the lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, which revealed that there were systematic uses of language, conversational features, and character interactions that made the reconstruction of male dominance while leaving restricted opportunities for female resistance. Through their analysis, they showed that the patriarchy ideology is present not only in explicit conversations but also in silence, attitude in the heart, evaluation words and the attitude of the givers of authority. There are some cases where the females are against oppression, but the overall message maintains gender authority and the normalisation of unequal power dynamics.

Recent studies indicate, however, that Pakistani dramas are not just about reproducing patriarchal ideologies but are also engaged in negotiations. In their comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of the dramas *Aakhir Kab Tak* and *Nanhi*, Jalali and Wasif (2026) concluded that the dramatic narratives of TV at the present times are simultaneously constructing feminist resistance and patriarchal control. Their research suggests that empowerment of women is not a rejection of gender norms but a process of negotiation. The dramas selected through dialogue, framing narrative and characterization,

highlight the different ways in which gender inequality is manifested and the cultural constraints which remain in place to shape women's agency. The researchers are thus led to believe that the Pakistani television is now disseminating a range of conflicting discourses on femininity rather than one dominant.

Likewise, Amjad, Javed and Farid (2025) studied the gendered discourse in Pakistani dramas *Duniyapur* and *Dil-e-Nadan* through the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis as proposed by Fairclough. Their research found that women's voices are often ignored in favor of the men's voice, listened to less, interrupted and judged with expressions and not included in decision making within the family. The researchers were also able to identify new narratives in which women defy traditional power structures through their education, professional competency, and emotional resilience. In this sense, the representations in Pakistani drama are contradictory, as it is more of an area where alternative gender discourses are emerging and identified than a simple echo of the patriarchy discourse.

This debate has been taken up beyond the realm of individual dramas and has been extended to wider issues of women representation in the electronic media in Pakistan. Raza (2025) suggests that Television dramas have emerged as a critical site that can be said to be feminising, challenging and negotiating it within the local sociocultural context. The study shows that issues of domestic violence, women in employment, forced marriage and educational inequity are some of the themes that are more prominent in the modern dramas, but the dramas do not necessarily work towards social structural change to solve these conflicts, they tend to restore the traditional family dynamic. This pattern suggests that Pakistani TV frames feminist discourses in a culturally appropriate manner rather than promoting radical change in the gender relations.

International scholarship also confirms the idea that media and its discourse have been a pivotal force in the development of gender identities and institutionalization of ideological power during the same period. Gender stereotyping in character agency, work roles and decision-making in narrative texts is found across a range of media genres in computational analysis of texts. These research projects show that whilst women are more visible in today's media, they still are not given the same level of narrative agency as men and are under-represented in leadership roles. The results do justice to feminist linguistic theories, which argue that, while overt discrimination may be present, it is discourse, not discrimination alone, that is responsible for this normalisation of unequal gender relations.

In the aggregate, the research done in the past six years (2020-2026) illustrates how Pakistani television dramas are moving away from the stereotyping of the feminine and masculine roles and now depict more complex bargaining between modernity and tradition. However, the patriarchal ideology continues to be represented in the discourse in terms of language, character and story structure. Previous research has focused on

particular dramas or individual themes relating to women's representation. The relatively small number of studies focally using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the constructions of female authority, professional identity, domestic power and patriarchal resistance in a single television drama is worth noting. The gap between the two is the basis of the present study which aims to investigate how the modern Pakistani television (TV) constructs gender representations in the process of representation and how it reproduces and challenges the patriarchal ideologies.

The findings of the literature span from 2020 to 2026, which shows the use of Critical Discourse Analysis as one of the most popular methods to analyze gender representation in Pakistani Television Dramas. The media has been consistently demonstrated to build gender identity through language, character type and narrative structuring. While women's roles in popular modern dramas are often depicted as educated, economically independent and professionally successful, they are still often entangled in patriarchal notions of authority, hierarchy, and traditional gender roles. In this context, Pakistani TV serials do not entirely challenge the system of gender relations, but rather reflect a complex dialogue between modernity and cultural tradition.

A major development in recent scholarship has been the move away from content analysis approaches to more discourse-oriented studies. Previous research has tended to point to the stereotypical representation of women and men, while more recent research has considered the impact of linguistic choices, conversational style, lexical choices, and narrative framing on the development of ideological meanings. The change has allowed researchers to identify underlying processes in the transmission of power in the media. Research using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model shows that gender inequality is not merely a result of direct discrimination, but of seemingly normal discourse interactions, such as in the way indirect speech and evaluative expressions are used, or of interruptions and the dominance of male voices in a conversation.

The other major change is the increased role of women protagonists in present day dramas in Pakistan. New research indicates that besides the image of the passive victim, women are now often depicted as professionals, political figures, entrepreneurs and decision makers. But scientists contend that these images are often “conditional” as well – that empowering women is okay so long as it doesn't undermine the patriarchal family system. Women must also preserve family honor and uphold domestic duties and make sacrifices from an emotional standpoint even after achieving success in their careers. Such contradictory portrayals are a reflection of the juxtaposition of the progressive and conservative gender discourses in the current media in Pakistan.

A number of recent studies have focussed on the phenomenon of women's authority in a male dominated environment. While some scholars focus on the dominance of men, modern discussions of the patriarchy among discourse analysts state that women can also

be agents of patriarchy in their reproduction of the patriarchy through language, family control and socialization practices. This view extends feminist discourse analysis by acknowledging that patriarchal power can be exercised through the feminine persona, who uphold traditional doctrines on the aspects of obeying, marriage, inheritance, motherhood, and family hierarchy. These are especially significant in the context of Pakistan's recent dramas in which women characters play influential roles in social life while upholding the patriarchy.

Although these contributions are important, there are a number of gaps in the existing literature. First of all, most of the studies have been focused on individual dramas like *Mere Paas Tum Ho*, *Sinf-e-Aahan*, *Bakhtawar*, *Sar-e-Rah*, *O Rangreza*, *Dunyapur* and *Dil-e-Nadan*. Although the topic of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* is popular and explicitly addresses gender, family authority, social class and women's educational and professional identities, comparatively little research has approached the topic from the perspective of the Three-Dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (3D CDA) proposed by Fairclough. Therefore, empirical evidence on the way this powerful drama creates alternative gender discourses is still weak.

Second, current research tends to be either on female oppression or female empowerment, not addressing the diversity of gender representations in a single analysis. In modern dramas, Pakistani women are depicted as different women, whether working women, mothers, students, family decision takers etc. The analysis of these various identities in a single television representation offers a more detailed view of the way in which discourse has the power to create different types of femininity and to operate to the extent of negotiating gender ideologies in different social settings.

Third, there are relatively few studies that combine analysis of text with the context of language use (discursive practice) and broader sociocultural explanation as advocated by the Three-Dimensional Model of Fairclough. While many investigations focus on dialogue analysis, few do so with as much focus on the tie between language and production and broader ideology. Fairclough's framework allows researchers to transcend the level of textual description and to understand how discourse and institutional structures, media production, and sociocultural values collide. This integration is especially useful when analyzing how TV dramas help reflect and reinforce evolving gender norms in Pakistani society.

The present study aimed to fill these gaps by adopting the critical discourse analysis approach to *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*. This paper explores how discourses produce femininity, masculinity, authority, professional identity, motherhood, family hierarchy, social class and patriarchal power in a single television discourse, rather than in isolation, as has been done in previous studies. Inspired by Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, the research analyzes the text, discursive practices, and sociocultural contexts to describe

the role of language as a strategy to reproduce, negotiate, and challenge gender ideologies. The multidimensional analysis of the study presents a complete picture of the representation of gender in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, which enhances the existing research in the field of media discourse, feminist linguistics and Pakistani television studies.

Overall, the literature reviewed suggest that representation of gender in Pakistani television dramas continues to be a dynamic and evolving area of study. Although there is a growing trend in recent productions for women to be more independent and capable, it is evident that patriarchal discourse still permeates the narrative structure, development of female characters and linguistic representations. It is crucial to consider these ideological conflicts as a reminder and a warning that the nature of television as a medium is being shaped by an examination of how social conceptions of gender, authority and identity are being altered. This research is, therefore, an extension of the existing research, as it provides a systematic Critical Discourse Analysis of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, in order to gain better understanding of how the discourse constructs gender identities, how it negotiates power relations, and how it reproduces or challenges the patriarchal ideology within one of Pakistan's most influential television drama.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study adopted the qualitative research design and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been applied to analyze the representation of gender in Pakistani Television Drama (TVD) *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*. Since the study was designed to investigate the processes by which language, dialogue and narrative shape gender identities, power relations, and patriarchal ideologies, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

This study was based on Norman Fairclough's (1995, 2015) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is divided into three dimensions: (1) Textual Analysis, which involves the analysis of language and dialogue; (2) Discursive Practice, which involves the production, distribution, and interpretation of discourse; and (3) Social Practice, which involves the broader sociocultural and ideological contexts in which discourse functions. Within this framework a detailed examination of the gender ideology produced and negotiated within the chosen drama was undertaken.

3.3. Data Source

The main data were the Pakistani TV serial *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*. The drama was strategically chosen because it directly focuses on gender roles, family relations, women's agency, professional identity, social class, education, marriage and patriarchy, which are all appropriate areas for the Critical Discourse Analysis.

3.4. Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select scenes, dialogues and interactions for the study that directly related to the goal of the research. Episodes with strong gender representations, negotiation over power, issues of family decision making, professional identity, educational dreams, class differences, and patriarchal discourse were marked and analysed.

3.5. Data Collection

Selected episodes from the drama *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* were watched multiple times and dialogues and interactions were verbatim. Frequent linguistic features, gendered expressions, conversational patterns, and narrative devices related to gender representation, social class and power were identified, which were then carefully reviewed in the transcripts.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis of the collected data was carried out in accordance with the analysis method used by Fairclough in the Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The lexical selection, use of pronouns, modality, evaluative language, metaphors and interactional patterns were explored at the textual level. At the discursive practice level, the study examined the construction of meanings around gender, class and identity in the selected dialogues by means of characterization and the structuring of narrative. The social practice level analysis interpreted the discourses that reflected and reproduced, negotiated or challenged patriarchy and the dominant sociocultural norms in Pakistani society.

3.7. Trustworthiness

The researcher then reread the episodes and compared the transcriptions of the dialogues to the original audiovisual content several times to increase the credibility of the findings. Common themes were identified and multiple examples were analyzed for each theme to increase consistency and clarify the interpretations' trustworthiness.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

This study did not involve any human subjects and only used open sources of TV drama *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* in Pakistan. The dialogues and scenes were used solely for academic research and appropriate acknowledgments were preserved throughout the study.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

This section aims to discuss the selected dialogues of the Pakistani TV serial *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* through the lens of Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (1995, 2015). The analysis focuses on the interconnections among the textual, discursive, and wider sociocultural aspects of the language, and how the language constructs gender identities, gender roles, and power relations.

To select dialogues to answer the study's research goals, purposive sampling was used, instead of analysing the whole drama. The interactions between the main characters highlight topics of femininity and masculinity, education, family hierarchy, marriage, class difference, and agency of women. The results are presented in the framework of the two research purposes. The first part of the book addresses discursive strategies in the formation of gender identities and relations, and the second looks at the ways in which these discourses reproduce, negotiate and contest patriarchy and gendered power in the present day's Pakistan.

Table 4.1 Corpus Overview

Item	Description
Primary Corpus	<i>Zindagi Gulzar Hai</i> (English Translation by Areeba Akbar, 2023)
Research Design	Qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis
Analytical Framework	Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (1995, 2015)
Sampling Technique	Purposive Sampling
Unit of Analysis	Selected dialogues and character interactions
Analytical Focus	Gender identities, gender roles, patriarchy, power relations, education, class, and women's agency

4.1. Representation of Gender Identities, Gender Roles, and Gender Relationships

4.2. Construction of Femininity

The chosen corpus defines femininity as a socially negotiated identity that is not defined by traditional domestic roles, but by education and socioeconomic factors and resilience. Kashaf's character is always against women stereotypes, stressing on intellectual ambition, self-respect and personal determination. Within the selected dialogues, femininity is found to be a discourse in the process, in which education and experience come to define the identity of the female.

4.3. Corpus Extract 1: Education as a Pathway to Empowerment

4.3.1. Context

Kashaf recaps her hardship compared to her classmates when she goes off to university. Her mother and sister's encouragement makes her see education as a way to change her future.

Kashaf: "Look at them, carefree and privileged, their worries a world apart from mine. But I won't let my circumstances define me. I will break free from this cycle of poverty and make a name for myself."

Kashaf: "Ammi, I have to keep going. Education is my only way out of this life. I won't settle for less."

Sidra: "Look, Ammi, they've announced scholarship opportunities for deserving students. Kashaf, you should apply!"

Rafia: "Nothing is impossible, my daughter. Have faith and give it a try. We're here to support you every step of the way."

4.3.2. Analysis

The dialogue uses the first-person pronoun a number of times and with high modality verbs like I will, I won't, and I have to, conveying confidence and determination about Kashaf as an active social actor. Words such as education, poverty, scholarship, and future symbolize education as a means that can overcome socioeconomic inequality. In contrast, the discourse does not suggest that women's empowerment is dependent on their marital status, or their family status, but rather that the key to empowerment is academic success.

At this level, discursive practice, Kashaf's hopes are strengthened by solidarity among women. Sidra brings up the idea of a scholarship but Rafia validates her daughter's goal with encouragement and emotional support. Empowerment is therefore symbolised as a process which is collective, where women explicitly help each other rather than pass on constraining gender norms.

The extract is situated in the broader sociocultural context where it questions the patriarchy that focuses on women's identity as being principally domestic. Rather, femininity is reimagined in terms of educational aspirations, perseverance and social mobility. Kashaf's aspirations are also linked to the notions of family responsibility, implying that empowerment of women is negotiated and not rejected in the context of cultural values.

4.4. Corpus Extract 2: Femininity, Emotional Resistance, and Class Consciousness

4.4.1. Context

In a first discussion at university, Kashaf and Zaroon have conflicting opinions regarding relationships. Born into poverty, Kashaf's sense of love and happiness is more guarded and cautious than Zaroon's, who is optimistic about life.

Kashaf: "I don't believe in fairy tales or love stories. Relationships only bring pain and heartbreak."

Zaroon: "You've clearly had a rough time, Kashaf. But don't let that close you off to the possibility of happiness."

Kashaf: "People who have everything find it easy to believe in happiness. Some of us have learned that reality is very different."

4.4.2. Analysis

Structural inequality is the worldview of the words that Kashaf uses, whereas the more romantic idealistic users tend to use words like beloved and happy. Her comparison of those who have it all and some of us also takes the discussion beyond gender and foregrounds the class/gender intersection in the construction of female identity. On the other hand, Zaroon's language is filled with hope and goodwill including expressions like

possibility and happiness, which reflects the socioeconomic privilege affecting his outlook.

Discursively, the interaction, femininity is a product of lived experience not biological identity. Kashaf's conceptualization of women as rational, self-protective, critical self-awareness is in contrast to the stereotyped portrayal of women in the conventional media in terms of romance and emotional dependency. She is encouraging readers to read female subjectivity not as an individual disposition, but as it is affected by its social and economic circumstances.

The dialogue spans the social level, emphasizing the lived experience of women shaped by their perceptions of relationships and the unequal family structures and economic struggles. The drama also connects emotional experiences with material conditions, thereby revealing how gender identity is not an independent variable, but rather one that is inextricably linked to class and social inequalities, and thus provides a more nuanced portrayal of today's Pakistani womanhood.

The analysis illustrates how *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* presents the femininity as a construct of education, resilience and critical self-awareness, not dependency and domesticity. In both extracts, high modality, agency language and educational language reassert Kashaf's agency in creating his future. At the same time, the gender/class intersection shows that patriarchy is not the only factor to shape female identity; socioeconomic inequality is also a factor. The drama challenges the conventional narratives about Pakistani women through Fairclough's three-dimensional approach by providing an alternative perspective on empowerment as a negotiated process that is not only about resistance, but also about education, family support and personal determination.

4.5. Construction of Masculinity

The selected corpus sees masculinity as a re-constructed and re-imagined identity, rather than a fixed representation of male authority. Initially, towards the beginning of the story, Zaroon's speech is confident, privileged and conventional patriarchal. But as he develops his awareness of women and relationships through Kashaf, he begins to change his perceptions of what masculinity is and means to him, by learning to be empathetic, reflective and respectful.

4.6. Corpus Extract 1: Masculinity and Male Privilege

4.6.1. Context

In the early university scenes, Zaroon and his friend Asad discuss a newly arrived female student before meeting Kashaf. Their conversation reflects gendered assumptions embedded within male peer interactions.

Asad: "Zaroon, have you seen the new girl? She's stunning!"

Zaroon: "You're always smitten by every new face you see, Asad. Let's see if she lives up to your hype."

4.6.2. Analysis

Through a conversation style and evaluative language, the dialogue creates gendered masculinity, in which women are the objects of male gaze. Words like stunning and lives up to your hype objectify women while Let's see makes Zaroon seem like he has the right to judge women's worth. Such linguistic decisions legitimate a discourse in which manliness equates with confidence, social privilege, and authority to assess women.

From the discursive level of practice, the exchange serves as a display of male solidarity. The talk further reinforces the gender norms, such as the evaluation of women's attractiveness, which is an accepted part of the interaction among men. Kashaf's discourse, however, is focused on education, on self-improvement: this represents a contrast that clearly points to an ideological split between the protagonists.

A social reading would highlight the fact that the extract is dominated by the patriarchal view that assumes that men are more likely to take a range of actions than women, and that women can be viewed as the object of observation by the male gaze. The discourse echoes the larger cultural notions of masculinity as associated with confidence and authority, while female identity is first mediated via the male gaze.

4.7. Corpus Extract 2: Transforming Masculinity through Empathy

4.7.1. Context

As Zaroon discovers Kashaf's family history and his own difficulties, his understanding of Kashaf and his own prejudices shift.

Zaroon: "I used to think you were arrogant and impossible to understand. But now I realize I never tried to understand the life you have lived."

Zaroon: "Your determination has always inspired me. You never gave up despite everything life threw at you."

4.7.2. Analysis

The speech of Zaroon is more reflective than critical as in the previous extract. The contrastive structure "I used to think ..., But Now I Realize" is used to express an ideological change, whereas the cognitive verb realise is substituted for the previous evaluative language. Likewise, the lexical items like determination, inspired and understand build admiration and respect rather than superiority.

In a discursive way, the interaction questions the traditional gender system. Zaroon doesn't assess Kashaf, but rather sees her life experiences as opportunities for learning and development. Listening, empathy and recognition of women lived experience thus reconstructs masculinity. This trajectory illustrates how gender identities are continuously "negotiated" through inter-personal discourse, and are not static social categories.

The broader sociocultural landscape portrays fashioned expectations of masculinity in the present day of Pakistan. Gendered maturity, self-awareness and respect

for women's agency are valued masculine attributes that question the traditional masculinity as a dominant and unquestioned authority.

It shows that in the analysis of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, the masculinity is an evolving construction, which is created through dialogue and social interaction. At first, Zaroon's talk emphasizes traditional notions of how women should be evaluated based on their appearance and the authority of men is taken for granted. As he keeps interacting with Kashaf, however, his concept of gender changes; he no longer makes judgments, but instead becomes empathetic and respectful. The drama shows that, as Fairclough would argue, masculinity is neither fixed as an essential identity nor determined by nature but is continually constructed through the discourses, experience, and evolving social values of the actors. This change reinforces the representation of womanhood by implying that achieving gender equality requires a change of both man and woman.

4.8. Gender Roles within Family Relationships

The selection of the corpus shows that in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, discourse of the family is the main location in which the gender roles are created, maintained and negotiated. The drama shows how the family roles are divided according to the patriarchy and how education, emotional help and sharing of responsibilities offer a chance for resistance among parents, spouses and children. The discourse is about the family, but it is not a discourse about a static family; it is a discourse about a family in a state of dynamic flux in which traditional values and more egalitarian values co-exist.

4.9. Corpus Extract: Family Responsibility and Women's Empowerment

4.9.1. Context

Years of financial difficulties and neglected by her husband, Rafia pushes Kashaf to pursue her studies despite the social and economic obstacles.

Rafia: "Never think that being a girl makes you weaker. Your education is your greatest strength."

Kashaf: "I promise I will never disappoint you. I will study hard and build a better future for us."

4.9.2. Analysis

The dialogue builds up gender roles in terms of motivational language by directly questioning typical notions of social status of women. The imperative of Rafia "Never think that being a girl makes you weaker" challenges the notion of weakness that has been linked intricately to femininity, whereas the words used, education, strength, and future position, suggest empowerment and social mobility for the girl. Kashaf's frequent use of will caters to that sense of determination and commitment to her own success as well as family well-being.

Motherhood is not a tool for the propagation of patriarchy, but rather it is a transformative force discursively. Rafia doesn't teach her daughter that her foremost duty

is marriage; she teaches her to be confident, educated and independent, all of which are attributes of womanhood. What is interesting here is how Kashaf internalized that empowering discourse by making her academic achievements a reflection of her family's welfare, and how the supportive family interactions she experiences plays a role in the negotiation of gender identity.

On a wider social-cultural level, the extract is linked with the transformation of attitudes regarding women's education in Pakistan where education is now considered as a means to social mobility and economic empowerment of women. Traditional gender roles are redefined in the discourse, as the family is the basis of women's identities but also education and shared responsibility are seen as fundamental to the family.

This analysis shows that the reconstruction of family relations in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* is achieved in terms of cultural continuity and social changes. The drama shows the presence of the patriarchy, which can be seen in the unequal parental responsibilities, but it also presents the role of mothers as agents of empowerment and education. Thus, family discourse not only reproduces traditional gender expectations, it also undermines them, as it emphasizes the education and resilience of women and their responsibility. The drama shows that Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to gender roles sees roles between family members as fluid and constantly negotiated, and not determined by social convention.

4.10. Discursive Construction of Patriarchal Ideologies and Gendered Power Relations

The chosen corpus testifies that *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* manifests patriarchy as an active ideology in daily interactions between the family members and also engages with resistance to patriarchy in education, dialogue and women's agency. Instead of the sense of unchallenged patriarchal rule, the drama shows how the negotiation of gendered power is continually negotiated between people. The section explores the ways in which discourse normalizes the inequality of power and in which female resistance produces alternative interpretations and readings of authority and gender equality.

4.11. Corpus Extract 1: Patriarchal Authority within the Family

4.11.1. Context

Once Murtaza starts a second life, he can explain the emotional and monetary life that he led with his first wife and daughters. He meets Kashaf who questions his role and responsibility as a father.

Murtaza: "I have responsibilities toward my new family now. You must learn to live without depending on me."

Kashaf: "We never wanted your money. We only wanted a father."

4.11.2. Analysis

The dialogue establishes the authority of the patriarchy by laying down and calling to action. The first person pronoun (I have responsibilities) and the modal verb must emphasize personal decision and lend his legitimacy to redefine family duties. In his speech, he makes his withdrawal from his husband's bed seem logical, as if it were a result of his own life's circumstances.

Kashaf is directly challenging the ideological statement with the contrastive statement "We never wanted your money. We only wanted a father. There is a contrast of money vs father that changes the focus from financial provision to emotional responsibility. She challenges the patriarchal status quo instead and imagines fatherhood as a moral obligation, based on care, responsibility and equality. The interaction then brings into focus the conflict between institutional authority and moral responsibility for men.

The extract highlights social aspects of the family context, where fathers typically hold symbolic authority over the family, while women are the primary caregivers, and their decision-making is subordinate to that of men. The drama, however, invites Kashaf to challenge this authority, thus foregrounding patriarchy as a discursive contestation of the social, rather than as a social reality.

4.12. Corpus Extract 2: Women's Agency and the Transformation of Patriarchal Power

4.12.1. Context

Through struggle, Kashaf voices her resolve to create an independent future for herself through education. Zaroon recognizes her strength and starts to see the point of view of others.

Kashaf: "I have struggled too much to let anyone decide my future for me."

Zaroon: "I admire your courage. You have always stood by your principles."

4.12.2. Analysis

This dialogue differs from previous extracts in building power through resisting the power that is seeking to dominate, not by dominating. The language used in Kashaf's declaration is high modality and agency-oriented, which is against external control in her life. Taking ownership of one's own life and future destiny, "let anyone decide my future," represents autonomy as an important part of woman's identity and suggests a change in the traditional role of women being mere objects of male will.

Zaroon's answer represents a significant ideological change. In the evaluative verb, the masculine superiority of the previous statements is replaced by admire, and the lexical items courage and principles highlight Kashaf's accomplishments rather than questioning her independence. Interactively, the experience shows how women's action affects the construction of women identity but also of masculinities.

From the social practice view-point, the extract illustrates the transformation in the relationship between men and women in the society of Pakistan in recent times, as the increasing role of education and employment is beginning to impact on the understanding of authority and dependence of women. In place of the rejection of cultural values, the discourse fosters mutual respect as the foundation of gender relations, demonstrating that in social change, confrontation is only part of the equation, with the other half being dialogue and recognition.

The analysis of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* shows that the ideology of patriarchy is socially constructed discourse that is produced and reproduced in everyday communication. While Murtaza's discourse represents the traditional patriarchal authority and validates unequal responsibilities and emotional distances within the family, Kashaf's resistance brings about a reevaluation of authority through care, responsibility and dignity. Thus, while communists regard the existence of a monotheistic God as a primary obstacle to their efforts, Zaroon's change of heart also shows that the beliefs and values of patriarchy can be changed in the course of conversation and learning, and as a result of human experience. From Fairclough's perspective of the 3rd dimension the drama shows that discourse simultaneously plays a role in sustaining and reproducing power relations and a role in challenging them. Thus, the idea of gender equality is not about the abolition of cultural practices, but rather it is an ongoing re-negotiation of power, accountability, and mutual respect in today's Pakistani context.

5. Discussion

The results of the present research reveal that the construction of gender identities, gender roles, and patriarchal power in the film is not a simple process, but rather a complex one that is discursively produced, produced at the same time as also challenges the dominant socio-cultural discourses. In line with Fairclough's (1995, 2015) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study shows that the representation of gender is not a biological category but a socially constructed and ideologically negotiated identity produced through language, interpersonal interactions, family relations, and educational experiences and institutional practices. The selected corpus reveals that discourse serves as the main device in constructing, challenging and challenging meanings around femininity, masculinity, authority, education, marriage and family.

The results have confirmed the main postulates of Fairclough's (1995, 2015) Critical Discourse Analysis that states that discourse at the same time represents social reality, constructs social identities and reproduces ideological relations of power. At the textual level, evaluative language, modality, usage of pronouns, contrastive patterns and interactional patterns re-established competing representations of women and men. The level of discursive practice showed that the conversations among Kashaf, Zaroon, Rafia,

Murtaza, Ghazala, and Junaid constituted a process of negotiation (rather than reflection) of gender identities. At the social practice level, these patterns of language usage mirrored the broader ideology of the society in Pakistan, and the conflict between the traditions of the patriarchy and the emerging discourses of equality for women. The study thus validates Fairclough's claim that discourse is not merely indicative of society but also plays a role in upholding and remodelling social structure.

The results also support Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, in which femininity and masculinity are enacted—repeatedly enacted—through language and the micro-interactions of everyday social relations, rather than just through the presence of biological sex. Kashaf's sense of identity is built upon his performances of resilience, educational dedication, career aspirations, and ethical fortitude, while Zaroon's sense of masculinity is gradually recalibrated through his introspection, emotional growth, and evolving understanding of women. The results indicate that gender identities are not fixed, but a social construction throughout the story. While essentialist views of gender see gender as fixed, the discourse continually demonstrates how masculine and feminine identities are fluid and dynamic, through shifting interpersonal relations and sociocultural experiences.

Likewise, the results confirm Hall's (1997) representation theory, which views media as an active creator of representation, not a mere reflection of reality. *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* is not just about the gender relations in society, but also builds specific conceptions of education, marriage, authority, motherhood and the responsibilities in families through a carefully structured discourse. Repeatedly portraying education as a route to empowerment for women, the process of challenged masculine identity and the negotiation of female marital authority are examples of how the media discourse acts to construct and shape public understandings of gender rather than simply reflect existing social practices.

The present results also support Lazar's (2005) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis that focuses on the interplay of discourse, ideology and gendered power. The analysis shows that the reproduction of the patriarchal ideology takes place not only in the context of prejudice but also in the context of everyday conversations that are more or less explicit about family responsibilities, educational prospects, marriage and emotional expectations. The study, in turn, builds on Lazar's argument by depicting women in the drama as not just victims of patriarchy. Rather, characters like Kashaf and Rafia make negotiation choices and problematize patriarchy through their education, economic status, moral reasoning and communication with others. Thus, power becomes relational, negotiated, and not the possession of the male characters per se.

The results also corroborate recent research on TV dramas produced in Pakistan between 2020-2026. Some research has been conducted on how women are represented as educated, competent and independent in modern Pakistani dramas while upholding

traditional values of the family and the tradition of patriarchy in society. This duality has been confirmed by the present analysis. Kashaf is portrayed as intellectually gifted, professionally driven, and emotionally tough, but all these attributes are subject to continual negotiation with the cultural norms of family duty, marriage, and social acceptability. Therefore, empowerment is presented as being associated with cultural identity and not an opposition to it.

Moreover, as per some earlier discourse analysis researches, the portrayal of patriarchy as a multifaceted social system is getting more frequent in recent Pakistani dramas both as a male and female character. In the present study, it is shown that the support of patriarchy is not limited to the power of men alone. Rather, expectations of institutions, familial expectations, and norms about gender norms collectively help to keep power inequalities in place. However, the study also finds that these ideologies can be negotiated by education, dialogue, and shift in interpersonal relations. This discovery builds on previous work by showing the process of ideological change is not an event of revolution, but a more subtle one, a gradual process in everyday speech.

A major contribution of the present study lies with the discursive change of masculinity. Past Pakistani media studies have mainly concentrated on the under-representation of women with male characters often existing as unchanging icons of patriarchy. However, in the current study, it is shown that there is a significant development of the discourse of Zaroon in the course of the story. As he gains more and more confidence, privilege, and stereotype about women, he softens to empathy, emotional intelligence, and respect. The idea that masculinity is an ideology, which can be transformed through interaction and experience, implies that masculinity is a socially constructed discourse that can be changed. As such, the research has helped to shape the ongoing discussions on portrayals of positive and changing masculinities in South Asian media.

The results also help to advance general debates on education and symbolic power. In the corpus, education is not just a vehicle for gaining knowledge, but an ideological tool which women use to negotiate the inequalities of structures and to re-negotiate their social identities. This educational path of Kashaf is a constant reminder of the assumption of dependency of women and at the same time serves as a reminder of the change that can be brought about through education in a patriarchal society. These results are in line with recent studies which underscore the importance of education as a key tool in enhancing women's agency and social mobility in developing societies.

Most importantly, the study is a demonstration that *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* does not glorify and entirely condemn the culture of patriarchy. Rather, the drama depicts Pakistani society as a complex ideological terrain in which traditional values and modern aspirations are constantly interacting. Family is still highly respected, there is still an important social

role for marriage and cultural values on respect, responsibility and moral values are well maintained. These institutions are, however, reinterpreted in the context of discourses that focus on "communication" or "mutual respect," "educational equality," and "shared responsibility. The drama thus calls for cultural changes within the existing culture, not rejection of it.

The findings from a theoretical point of view show the analytical usefulness of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model in studying TV discourse. The framework combines textual analysis, discourse theory, and the sociocultural approach to understanding the multiple dimensions of language's function as a means of communication, representation, and ideology. Hence, the study has added value to the field of Critical Discourse Analysis by showing the applicability of Fairclough's model to the present-day Pakistani television dramas and how the media discourse is involved in wider ideological production and social change.

As a whole, the conversation reveals that Zindagi Gulzar Hai conceals a sociology of gender as a process of negotiation in discourse and not a cultural fact. The drama not only reinforces the patriarchy but also offers an alternative version of it by depicting women as educated, resilient, and agentive; and masculinity as transformative through empathy, dialogue, and mutual respect. The study therefore contributes to the current literature on TV discourse in Pakistan by demonstrating the ideological reproduction and social change potential of language in television discourse. The study combines the work of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis with modern theories of gender and power, giving an in-depth look at the interaction between discourse, ideology, gender and power in one of the most popular TV serials in Pakistan.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the representation of gender identities, gender roles and patriarchy in the Pakistani TV drama Zindagi Gulzar Hai by using the Three-Dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Norman Fairclough (1995, 2015). This study attempted to analyse the construction, reproduction, negotiation and contestation of gendered identities and power relations in the context of present-day Pakistani society by analysing purposively selected dialogues of the main characters.

The results indicate that gender is not a determinate biological construct, but rather a socially constructed identity, which is constantly negotiated. The analysis shows that Kashaf's discourse builds up femininity through education, resilience, self-respect, and professional ambition, while Zaroon's discourse builds up masculinity as a process that is steadily changing from privilege and traditional gender ideas, to empathy, respect for others, and emotional maturity. Family dynamics also demonstrate how gender is negotiated through everyday interactions through which the authority of the parent, motherhood, learning and marriage are significant sites of negotiation of expectations. The

results directly relate to the first research goal and provide evidence that gender identities and relationships are discursively constructed through language, interaction, and culturally situated ideologies.

The study also concluded that patriarchy is a dynamic ideology that is reinforced and challenged in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* through discourse. Patriarchal power is strengthened by unequal workloads in the family, traditional gender norms and authority systems, but is challenged by women's educational goals, economic autonomy, emotional resilience and dialogic opposition. Similarly, the evolution of Zaroon's talk suggests that there is no universal masculine identity—it is possible to change it via education, interpersonal engagement, and introspection. These findings directly address the second research objective by providing evidence of how discourse is used as a tool for the reproduction of ideology as well as for the negotiation of gendered power relations.

In addition, the study validates the effectiveness of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model to analyse media discourse, which combines textual analysis, discursive practice and a wider sociocultural explanation. The results confirm that television dramas are not simply representative of a society, but are highly influential cultural documents which construct and construct public discourses about gender, family, authority and social change. *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* not only portrays empowered female protagonists but also introduces new definitions of masculinity as well, leading to a more balanced gender understanding, yet still rooted in the cultural context of Pakistani society.

The study focuses on one TV drama but it can be added into the body of research in the field of representation of gender in Pakistani media with a discourse-oriented analysis of language, ideology and power. Future studies could involve a wider range of Pakistani dramas, multimodal discourse analysis or audience reception analysis to get a better picture of the influence of media discourse on the perception of gender in the public domain.

Overall, the study suggests that *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* opened the way to think about gender as a dynamic social process where education, dialogue, respect and emotional development can take on the role of emancipatory resources to engage with patriarchal assumptions. The study adopts the critical discourse analysis approach proposed by Fairclough, which helps reveal the role of discourse in constructing and changing gender identities and power relations, and thereby Pakistani TV dramas have considerable influence on the social attitudes towards gender and equality in the present context.

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