



## NEGOTIATING FEMALE MARGINALITY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FEMININE POWER STRUGGLE WITHIN PATRIARCHAL SETUP IN JAVERI'S *NOBODY KILLED HER*

Mazhar Iqbal  
[Mazhariqbal810@gmail.com](mailto:Mazhariqbal810@gmail.com)

M.Phil. (Applied Linguistics), Secondary School Educator  
(English), School Education Department, Punjab, Pakistan

Nasir Mushtaq  
[nasirmushtaq007@gmail.com](mailto:nasirmushtaq007@gmail.com)

M.Phil. (Applied Linguistics), Subject Specialist (English),  
Elementary & Secondary Education Department, Khyber  
Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Sajad Amin  
[Sajidamineng@gmail.com](mailto:Sajidamineng@gmail.com)

M.Phil. (Applied Linguistics), Assistant Professor (English),  
Govt. Graduate College, Ravi Road, Shahdara, Lahore,  
Higher Education Department, Punjab, Pakistan

### Abstract

This research paper critically analyses the negotiation of marginality, agency, and power that women negotiate in the context of a deeply patriarchal social setup in Javeri's *Nobody Killed Her*. It uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and specifically Michelle M. Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to examine how language is a space of limitation and negotiation of feminine power. It does not just depict women as victims of patriarchal domination, but also examines the complexities of responses women characters have to the expectations imposed on them, gender hierarchies, silencing and unequal power relations. Emphasis is placed on the discursive structures that enable the reproduction, contestation and sometimes internalisation of patriarchy and on the subtle modes of resistance that women use to recover their voice and agency. The analysis shows that the marginality of women is not static but is a space contested, where power is negotiated continuously. The paper also suggests that the fight for feminine power takes place in two ways: overt resistance and the negotiation on a daily basis, manifesting in tensions between conformity, survival, autonomy and self-expression. The interdisciplinary approach of the paper demonstrates the potential of the convergence of gender studies and CDA to reveal the discursive strategies that reinforce and reflect patriarchy but also facilitate resistance. Ultimately, *Nobody Killed Her* presents femininity as a complex and dynamic experience, defined by differential power dynamics, but also by women's ongoing efforts to change their role in a male-dominated system.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Feminist Discourse, Patriarchy, Gender And Power, Gender Inequality, Female Marginality, Feminine Power, Women's Agency, Resistance

**Corresponding Author:** Mazhar Iqbal (M.Phil. (Applied Linguistics), Secondary School Educator (English), School Education Department, Punjab, Pakistan.)

**Email:** [Mazhariqbal810@gmail.com](mailto:Mazhariqbal810@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

Marginality of women is entrenched in patriarchy. Patriarchy has established dominance for men and defined the social roles of the woman. Under patriarchal setup, women are generally consigned to a subordinate role and their choices, identities, and agency are determined by the expectations attributed by the patriarchal system. As Parveen and Qadir (2019) argue, “Patriarchy, by definition, exhibits androcentrism” (p. 163), highlighting the male-centered nature of social structures that contribute to women’s marginalization in all domains of life. Lindsey (2011) believes that patriarchy seems to be an irrevocable and inescapable fact of our existence. Due to the close relationship between gender relations and power, authority, identity and social control, the representation of women within patriarchal societies has been a pervasive topic of literary and cultural studies. Literature and culture ‘condition’ women by framing them and re-framing them through the discursive construction and reconstruction of patriarchal philosophy. Patriarchy does not manifest itself solely in overt patterns of domination; it is also reinforced through the language, expectations, culture, and institutions that shape women’s legitimate voice, movements, and possibilities. “Literature has long served as a powerful medium for reflecting the complexities and realities of human life, acting as a lens through which pivotal events that have shaped human culture are immortalized” (Afzal et al, 2024, p. 869). Literature also serves as a powerful tool to explore the struggles, agency and resistance of women. It highlights patriarchal power structures and open up possibilities for alternative definitions of femininity and empowerment through characters who do not follow the rules.

Sabyn Javeri is a distinguished modern Pakistani fiction writer and teacher. Her writings are focused on issues of gender, power, morality, social injustice, and the intricacies of South Asian society. Her fiction in particular brings to the fore the experiences of women in the patriarchal structures which control female bodies, sexuality, identity and agency in terms of culture and institutional practice. It depicts women in situations of choice between conformity and autonomy. It highlights the means by which Javeri represents how women negotiate, resist, and redefine their roles in a patriarchal system of society. Her female characters often defy gender norms in order to express themselves and make decisions in a patriarchally dominated society. Through her fiction, Javeri creates a critical framework for exploring the agency of women, their resistance, and how they negotiate marginality in Pakistan today. In *Nobody Killed Her*, Javeri (2017) uses a realist narrative form to reveal the hypocrisy of moral policing, social respectability and institutional violence in seemingly respectable institutions like family, class and society. As Ashraf et al. (2020) observe, “Sabyn Javeri, an emergent English fiction writer, in her debut novel attempts to substantiate women’s suffering that cut across generations and crosses the walls of caste and class” (p. 1001). The novel’s emphasis on women’s

marginalization and a critique of patriarchal discourse situates it within the rich Pakistani tradition of contemporary feminist and socially aware literature.

*Nobody Killed Her* is not just about a single instance of male domination, it is a system of power that is entrenched and self-perpetuating. In this system, women's bodies and lives are continually monitored, judged, and controlled. Both men and women are subjected to gendered forms of violence, including symbolic and physical; and their voices, credibility, choices and agency is often doubted, silenced, or denied. Their suffering is frequently silenced, ignored, overlooked, and tolerated by society through quiet and culturally enforced moral censorship. Authoritative power within families, social norms, class systems, and other institutions all help to sustain an order that is characterized by the normalization of male privilege and the reproduction of female marginality. As a result women are often marginalized and excluded from social activities, the accepted, respectable, moral or legitimate is decided by dominant voices.

The present paper examines these power relations through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), while drawing upon feminist perspectives on gender and power. CDA is a helpful approach to explore the role language plays in the creation, preservation, and challenge of unequal social relations. Discourse becomes an important place in *Nobody Killed Her*, where the authority of patriarchy is created and contested. The language characters use—whether in speaking or not, in justifying, in blaming, and in developing moral notions—shows the ideology of the gender relations. Woman's efforts to speak, resist, to negotiate, and to recover her identity, however, suggest that marginality is not a passive phenomenon but a field of struggle where power is constantly being negotiated. Hence, the present study centers on the battle for feminine power in patriarchal terrain as evident in *Nobody Killed Her* and examines the ways of excluding women from patriarchal discourse and how the female characters claim a space of resistance, silence, self-expression and other forms of agency in the subordinate position. The study posits that Javeri's novel reveals the subtle and institutionalized ways in which the oppression of women remains normalized, while also providing a platform for the voices of the marginalized women. The novel shows how patriarchal power manifests itself not just in physical violence, but in words, unspoken things, social condemnations, and institutional neglect. In this regard *Nobody Killed Her* becomes an important literary location to explore the intricate relationship between discourse, gender, marginality and resistance in the contemporary Pakistani context.

## 2. Review of Literature

Patriarchy is a system of social, cultural and literary practices that favours the status of men and entrenches a hierarchy of power which often silences or marginalises women's voice and agency (Walby, 1990). In patriarchal system, women are often marginalized, excluded and silenced in social practices and textual representation, leading to their overall

invisibility in society (Tong, 2014). In writing, such dynamics are expressed through the predominance of male narratives, in which women characters are often stereotyped or given a symbolic function, which constrains their scope of narrative authority and autonomy (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000). In a patriarchal society, “women are viewed as second-class citizens...” (Qasim et al., 2024, p. 171). Feminist theorists claim that this silencing is not just a result of social norms but a mechanism by which the patriarchy’s ideology is reproduced and normalised from generation to generation (Beauvoir, 2011; Spivak, 1988).

CDA is a methodological framework that can be used to uncover how language, narrative structures, and cultural texts contribute to these power relations, offering a window into the often invisible and explicit ways that patriarchal power is maintained. Patriarchy and discourse analysis can reveal the strategies of oppression, the silencing of the female subject and the larger social consequences of the silencing of the female subject. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) is a methodological approach which draws on the tenets of both feminist theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to look at how language constructs, reinforces, and challenges gendered power relations. FCDA is related to the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is a research method focusing on marginalization, silencing and subordination of women in discourse while strengthening the perspectives of men (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This method takes into account the macro level society’s structures that create gender inequalities and the micro level linguistics strategies that maintain or challenge these inequalities such as representation, lexical selections, syntactical patterns and narrative framing (van Dijk, 2001; Lazar, 2005). FCDA aims to uncover the hidden structures and processes of patriarchy, including stereotyping, omissions, and the naturalization of male power in discourse (Lazar, 2007). Furthermore, FCDA is not only a criticism, but also a search for spaces of resistance that bring alternative discourses and counter-narratives to the foreground, which can disrupt hegemonic structures and increase female agency (Haworth, 2006). FCDA’s emphasis on the oppressed and the resisting side at the same time renders it an extraordinary tool for the analysis of the relationship between language, power and gender in historical and contemporary contexts, and helps to explain how discourse constructs social realities and can reinforce social inequalities.

Ashraf et al. (2020) analyse *Nobody Killed Her* in the context of Spivak’s notion of the subaltern, and female silencing, patriarchy, marginalisation, and social oppression. The researchers demonstrate the silencing of women’s voices across caste, class and generational lines. Khan et al. (2025) examine patriarchy in *Nobody Killed Her* through feminist perspectives, focusing on gender oppression, female marginalization, power, agency, resistance, and female solidarity. The research underscores the limitations imposed on women by their sociocultural and political contexts as well as their efforts to defy patriarchy. Azam et al. (2026) explore *Nobody Killed Her* using the lens of feminist theory,

highlighting the issues of patriarchy, marginalisation of women, gender-based violence, domestic violence, and the lack of voices of women. The study emphasizes the importance of family, law, and community perpetuating male dominance. Hafeez and Zakki (2026) analyze *Nobody Killed Her* in the framework of feminist biopolitics, specifically body politics, erotopolitics, sexuality, resistance, vulnerability and female marginalization. They reveal the ways by which Nazo puts her body and sexuality to work in asserting her political power within a patriarchal framework, and the ways in which this can create greater vulnerability and punishment. Existing studies on *Nobody Killed Her* have largely examined women's oppression, patriarchal structures, gender discrimination, and female resistance. But little scholarly research has been devoted to the power negotiation of feminine power in the patriarchal context using language and discourse. Specifically, the role of female characters in challenging, reproducing, or negotiating marginality in language, silence, resistance has been under-researched. Furthermore, few studies have employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the relationship between language, gender, and power in the text. Hence, this study is aimed to fill the gap in examining the discursive construction and negotiation of feminine power struggles in *Nobody Killed Her* in a patriarchal social structure.

### 3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This paper employs a qualitative research methodology using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine female marginality and feminine power struggle in *Nobody Killed Her*. It is theoretically informed by Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), specifically the work of Michelle M. Lazar. Lazar's work is important because it combines the critical analysis of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and feminist analysis to examine how discourse helps to create, reproduce, negotiate, and transform gendered power relations. FCDA does not see language as a purely instrumental system of communication, but rather as a social practice. In this sense, discourse is inextricably linked to ideology, power, social system and unequal power relations between women and men.

Critical Discourse Analysis became an important form of communicative analysis after the 1989 publishing of Norman Fairclough's *Language and Power*. developed by Norman Fairclough, It is a theoretical and methodological approach that examines the relationship between language, power, and society. "Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary study of all forms of communication that is primarily focused on power and its relationship between inequality and society" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 1). CDA is different from other forms of linguistic analysis which tend to view language as neutral. It is a way of looking at language not as grammar but as it is used in real-life situations. "CDA is explicitly concerned with investigating how language is used to construct and maintain power relationship in society; the aim is to show up connections between language and power, and between language and ideology" (Holmes, 2008, p. 389). CDA

considers the issues and ways discursive sources (power inequalities, hegemony, domination) are maintained and reproduced in particular political, social and historical contents. There is clearly an interdisciplinary aspect to feminist CDA. On the one hand it brings a voice from feminist studies to (critical) language and discourse studies, and on the other hand it sketches out possibilities for the application of language and discourse studies to investigate feminist issues in gender and women's studies. Feminist CDA as a critical approach aims to deconstruct the complex relationships between gender, power and ideology. It is mainly focused on the identification of often unacknowledged ideologies that naturalize and legitimate gender inequalities. The aim of feminist CDA to reveal the complex, subtle, and sometimes overt ways in which deeply embedded and often unquestioned gendered assumptions are constructed, reinforced, and reproduced through discourse and "hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities" (Lazar, 2007, p. 143). Gender is not just another personal or anatomical attribute, but is said to be a process that is socially and discursively reproduced. Language can reflect dominant conceptions of femininity and masculinity in its ascription of specific identity, role, behaviour and expectations to women and men.

One of the core tenets of Lazar's (2005) approach is the analysis of gendered power relations. Power does not only take over in formal institutions or in acts of domination but can also manifest in forms of discourse, representation, assumption, and pattern of interaction in every day life. Gender construction is very powerful in that it does not seem controlling or dominant to people, but acceptable and recognised by most of the people in a society (Lazar, 2007). FCDA therefore explores the power dynamics of discourse as it privileges one group while marginalizing another group. It questions who is included and who is excluded from a range of legitimate voices; who is heard and who is not; how unequal gender relations are normalised through linguistic and social practices.

Lazar (2007) extends the feminist critical approach by stressing the need for discourses to be analysed as they relate to social change. Her framework goes beyond flagging discrimination or providing a representation of inequalities; it aims to uncover the mechanisms of ideology that foster gender inequalities. FCDA is thus oriented in an explicit emancipatory direction. It raises issues related to the questioning of the dominant assumptions of patriarchy and possibilities for challenging the relations of power. The main focus "of feminist critical discourse analysts is with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order – relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group, and disadvantage, exclude, and disempower women as a social group" (Lazar, 2007, p. 145).

The concept of ideology is one of the other important elements in Lazar's theoretical framework. In feminist CDA, ideological meanings are explored by viewing

apparently normal and mundane uses of language and representation as natural, normal, or inevitable expressions of unequal gender relations. To reveal the ways in which discourse reinforces patriarchal structures, Lazar (2005) calls for the foregrounding of gender, power and ideology. FCDA therefore investigates the role of patriarchal norms in everyday encounters and the process of the development of femininity and masculinity in language and representation. At the same time, Lazar (2005, 2007) gives considerable importance to agency and resistance. FCDA is not only about the role of women as a passive victim of patriarchal structures, but rather the way in which marginalized subjects negotiate, challenge and resist dominant gender ideologies using discourse. In this way, discourse may be used at the same time as a tool of domination and as a tool for resistance.

In conclusion, Lazer's theoretical framework provides a suitable foundation for examining female marginality and feminine power in Sabyn Javeri's *Nobody Killed Her*. It allows the study to analyze the ways in which gender, power and ideology are articulated in discourse. The novel's portrayal of silencing, surveillance, patriarchal control, marginalization and gender discrimination highlight unequal structures affecting women's lives. Meanwhile, their agency, resistance and negotiation indicate that female power is not fully eradicated but always challenged. *Nobody Killed Her* is an account of the fight between patriarchy and the empowerment of the female voice, and of discourse as a tool of maintaining inequality and a space for questioning the existing rules of the game.

#### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

The analysis of *Nobody Killed Her* is approached using the lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), specifically that of Michelle M. Lazar (2005, 2007) who has theorized the relationship between gender, power, and ideology. Lazar's approach enables close analysis of the ways in which patriarchy is created through discourse, of the role of women in unequal social relations, and of how female characters negotiate, challenge, or sometimes reinforce dominant gender discourses. The analysis thus centres on discursive constructions of marginality, patriarchal domination, female solidarity/conflict, resistance, agency and silencing.

##### **4.1. Patriarchal Power and Gendered Ideology**

Patriarchy is the root cause of systematic marginalization and mistreatment of women in all aspects of life. *Nobody Killed Her* reflects not only patriarchy but patriarchy as a system of ideology and institutions which defines the social status of women. This is similar to what Lazar (2005) said about the ideology processes that foster gender inequalities and normalise them in the CDA process. In patriarchal societies, women are often restricted in their roles and are stereotyped as caregivers, whereas men are traditionally seen as the ones in charge of decision making and making economic choices.

Women are muted, silenced, suppressed, and marginalized in a patriarchal society. The birth of a female baby is considered to be a matter of shame. This gendered ideology

is evident in Balgodhi's statement regarding the birth of Rani's daughter: "She is just a girl... [Rather she is] a woman who does not answer back" (Javeri, 2017, p. 390). The word "just" linguistically downgrades the value of the girl child and the notion "does not answer back" creates female silence as a desirable state. For the Lazarians, this is not just someone's personal view of femininity, but also a patriarchy ideology that equates obedience and silence with ideal femininity.

Power lies in the hands of men; they can do whatever they wish. Females have no right of inheritance. Legitimate inheritance is left to the male, as seen in the statement "He wants an [male] heir" (Javeri, 2017, p. 227). Nazneen does not agree with this notion and responds blatantly, "A girl can [also] be an heir... Your father chose you... not his son" (Javeri, 2017, p. 227). These two statements suggest a discursive conflict between the dominant patriarchal ideology and a different sense of female agency. Nazneen's answer challenges the notion that the terrain of inheritance, authority and family continuity is a natural one for men.

#### **4.2. Female Marginality and Silencing**

One of the major issues in Lazar's FCDA is how discourse plays a role in marginalization and silencing of women. Female marginality is constructed in the novel through the female's verbal and linguistic practices which questions her credibility, authority and social value. Speaking louder by females is strictly banned in a patriarchal setup. If a woman speaks aloud, then that means an effort for freedom of expression of ideas. The statement "The louder she spoke, the harder they worked to drown her voice" (Javeri, 2017, p. 201) provides a direct representation of discursive suppression. The contrast between "spoke" and "drown her voice" metaphorically creates a sphere of woman's speech as something that can be destroyed by patriarchy.

Women are powerless in a patriarchal system. They are inferior and second class citizens. Despite her political status, there is no guarantee that Rani will not experience this marginalisation. She holds a formal political power but is aware of her powerlessness as woman. Having a formal political position, she is aware of her powerlessness as woman. Yasmeen explicitly reminds her: "You're still a woman to them... worthless [creature]....created from a spare rib" (Javeri, 2017. p. 37). The term "still a woman" is especially important because it establishes gender as a limitation that is still present when a woman has become educated, a politician, or a woman who has attained a higher social position. The discourse thus shows the paradox of women's formal membership in powerful institutions and their continued subordination in the ideology of patriarchy.

Rani herself acknowledges this vulnerability: "... I'm very scared. [I have] the fear that grips me all the time". Rani's life is replet with fears. She "pretend[s] to be brave", but she is always shaking with fear (Javeri, 2017, p. 41). The feminine power is shown as internally conflicted, between the "pretend to be brave" and the "inside... I'm shaking"

constructions. She is a strong political figure and a strong woman, but at the same time, she was afraid in her private life. This comparison reveals that being in a position of power does not mean that gendered vulnerability is absent.

#### **4.3. Surveillance, Moral Policing, and Patriarchal Control**

In a patriarchal society, women are created as inferior creatures, and strict gender structures are supported by the dominant ideological discourses that lead to the subjugation of women in various aspects of life. Rani's observation, "Forty lashes. The penalty for a woman found intoxicated..." (Javeri, 2017, p. 40), exposes the gendered nature of moral and legal regulation. The statement focuses on a system that inflicts harsh punishment on women's behaviour. Similarly, the warning "You shouldn't be drinking in your state..." (Javeri, 2017, p. 227) reflects the regulation of female behavior through expectations surrounding motherhood. The socially prescribed identities of mother, wife, obedient woman and moral subject are the main ways that women are constructed in this discourse from an FCDA perspective. Their individual choices become subject to collective judgment. As a result, patriarchy manifests in ways other than physical violence, namely through discourse, which defines women's allowable actions, words, and identities.

#### **4.4. Negotiation, Resistance, and Feminine Agency**

Lazar's approach is particularly useful because it does not represent women exclusively as passive victims. Instead, FCDA explores the ways in which marginalized subjects negotiate and contest hegemonic relations of power. When women raise voice regarding their rights, their voice is suppressed. It is a crucial dimension for the portrayal of Rani and Nazneen. Rani's statement, "Women like us are tolerated as long as we don't threaten the [patriarchal] system" (Javeri, 2017, p. 112) explicitly identifies the relationship between female agency and patriarchal power. The opposition of "claim our rightful place" and "become dangerous" gives a clue that women can only be accepted when their actions do not upset the power structures. When women's empowerment threatens men's authority, it is then treated as a 'threat'. When women's empowerment poses a threat to men's authority, it is constructed as a threat. Rani proves, then, what Lazar (2005) calls the "discourse-gendered power" dynamics; that is, while women can be a part of powerful spaces, their legitimacy is subject to conditions. Males are considered to be a shelter for females and females have to comply with the commands of males in a patriarchal setup. Balgodhi's statement, "Without a husband, the General's men will chew you up..." (Javeri, 2017, p. 30), constructs male protection as necessary for female survival. "you need me" is linguistically important as it creates a sense of dependency and reduces Rani's independence. Rani, meanwhile, in response to the patriarchal constraints, shows that female power is not completely suppressed. Her political engagement is a rejection of the standard image of a woman. She challenges the traditional image of women as a political participant. However, her later admission, "I'm [totally] powerless" (Javeri, 2017, p. 267),

demonstrates the limitations imposed on female agency by patriarchal structures. Thus, her character is a negotiation throughout between the power she is granted and the power she is exposed to, agency and restriction, resistance and dependence.

#### **4.5. Nazneen: Marginality, Resistance, and Agency**

Nazneen represents a different form of female marginality. Unlike Rani, Nazneen is in a socially and economically precarious position without the access to the elites that Rani enjoys because of her political status. Her experience also highlights the importance of studying gender inequity in the context of larger social structures, as suggested by Lazar (2007) in his focus on gender inequality. Despite being marginalised, Nazneen has agency. Her encouragement of a young girl to pursue education demonstrates her attempt to challenge patriarchal expectations: “Just study hard [to] show them [how] a woman can do something useful besides breeding” (Javeri, 2017, p. 283). Discourse becomes an act of empowerment as the imperative verbs “study,” “show,” “don’t let me down” are used. Nazneen challenges patriarchal belief that women’s primary purpose is marriage and reproduction. Females are not allowed to get education as they are consired to be a useless creature. They do not need degrees to get married, to get jobs. Their main duty is doing domestic chores and obeying the dictations of males. The statement “They said girls were a waste of a degree...” (Javeri, 2017, p. 282) represents the ideological construction of female education as useless. Nazneen’s reply challenges this notion by claiming that education is a path by which women can gain agency. This exchange can then be understood as a confrontation between the discourse of the father and the discourse of emancipation, as made possible by FCDA.

#### **4.6. Internalized Patriarchy and Female Conflict**

Lazar’s framework can also be used to analyse patriarchal ideology as a system that has a potential to affect women’s relations to each other. Patriarchy is not always manifested as male control; its norms can be internalised and reproduced in the relationships between women. “[Patriarchy] obstructs women’s liberation in social, political, and educational spheres” (Qasim et al., 2024, p. 171). Rani’s description of Nazneen as “A zero in my scheme of things” (Javeri, 2017, p. 368) linguistically devalues another woman. Women have no identity, no voice, no brains, no thoughts, and no rights. They are stupid, useless, and waste. They are regulted by men. Rani also states about Nazneen: “Nazo, you are a nobody” (Javeri, 2017, p. 399). Further she points out that Nazeen is “just a stupid tagalong”... having no vision, [no thoughts and] no brains” (Javeri, 2017, p. 399). The constant appearance of the negative labels, “nobody” and “no vision” and “no brains” and “stupid,” makes Nazneen seem socially and intellectually inferior. This relationship shows that the horizontal and vertical marginalisation can interact. Men hold key roles in patriarchal systems, but women can also create class, family, educational,

and social hierarchies. This is a good example of the intersection of gender and other forms of social stratification from a feminist CDA point of view.

#### **4.7. Marriage as a Mechanism of Patriarchal Control**

In *Nobody Killed Her*, marriage is yet another major discourse in which the power of patriarchy is built and sustained. “Marriage [is] not a [sacred] union; rather it [is] a cage, [a prison]” (Javeri, 2017, p. 156). Here, Javeri (2017) uses a metaphor to argue against the conventional portrayal of marriage as a relationship of companionship, equality, and mutuality. The noun “cage” has connotations of confinement, restriction, captivity, and loss of autonomy, and therefore also marriage as an institution that restricts the autonomy of women. Such discourse, from a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, helps to illustrate how seemingly normal social institutions can perpetuate gendered power dynamics and a patriarchal ideology. This dichotomy between female authority and domestic subservient is portrayed through the relationship between Rani and Balgodhi. Rani has political power and social prestige but the place of the wife in marriage is still strictly defined by the husband’s will and power. Females are dependent upon males for protection. Balgodhi remark, “ [With a life] without a husband, the [patriarchal system] will chew you up...” (Javeri, 2017, p. 30), linguistically constructs Rani as dependent upon male protection. “You need me” sets up an imbalance of power, and the man is the one who must have the woman while she is the one who is vulnerable. The concept of marriage, therefore, is a tool by which patriarchal power is introduced into the private sphere, showing that women’s public power does not mean their domestic autonomy.

#### **4.8. Female Solidarity and the Possibility of Resistance**

*Nobody Killed Her* also presents a complex tension between female solidarity and fragmentation. Javeri’s phrase “Sisters in struggle, but strangers in survival” (Javeri, 2017, p. 244) expresses this paradox by contrasting the words “sisters” and “strangers.” “sisters” builds women together on their own experiences, emotions, and struggles, yet “strangers” implies division, rivalry, and the challenge of maintaining a bond in less favorable social contexts. This tension, according to the feminist critical perspective of Lazar’s (2005, 2007), shows how patriarchal power can condition relations between women in such a way that they might become competitive or be kept apart. Representation of women’s experience thus transcends a binary of victim versus oppressor. Women are controlled in different ways depending on their social status, class, schooling and political power. Rani’s political power gives her more institutional support, while Nazneen’s social powerlessness means that she is subject to other vulnerabilities. They are two very different experiences that illustrate that women are not one and the same. Instead, women negotiate the patriarchy from a variety of positions, and feminine power is a complicated and uneven process of resisting, accommodating, and surviving in patriarchy.

#### **5. Conclusion**

This research paper concludes that *Nobody Killed Her* deals with the problem of female marginality as a result of engrained patriarchal institutions, which influence women's social, family, political and institutional lives. The results of the analysis conducted using the method of Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis show that there is oppression of women in the following aspects: silencing, surveillance, moral policing, gender discrimination, social judgment and constraining personal and political freedom. Patriarchy thus is not only manifested in the direct authority of men, but also in social norms and institutions which legitimate women's inferior status. Concurrently, the analysis shows that women characters do not merely suffer the oppression of patriarchy but they also resist, negotiate, accommodate, and act on the oppression. Rani's political power is continuously questioned by patriarchal expectations and Nazneen uses her status as a marginalised woman to challenge other women. The experiences in these two contrasting cases show that feminine power does not exist in its entirety nor is it synonymous with power. Female agency is continuously negotiated in structures that limit and support the expression of feminine power. The analysis also suggests that discourse can simultaneously be used as a tool for reproducing gender inequalities and as a tool to resist gender inequalities. Female marginality is therefore the ongoing process of a woman's negotiation of her identity, voice, authority and the potentialities for the power of resistance. Finally, *Nobody Killed Her* focuses on the strength of men's power and how women can negotiate, oppose and re-imagine their role in patriarchy.

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