

**REPRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN IN PAKISTANI PRINT  
MEDIA DISCOURSE: A CORPUS-BASED  
FEMINIST STYLISTIC ANALYSIS**

**BY**

**FOZIA NOUREEN**



**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES**

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**Representation of Violence Against Women in Pakistani  
Print Media Discourse: A Corpus-based Feminist Stylistic  
Analysis**

By

**Fozia Noureen**

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**Thesis Title:** Representation of Violence Against Women in Pakistani Print Media Discourse: A Corpus-based Feminist Stylistic Analysis

**Submitted by:** Fozia Noureen

**Registration #:** 5-MPhil/ELing/RWP/S21

Master of Philosophy  
Degree name in full

English Linguistics  
Name of Discipline

Dr. Ejaz Mirza  
Name of Research Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Supervisor

Dr. Safeer Awan  
Name of Dean

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Dean (FAH)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Fozia Noureen

Daughter of Amjad Hussain

Registration # -MPhil/ELing/RWP/S21

Discipline English Linguistics

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Representation of Violence Against Women in Pakistani Print Media Discourse: A Corpus-based Feminist Stylistic Analysis** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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## ABSTRACT

*Title: Representation of Violence Against Women in Pakistani Print Media Discourse: A Corpus-based Feminist Stylistic Analysis*

This research study has attempted to analyse the representation issues of violence against women in Pakistani print media discourse. The researcher has applied a feminist stylistic approach given by Mills (2005) as a lens to analyse it. To benefit from the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, a mixed method approach was adopted. Corpus-based method was adopted for quantitative analysis and the in depth analysis was carried out using feminist stylistic model. The corpus was created by taking 110 articles from the four major English newspapers in Pakistan. A purposive sampling technique was adopted based on the online availability of these articles and their relevance to the study. The articles covering the issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse were selected. The corpus was analysed on three levels; lexical choices (word level), syntactic choices (phrase level), words in context and correlations (discourse level). Use of adjectives and adverbs was analysed in binary opposition i.e. for man/woman, victim/perpetrator, frequency of the words victim/ survivor and rapist/perpetrator was also analysed to investigate media's preference of use of specific terms. Key words were analysed in context and collocations of certain words were also explored. In addition, the use of active and passive constructions was also analysed. The results of the study show that the media's use of language for the representation of violence against women issues is biased and guided by the ideological conventions of society. Some of these features of language like the use of passive constructions and silencing of women's voices through omission as well as over-lexicalisation of certain ideas reinforce the stereotypes that already exist in society rather than discouraging them. The research concludes that media's representation of violence against women issues needs to be more conscientious and astute.

**Key Words:** *Violence against Women (VAW), Corpus, Lexical, syntactic, binary opposition, ideological conventions.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
<b>THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>AUTHOR’S DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Media Discourse .....	1
1.3 Features of Media Discourse .....	3
1.4 Violence Against Women.....	4
1.5 Media Reporting on VAW in Pakistan.....	5
1.6 Statement of the Problem .....	7
1.7 Objectives of the Study.....	7
1.8 Research Questions.....	8
1.9 Delimitation of the Study .....	8
1.10 Organisation of the Study .....	8
<b>2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Violence Against Women.....	10
2.2 Language and Gender .....	12

2.3 The Role of Media in Promoting Gender Ideologies .....	13
2.3.1 Language and the Media.....	14
2.3.2 Language of VAW.....	15
2.3.3 Representation of VAW in Media.....	15
2.3.4 Reporting of Crime Cases in Pakistan.....	18
2.4 Literary Theories .....	19
2.4.1 Feminism .....	19
2.4.2 Stylistics.....	20
2.4.3 Feminist Stylistics.....	21
2.4.4 Feminist View on Violence Against Women.....	23
2.4.5 Lexical Level .....	25
2.4.5.1 Naming and Andocentrism .....	25
2.4.5.2 Women as Marked Form .....	26
2.4.6 Syntax Level.....	26
2.4.6.1 Ready-Made Phrase .....	27
2.4.6.2 Passivisation.....	30
2.4.7 Analysis at the Level of Discourse.....	32
2.4.7.1 Fragmentation .....	33
2.5 Linguistic Determinism .....	33
2.6 Previous Studies in Pakistani Context.....	33
2.7 Summary.....	35
<b>3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>37</b>
3.1 Research Design .....	37
3.1.1 Population.....	37
3.1.2 Sample .....	37

3.1.3 Corpora .....	38
3.2 Theoretical Framework.....	38
3.3 Analysis, Software, and Tools.....	41
3.3.1 Analysis of the Binary Oppositions.....	42
<b>4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>44</b>
4.1 Lexical Level.....	44
4.1.1 Terminology Preferences.....	44
4.1.1.1 ‘Victim’ versus ‘Survivor’ .....	44
4.1.1.2 Absence/Omission of the words ‘Rapist’ and ‘Perpetrator’ .....	46
4.1.2 Naming Conventions and the Use of Adjectives and Adverbs....	49
4.1.2.1 Adjectives.....	49
4.1.2.2 Adverbs.....	52
4.3 Semantic Level .....	56
4.3.1 Collocations .....	56
4.4 Syntactic Level.....	60
4.4.1 The Use of Passive Constructions .....	60
4.5 Summary of the Findings .....	63
<b>5. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>67</b>
5.1 Summary.....	67
5.1.1 Linguistic Choices .....	67
5.1.2 Omission of Victim’s voices .....	68
5.1.3 Assigning and Shifting of Responsibility through Active and Passive Constructions .....	68
5.2 Recommendations .....	69



5.3 Limitations of the Study ..... 71

5.3 Challenges ..... 72

5.4 Implications of the Study..... 73

**REFERENCES..... 75**

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Model of analysis showing selected categories and their representative meaning, adapted from Machin and Mayr, 2012.....	43
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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Frequency of the word ‘victim’ versus ‘survivor’.....	45
Figure 2: Frequency of the word ‘perpetrator’ and ‘rapist’ relatively.....	47
Figure 3: Adjectives most frequently used with the word ‘woman’.....	49
Figure 4: Adverbs most frequently used with the word ‘woman’.....	53
Figure 5: KWIC analysis of the word ‘resident’ .....	55
Figure 6: Collocations of the word ‘said’.....	57
Figure 7: Frequency and the collocates of the word ‘said’.....	58
Figure 8: An analysis of the passive construction via KWIC .....	60
Figure 9: KWIC analysis of the word ‘was’.....	62
Figure 10: KWIC analysis of the phrase ‘was raped’ .....	62

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## **DEDICATION**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

‘Woman’ is a central figure in society, culture, art and literature. ‘Woman’ holds a significant place in the creation of discourses that concern violence, specifically when it comes to the gender-based violence. Weatherall (2002) believes that these discourses present an inaccurate picture of women that seems to be motivated by political ideologies. In the past few years, violence against women has become a critical social issue. There is increased awareness about these issues due to different outlets that provide a platform for women to raise their voices on such matters. Extensive media coverage, access to various legal measures and awareness to political rights have enabled people to bring these issues to the limelight. The media is a representative of the social and political domain where VAW discourses are created and presented. Historically, women's representation in the media has been underwhelming (Cabrera, 2011). Frequently, the presence of women was and is missing in this medium of communication. Another commonly observed fact is that media content violates the reputation of the women in the community (Tuchman, 1979, p. 531). Since the representation of men and women in the media has become an important issue to understand the power of the media in creating and sustaining gender identities, as a result, the media as a medium of awareness and ideology construction must be investigated about the marginalization of women.

### 1.2 Media Discourse

The media discourse is a broad term that can refer to the way reality is portrayed in print and broadcast media, from TV to newspaper (Anne O’ Keeffe, 2010). We as individuals are affected by the exposure of the media; our opinions are shaped, reinforced, and altered (McCarthy, 2013). The media plays an important part in strengthening and supporting concepts like gender equality which is one of the crucial aspects for the establishment of liberal societies. Morrison (1984) asserted that if you control the media, you control the mind. In today’s world, the media’s role in questioning gender stereotypes when portraying the issues of violence against women (VAW) cannot be undermined. The media perpetuates some gender stereotypes in

multiple ways. For instance, media discourse often assigns the attributes of strength to men whereas they describe women as weak (Hermes, 2012). Media discourses strengthen the already existing notions of asymmetrical distribution of power rather than challenging them. This then puts women in a position of disadvantage (Carter, et al., 2013). Cuklanz (2013) affirms that different the media outlets whether they are based on reality or fiction, have focused on the issues of VAW. However, as Carlyle (2014) argues, when the depiction of power dynamics between males and females is mediated it directly impacts the audience response which can be empathetic or otherwise.

In media discourses for VAW, language plays a crucial role in highlighting the relationship between the concepts of violence and women. Gender and language have been a subject for studies over many years. Different studies have highlighted how language can perpetuate or challenge the already existing gender stereotypes in society. Additionally, the context in which language is used also plays a substantial role in either preserving or questioning these stereotypes. Hence, the focus of these studies has been on the discourse. Media discourses that portray the issues of VAW, sometimes use such details that focus on women's bodies to make these reports sensational. Particularly, the news reporting sexual violence often tend to be more sensational. Moreover, in many of these reports, victim blaming is very common (Clark 1992). After conducting a study of news reporting, Clark (1992) determined that such negative depiction of women is presented as authentic information even in a popular newspaper like 'Sun'. Research has also been conducted on whether the representation of gender is balanced or not. Similarly, the concepts of gender power dynamics and ideological conventions are also crucial to the study of media discourse for VAW. The linguistic choices of speakers or writers of a language reflect their ideologies. Fowler (2013) considers the role of language as that of a "highly constructive mediator". Moreover, language has a strong role in shaping our view of the world, our thoughts as well as our public communications (Montgomery, 2008).

The concepts of language and gender are studied in Critical Discourse Analysis and Feminist Stylistics. It has been established that they are closely connected with the expression of ideology. While it is challenging to recognise the ideology rooted in the discourse as it is not overtly articulated CDA and FCDA recommend that these ideologies can be uncovered through a linguistic analysis of the text. Hence, most of

CDA, FCDA and Feminist Stylistic Analysis including the current study attempt to discover the ideologies by investigating the choices of words, phrases and syntactic arrangements made by the writers. This study investigates the choice of lexical items, syntax and contextual information in order to find out the ideologies covered in the media discourse for the portrayal of issues of violence against women.

### **1.3 Features of Media Discourse**

The media discourse comprises of the various ways through which different platforms use language including newspapers, radio, television as well as online media sources. One of the most significant features of the media discourse is framing. Framing refers to the way news is presented so that it influences the perception of the audience. It involves the choice of words, phrases, structures and patterns. In the words of Entman (1993), it includes the selection of different features of an interpreted reality and use these features in a way that they become more prominent in the text. In this way, the media discourse can sway the public perception towards a specific issue to their perspective.

Another prominent feature of the media discourse that is explored by the scholars is the bias and ideological stance of the writers that have an impact on the way the news is covered. Often, the media reports reflect the biases of the writers through the selection of different linguistic features, for example their choice of adjectives, adverbs, different terms and sentence structures.

With the introduction of various new media networks, there is a growing competitiveness between and among different media outlets. In order to draw the attention of the audience, the media uses diverse tactics including the use of sensationalism. Media reports often tend to focus on the sensational aspect of their reporting in order to draw the readers' attention. This includes the use of different techniques like foregrounding, exaggeration, use of emotional language, focus on less important details and controversial aspects.

Another salient feature of the media discourse is that most of the news stories are usually composed in a narrative style. They follow a proper narrative structure with a clear beginning, middle and end. Such structures make the news more engaging. Moreover, these stories tend to be interactive and dynamic especially on online platforms where audience are allowed to comment and share.



The media discourse nowadays has evolved involving the use of images, infographics as well as videos on online platforms. The use of these features enhances the impact of the information. It further adds to the clarity and relevance. They appeal to a larger number of audience.

## **1.4 Violence against Women**

Violence against women is a critical issue that exists in almost all societies. While violence against women is seen as natural, violence against men that also exists in society seems an exception as research over the years shows that women are more common victims of gendered violence. There is no denying the fact that violence is also carried out against men by their female partners. However, when we look at the stats, the majority of the victims of domestic violence are women while men on the majority of the occasions play the role of perpetrators. As a result of this, there is an obvious connection between women and violence. The societal norms about the power dynamics between the two genders are at the core of the discourse on violence. Arendt (1970) stated that violence is nothing more than the most blatant exhibition of power. Violence is closely related to the power dynamics of society as most of the time, violence is seen by the perpetrator as vital to the implementation of power. According to Van Dijk cited in Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton (1996), digressive power imitation includes the right to use speech and an extensive variety of communicative roles. According to him, we need to investigate the effects of the complicated queries; the who, whom, what, when, and in what context of the communicative events. For example, as addressor-addressees, audience-bystanders, or over hearers. These events need also be investigated about the subject of the discourse as well as who it is referring to. It can be assumed about other social resources as well, that according to these several participant roles, more access is equal to more social power (Van Dijk cited in Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton, 1996, p. 354). The majority of the cases of VAW present an interesting practice of a violent, dominant masculinity at play. Thus, in such situations, violence is seen as an act of power or dominance and this power is actually the male power over the opposite gender. Shepherd (2008) elaborates that the media discourses give the impression as if men have the power to oppress women via different violent acts.

## 1.5 Media Reporting of VAW in Pakistan

With the promotion and spread of the movements for equal gender-based rights in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a lot of progress in terms of awareness about women's rights. And yet, violence against women continues to be a crucial issue even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Violence against women is fact a violation of human rights. Walby (2005) states that this violation arises from discrimination based on gender which is deep-rooted in the social and economic systems.

In the typical patriarchal society of Pakistan, gender ideologies and differences concerning male dominance and female subservience are shaped in all the fields of life. Women face discrimination in all fields of life. Pakistani media also works under the same social structure where women are considered to be weak and passive victims of abuse. Media portrayal of female victims of abuse reflects and conforms to the already prevailing social status of women. Gender-based discrimination prevails in all spheres of life in Pakistani society. From domestic structure to early schooling to work and public places, Pakistani women become victim of gender discrimination in all fields. Pakistani media is no exception. This kind of prejudice and bias against women is evident in Pakistani English and Urdu newspapers. A discriminatory and biased representation of women is produced through gender-specific vocabulary as well as different language structures.

In the media discourse, masculinity is commonly associated with violence whereas weakness is attributed to women. There has been a substantial amount of research that exposed this biased representation of women through media discourse since 1970s (Mulvey 1975; Tuchman, 1978). The notions of violence, strength, and dominance are commonly presented as symbols of masculine identity. On the other hand, media objectifies women. The visual representation of women is done through a 'male gaze' that sees women as objects and passive recipients (Mulvey, 1975). Calogero (2004) adds that these media practices of sexually objectifying women has a negative psychological impact on women themselves as it spreads abnormal viewpoints and results in self-objectification. Moreover, glamorisation of women in media also contributes to this notion of seeing women as sexual objects. Carter (2013) asserts that additional harm that the media inflicts is putting sexually assaulted women as somehow 'to blame for such violence precisely because they have asserted their sexual agency'. Other media outlets like news for example also represent women as victims and

somehow as those who deserve or are justified to receive sexual abuse (Cullen, O'Brien, and Corcoran, 2019).

The news is an essential factor in the lives of people, groups, societies and states. Through different mediums, the news constitutes the world, as they are presented as "reality". Hence, media frames reality for people as they have an impact on the way the news is conveyed. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) demonstrate that media frames are the comprehensible collection of information covering a vital formulating idea or story that gives meaning to a relating series of events. Media's framing of the news includes a choice of content, the way this content is to be presented, and the inclusion or exclusion of specific type of details influence the way the news is transmitted and perceived. So, in a way, the media shapes and transforms reality for its audience. In this way, the media also has a power to either reinforce and conform to the existing ideologies and values or challenge them. Lewis (1991) concludes that in this way, media constructs an ideological reality through which the audience is led to perceive the binary relationship between good/bad or them/us.

Thus, according to Car and Osmančević (2016) this process of creating reality by different media outlets requires different media persons like anchors, editors and journalists to make certain choices that are led by their own ideological beliefs. All these media persons are actively engaged in the practice of building reality through news being broadcasted. Hence, Hay and Israel (2001) conclude that media represent powerful mediators in the ongoing courses of building news and ultimately reality (p. 108).

The current research focuses on the way journalists use language to create and convey news about VAW and the way it influences the audience's perception of this news. The perception and interpretation of the news by the media audience depends not only on their own prior knowledge, motivating forces, and aptitudes but correspondingly on the framework in which the media outlets present this news to them. Studies on media portrayal of VAW demonstrate that news reports often reflect social structures and doubts related to this matter (Morgan and Politoff, 2012). Sutherland et al. (2016) highlighted that sensationalism, omitting social context, shifting the blame to victims, misrepresentation, as well as the marginalization or complete absence of the voices of victims, are some of the major problems concerning the representation of VAW in media. UNESCO's handbook for journalists (Impe, 2019) points out the

considerations, suggestions, as well as positive practices common to the presentation of VAW. The appropriate choice of vocabulary/ lexical items, phrases, structures, titles, or images are recommended. There are guidelines about the way an article/ news report on gender-based violence should be presented and how a journalist should report about victims. Concerning the media discourse, the current research focuses on the aspects of framing, biases and ideological stance of the writers through their choice of linguistic features and sensationalism.

## **1.6 Statement of the Problem**

Undeniably, violence against women (VAW) has become one of the most crucial social concerns in the past few years, with significant media coverage and more ‘visibility’ and with more social, legal and political steps being taken. Media is a representative of the social and political sphere where VAW discourses are formed, discussed, represented or endorsed with alleged objectivity. Since the portrayal and visibility of genders in the media has become a crucial issue to understand the power of the media in producing gender identities, hence, media as a source of knowledge construction must be interrogated about the marginalisation of women. Furthermore, when it comes to the issues of violence against women, despite more coverage in the media, they are always on the rise. Therefore, media discourse needs to be questioned about the representation of these issues.

There have been a considerable number of studies recently that have attempted to investigate ways in which patriarchy, explicitly, the dominance of males, has been persistently reinforced by language. That is to say, language is conscientiously guarded by the people who hold a position of dominance in society as it is one of the sources through which they preserve their dominance. Therefore, it would be riveting to investigate if media plays a part in reinforcing and upholding these ideologies through their choices of different linguistic features and structures for the two genders. Moreover, how the media frames these stories is crucial to the understanding of whether the media’s representation of these issues is judicious or not.

## **1.7 Objectives of the Study**

The current study aims to:

- analyse how Violence against women is represented in the media by attempting

to investigate the kind of language used to represent the victims and perpetrators

- investigate the media's use of language to report the issues of violence against women in order to identify the instances where it reinforces or challenges gender stereotypes, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how linguistic patterns that shape societal perception of gender roles and identities

## **1.8 Research Questions**

Q1: What linguistic features are used to frame the stories of violence against women in the selected articles?

Q2: How are the of the male perpetrators and female victims described in reporting the acts of violence in the selected articles?

Q2: How does the use of language in the selected articles perpetuate or resist the harmful gender stereotypes in society?

## **1.9 Delimitation of the Study**

The study is delimited to print media. The articles selected for the study cover the stories of domestic and sexual abuse. The articles selected for the study were published during the time span of 2019 to 2023.

## **1.10 Organisation of the Study**

The thesis is divided into five main chapters: The first chapter of the thesis deals with the introduction of the topic and a detailed account of its background, significance, problem statement, objectives, research questions, delimitation, and organization of the study. In the second chapter which is the literature review, already existing work done on the same topic is discussed and gaps are highlighted. Research design is given in the third chapter which consists of the methodology, corpus and theoretical framework. This chapter explains in detail the approach, technique, data collection and method that is used for the current research. The fourth chapter comprises data presentation and analysis. In this chapter, data is presented in the form of stats, images and well as interpretations, analysis is carried out and a thorough discussion of the findings from a feminist stylistic perspective is performed. The fifth and final chapter which is the conclusion presents a summary of the findings, limitations, recommendations and

suggestions for future studies.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In this chapter, the researcher aims to present a literature review confining to a theoretical background which investigates the connections between gender studies and stylistic analysis of the media discourse. In the previous chapter, it has been established that the subject of the current study is the media discourse for the representation of gender crimes against women in Pakistani society. In this chapter, the researcher aims to explore the previous research and theories related to different aspects of the media discourse, for example, violence against women, language and gender, language and media, role of media in promoting gender ideologies and feministic stylistics. In addition, this chapter presents a framework of the related literature by analysing different perspectives and identifying areas that require further investigation.

#### **2.1 Violence Against Women**

‘Violence’ as elucidated by The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) in the UN assembly is:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in the public or private life (p.2).

Violence against women includes all forms of violence carried out against women whether it be physical, emotional or psychological irrespective of any context (age, profession, dressing). It is noteworthy that it is mostly women who become victim to such violence on daily basis. VAW is a profound issue in almost every society. As most of the societies are patriarchal, their cultures, belief systems, families, religion directly or indirectly enable VAW. Many scholars are convinced that in spite of the great rate and its distressing impact, violence against women is majorly an ignored issue (Heise, 1999).

McManus & Dorfman, (2005) assert that the press generally misrepresents the reality while covering the stories of gender-based violence. The researchers agree that the news media misrepresent and undermine the issues of VAW systematically.

Moreover, the blame is shifted from the culprit to the victim (McManus & Dorfman, 2005, p.44). The Media's treatment of the issues of violence against women denotes non-seriousness and triviality and hence such behaviours tend to contribute to undermine women's need for prevention from facing more abuse in the future.

Meyers (2004) explains that journalists reporting the issues of abuse to women scarcely resort to victims and their supporters as sources of information but rather report the stories in a way that shifts the blame to the survivors. Meyers (2004) demonstrates that previous research on of VAW news reports reveal that media reports present the information in a way that gives the impression that women are held responsible for the violence carried out against them and in a way men are exempted from it. The way the media's reporting of these cases shifts the responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim is unfortunate. These news reports present women as initiators, enablers or provokers of the violence targeted towards them (pg. 97). Michelle & Weaver (2003) explain that Media reports seem to report domestic or intimate partner violence as more of a personal issue rather than a major societal issue. Michelle & Weaver (2003) assert that media outlets generally disregard the more prevalent issue of domestic abuse against women, be that physical, emotional or psychological which is carried out by men they have close relationships with. According to the research, the media think of violence as a personal/family issue and not a grave social issue that requires great significance in the media (pg.4). Wozniak & McCloskey (2010) assert that as there is this inclination to report issues of domestic abuse as distinct 'events', media reporting provides slight importance to its back ground, preventive measures or other such useful information.

Wozniak & McCloskey (2010) point out that it is because of the representation of the issues of VAW in the media as isolated events, that the public is given the impression that these events are secluded distinct events and are thus absolved from their social implications. Newspapers' coverage of gender crimes against women lacks authentic details and thorough analysis. Gill (2007) argues that when it comes to the news reports on the issues of VAW, especially sexual violence, they are often presented in a way to create sensation. He (2007) further contends that the existing information displays that the majority of the rape cases are not covered by newspapers and other media outlets; except for some hyped cases, usually containing extraordinary or horrendous abuse, get noticeable coverage. In order to get the media's attention, the



cases of violence against women must have something unusual, absurd, extreme or brutal, only then it will be worth-reporting (p. 144).

Alat (2006) illustrates that the female victims of VAW often receive the blame for the abuse committed to them. She (2006) agrees with former researchers saying:

The male account of the incident gets access to the news. No attempt is made to give personal information about the victim apart from the nationality that classifies her as a foreign woman about whom the common perception is of being immoral and, thus, absolves the attacker. Additionally, she states that due to this, certain readers who have been asked to share their view on the subject assert that there is reason behind all crimes. Such a thought process probably implies that ‘men’s action must have been provoked by women’ and so ‘such women deserve to be punished’ hence ‘male abuse is acceptable’ (p. 303).

## **2.2 Language and Gender**

Shashkevich (2019) states that linguistics scholars attempt to analyse words and phrases that may unconsciously influence our perception of the world. He asserts that the results of a study discover how a harmless statement such as "girls solve arithmetic equally as well as boys" can indirectly reinforce sexist biases. It is because of the syntactic arrangement, which conveyed that boys are naturally better in arithmetic than girls. Hence, our use of language and selection of words play a part in the process of oppression, prejudice, injustice, and discrimination against women.

Ann Oakley (1972) was one of the first researchers who differentiated between the concepts of gender and sex. According to her, gender is “the biological division” of sex into men or women. Additionally, it consists of the division and society’s assessment of manhood and womanhood. Society’s general perceptions and how the word is seen by the individuals depend on gender to a great extent. Moreover, the way individuals people develop, understand, and perceive different texts is also greatly influenced by gender. Hence ‘gender’ is a term that holds great importance in feminist stylistics as this term entails that, despite the fact that there are some resemblances or common grounds, primarily there are differences in the way gender is represented by men and women (Baladjay, Rio, & Tigas, 2016).

Coates (2013) explains that the term ‘gender’ categorises male and female into social divisions on the basis of sex. Graddor (1989) agrees that sex is a biological

division whereas gender is more of a social division. Siregar (2020) argues that man and a woman are essentially different based on their biological category. In the light of these views, sexism is a subject of study mostly for feminists rather than linguists. According to Graddor & Swann, (1989) feminists believe that language usually reflects prejudices against women whereas it portrays that men are the norms.

Feminist stylists like Mills (1995) assert that the term ‘gender’ should be used in a way to refer to women and men in a relational and not an oppositional way (Mills, 1995). It is very clear that women consistently face a lot of discriminations in a number of means, feminism emphasises on the need to change the social construction in a way that it is made less repressive to women in particular but also to men.

Shazu (2014) suggests that since language is flexible enough that it can afford different types of changes so it is possible to turn sexist statements and utterances into unbiased ones for example salesman-salesclerk, chairman- chairperson, actor, etc. He asserts that it is not the language that is naturally sexist, in fact the people who use language make it sexist or otherwise. Thus, in order to tackle this problem of sexism, the change in language is inevitable (Spender, 1993).

Talbot (1998) maintains that, there are two different viewpoints on the interaction of gender and language. According to the first point of view, language reflects society. However, she thinks it is a rather weaker perspective. For example, on the one hand, the title ‘Mr’ remains constant for men whether they are married or otherwise, there are separate terms or titles for married and unmarried women i.e. ‘miss’ or ‘mrs’. She (1998) favours the point of view that language actually contributes to cause gender discrimination instead of merely imitating or representing them. Thus, such terms do not merely represent society; but in fact also stimulate as well as reinforce discrimination.

### **2.3 The Role of the Media in Promoting Gender Ideologies**

The media are a source of formulating ideas, opinions and strengthening gender-related ideologies. Burki (2004) states that media contributes a great deal in shaping our perception of gender. The media do not merely present but also generate and reforms the opinion of the masses. She believes that journalists play an important role in promoting gender sensitization and a gender-biased perspective to media content. Both the genders are represented in the news, events and entertainment in the media.

However, assigning gender roles is a norm in the media and it is expected of both men and women to comply with social codes of conduct.

Dagar (2004) points to the glamorization of women and models as a reflection of the image of women produced by the media. This is not about just one country rather it is a universal phenomenon in the world of the media. According to Ahmar (2004) it is so because it is men that design and formulate the media policies, priorities and agenda, including how women are to be portrayed and presented. Tassarò (2002) states in this regard that generally the media are a profit seeking industry. He adds that stereotypes are the general and widespread perceptions regardless of whether they are right or wrong, they are used by the media to gain profit.

In Pakistan also, media plays a significant role in reshaping the image and status of women in society. In Pakistani media generally women are under-represented, and degrading language is used for them. Pakistani newspapers use sensational and gender biased language to project women as submissive, inferior and incapable. (Ahmad, 2017)

### **2.3.1 Language and the Media**

Just like all other social institutions and value systems, language also does not serve all its speakers equally (Frank and Treichler, 1989, p.15). While talking about the role of language in shaping the patterns of hierarchy in the case of gender, Mayor and Pugh (1987) assert that there is noticeable difference in linguistic choices for the two genders. One example of this is the exception of 'Miss' and 'Mrs.' as compared to 'Mr'. the generic pronoun 'he' is used in case gender is not known or important. According to Coates (1998), generally the language of women with regard to social construction is a 'powerless language'(p. 377). Hasan (2001) makes a similar observation about the gender differences in language and points out that the adjectives used for men and women are explicitly different. For instance, the common adjectives mostly used for men in the media have the connotations of being active, wild, energetic, creative, angry etc. On the other hand, the most commonly used adjectives for women have the connotation of being dependent, delicate, beautiful and submissive.

Similarly, concerning the use of language in the media to formulate gender identities, the media is also a reflection of society. So, the language used on the media can also be a tool to reflect the prejudice existing in society. Maddock (1999) asserts

that press often portrays women as either underprivileged, dangerous or sinner; and language is often used as a tool to serve this purpose. There is stereotypical representation of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ through the use of sensational language in Pakistani media as well.

### **2.3.2 Language of VAW**

The phrase ‘domestic violence’ itself is an understatement as it does not fully encompass the gravity and criminality of VAW within the home. The word ‘domestic’ suggests that it is a private issue and is often perceived as comparatively trivial. The distinction between the private and public is a part of our lives and an ideological perplexity of liberal-patriarchal reality. In a patriarchal society, women’s place is considered to be at home (a private sphere) but that too as a subordinate to men. Men on the other hand, properly occupy, and rule both the spheres (public and private) (Pateman, 1989, pp. 131, 120).

Adding the word ‘domestic’ to violence, shows that it as a common category of offence which makes its impact less criminal and defuses the role of the perpetrator. For example, just like in a general category of offence, to successfully contend the case, the assaulted woman defendant has to prove that she had a reason to believe that her life was in grave danger. This can be problematic when certain terms like ‘spats’, ‘difficulties’, ‘matrimonial discord,’ ‘marital problems’ are used, they trivialise the effect (Easteal, 2003, p. 15).

In the private sphere, the use of the term ‘domestic violence’ to refer to violence within the home minimises its significance to a great deal due to the association of the word ‘domestic’ to be less significant than some of the ‘professional’ terms (Easteal, Bradford, & Bartels, 2012). This tagging of the word ‘domestic’ greatly affects the perception of how violence that happens in the private sphere is seen as not ‘real’ violence. Moreover, cases of rape by spouses in the private spheres are perceived as less severe than cases of rape committed by strangers. The use of the terms such as ‘indirect consent’ or ‘signaled consent’ are common in describing rape by intimate partner (Fewster, 2009).

### **2.3.3 Representation of VAW in the Media**

Violence against women is a social problem which has an impact on women all over the globe. However, despite this unfortunate reality, the quality and quantity of

news reports on violence against women continue to be shockingly unsatisfactory. The media have a significant role in spreading information and awareness about the current social problems such as violence against women. Research on news proves that very insignificant number of news concerns women, has women representation in the information collection, or investigates matters that hold specific significance to women, women's health, for instance child care, the financial position of women in society or violence against women (Steeves, 1997).

Marshall (2004) agrees with Steeves and explains that news about crimes against women has changed over time from exceptional to usual. Additionally, he asserts that consequently such news is not published on the first page unless they involve well-known people. Gallagher (2001) points out that women, their issues and opinions are seen as undeserving of grave attention even in the content which is reserved particularly for women. Even if VAW is reported in the media, this representation is not well-framed and lacks comprehensiveness. Media's representation of the issues of violence against women seems biased (Gill, 2007). Media's reporting of issues of gender-based violence emphasise excessively on assaults by unfamiliar persons, unconventional cases of abuse as well as the abuse carried out against younger female victims. Media coverage of VAW are also full of details that have very little to do with the actual experience of the female victim, such as, "...took turns, while the other pinned the girl down".

Regarding the use of gender specific vocabulary, Gill (2007) makes an interesting observation that adjectives such as bubbly, hysterical, attractive, prudish, chirpy or playful are never used for men. On the other hand, the use of such adjectives is very commonplace in order to describe the female victims of news reports that have been studied by scholars. It is scarce to describe male victims with regard to their sexual charm, while female crime victims are described in such terms most of the times. One more example of this inaccurate depiction of committers of violence by the news media reports is the use of phrases like "noticeably sick and corrupt strangers". However, as a matter of fact, many of the assailant people who are familiar or close to the victim including the intimate partner or friends etc.

News is an integral part of any society as it has a significant impact on the way things are perceived by society especially when it comes to the major social problems like VAW. According to Gillespie (2013) the news media holds a power to spread

information in the quickest way as compared to other mediums of information as well as the power to change, establish and shape public viewpoint. In the light of this argument, it is safe to say that the media's influence in shaping public opinion cannot be ignored. Thus, the media's role in forming society's perception about the societal issues like gender-based violence is quite significant (Sacco, 1995). According to Sacco (1995), it is the job of the news media that have the power to transform the issues of violence which are generally considered to be private or personal to social problems requiring immediate attention (p.141). The way the news media gather, sort and scrutinise information about VAW contributes to form public opinion related to the problems that require immediate attention and by suggesting how they should be fixed.

The mediated representation of violence against women devalues the struggles to mold public's views as well as policies. It further contributes to damaging victims' courage to share their story and stands in the way of identifying the underlying societal causes of violence against women. Significant amount of research in this field proves that the media also impacts the policy making on issues like VAW. Hence, the media's influence goes beyond formulating the public perception of which issues to be taken seriously to the process of policy making regarding important social problems like VAW (Meyers et al., 2009, p.94). Media representation also determine the place of women in society as Ross (2010) suggests that the lives of women are constrained by men. Furthermore, the media scarcely report about the survivors of violence.

Another phenomenon commonly observed in dominantly patriarchal societies is the use of the terms like 'ignorant' for men who perpetrate violent acts. In some stories covered by the media, they are even referred to as children. They are reported as ignorant/unaware of their acts. Using terminology such as children is misleading for it gives the impression that the violent committers of acts of violence are childlike or ignorant and hence unable to differentiate between right and wrong (Ross, 2010, p. 95). The media rather blames the female victims for such assaults, sometimes even going to the extent of suggesting that they are provokers. It not only directs the blame to women but their way of dressing is also highlighted. Other researchers like Alat (2007) and Michelle & Weaver (2003) have also proved this view through their research that the use of language for the portrayal of the issues of violence against women shifts the blame to women and holds them responsible for the assault they face and hence absolving the culprits.

Alat's (2007) research shows that news reporting of the issues of violence against women in four of Turkey's most popular newspapers portrayed the female victims in a negative light, showing them as "faulty". The results of the research further disclosed that the media has a wrong tendency of holding women responsible for the crimes committed against them whereas the role of the male perpetrators was undermined or abated. Alat (2007) also highlighted the frames that denote gender roles. She further found out in the study that women are mostly positioned lowest in the social order (p. 29). Watson (2008) agrees with Alat that stories of VAW do not hold much significance in the popular media. Women in the issues of VAW are persistently and methodically sidelined in news broadcasting mediums.

### **2.3.4 Reporting of Crime Cases in Pakistan**

According to the recent studies, there has been a sharp increase in the cases of gender-based violence in the past years in Pakistan. Aurat Foundation reports (2020) show that a total of 2,297 cases of gender-based violence were reported during 2020. At the same time, a 2020 bi-annual report of Sustainable Social Development Organisation (SSDO), the Tracking Numbers State of Violence Against Women and Children shows that 158 cases of domestic violence were reported during the earlier months of 2020, with Punjab as the most-affected region followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A total of nine cases of violence against women in January went up to 165 cases in June 2020.

Another SSDO report from January-June 2021 showed that 325 cases of violence against women were reported in the first half of 2021 in Punjab, while only 158 out of them were reported by the media. Correspondingly, 58 out of 346 cases were reported by the media in Sindh. On July 14, 2021, a PTI MPA Zehra Naqvi had moved an adjournment motion in the Punjab Assembly over killing of 81 women for honour across the province in that particular year. Archival research tells us that between January and November 2020; at least 83 women had been killed in the name of honour in Lahore alone! In Sindh, as a media report dated February 19, 2020, had revealed that as many as 769 people, including 510 females, had become victim to honour killings between 2014 and 2019.

The situation is not much different when it comes to the issues of harassment and sexual violence against women in Pakistan. According to a report published by the

Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO), a total of 6,754 women were abducted while 1890 were raped during the first six months of 2021. A total of 34 cases of rape were reported in Islamabad while 3,721 cases of violence against women were registered in Punjab. The report also pointed that out of 163 cases about the abduction of women were registered in Islamabad and, In Punjab, there is a huge number of cases of sexual harassment, abduction, rape, child abuse and domestic violence.

The last few months of 2022 have been particularly disturbing for Pakistani women. The most recent example is the terrifying case of a 27-year-old woman named Noor Muqaddam, who was violently tortured and murdered in the nation's capital on July 21. It has even been termed as a "femicide" to bring to the attention the massive scale of the problem and its systemic nature. However, gender-based violence in the country is not new (kirmani, 2021).

According to Carter and Weaver (2003:28), gender bias in the media reporting is not limited to one country, rather it is evident in the media across the globe. When it comes to crime reporting, Payvar (2004) states that rape cases are a source of 'gender typification'. Zia (1995) refers to such reporting as periodic and sensational items. Jewkes (2005) points out that news about crime reports is organised in a way to create an impact of shock to the readers and it is through this sensational aspect that they try to get the attention of readers. Devi (2005) refers to the same aspect and points out that this type of sensational reporting takes away the attention of the readers from the real news. Pakistani newspapers are not far behind in this aspect as they also tend to choose items more compliant to sensationalism. Gender-based crimes are reported more in terms of the victim's appearance, age, dressing and familial relationships in order to invoke the connotations of dependence and submissiveness. The way Pakistani media covers crime and violence shows its level of gender bias.

## **2.4 Literary Theories**

### **2.4.1 Feminism**

Ray (2013) defines feminism as an awareness of all the patriarchal practices that include power exploitation, and subjugation of women's rights at the physical, emotional and ideological levels, in the domestic or professional setting, and in society at large. It also includes any deliberate effort by both the genders to change the current circumstances. Feminism is not about disapproving or disregarding men which seems



to be a common perception. On the contrary, feminism discourages any kind of sexism regardless of the gender.

De Rozario and Zheng (2010) explain that feminism aims to challenge the systematic prejudices that women face every day. The goal of feminism is not female supremacy rather equality in terms of labor, in terms of rights and in terms of social status. Gibbons (2018) defines feminism as a philosophy that challenges the gender norms in society. Hocks (2000) points out that feminism is not in any way an anti-male movement. It is a movement that aims at promoting gender equality as well as bringing an end to sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.

#### **2.4.2 Stylistics**

According to stylisticians, the term "style" is not a new concept. The notion of style has been there since the foundation of European literary philosophy. And since style is an element of the persuasion technique, it is associated with classical rhetoric (Hough, 1969). Agreeing with Hough, Hashim (2017) stated that the antiquity of stylistics can be traced back to the period where there used to be a lot of emphasis on oral expressions. He maintained that modern style has its foundation in the pre-renaissance rhetoric which the Romans termed 'elucutio' while the Greeks called it 'lexis'.

Stylistics can be defined as the linguistic analysis of style and its purpose is mainly to link language to its aesthetic meaning (Leech and Short, 1981). According to them, it is the responsibility of a stylistician to describe how language was used to accomplish a certain aesthetic impact. On the other hand, its linguistic purpose is to elucidate the reason a particular form of expression is chosen by the author.

Carter and Simpson (2005) divide Stylistics into two types: literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics. Apparently, Linguistic as well as Literary Stylistics deal with the relation between language and literature, there are some fundamental, functional differences between the two types. Fundamentally, Linguistic Stylistics focuses more on the linguistic aspect and style of language in general. It analysis and the functional styles of the language as they are used. In this way, it is the most natural form of Stylistics because the linguistic stylisticians study language and style in order to establish analytical models which leads to the development of literary theories (p.4).

Alternatively, Literary Stylistics focuses more on establishing the foundation

for better comprehension, acknowledgement of style as well as explanation of literary and writer-centered accounts. Carter & Simpson (2005) explain that it still makes use of linguistics in that it attempts to draw on linguistic perceptions and to use them in a more comprehensive understanding of impact of language than can be done without taking from the toolkit of linguistics (p.6).

In simpler words, it is the study of an author's literary or non-literary style. Widdowson (1975) states that stylistics is an attempt to examine literary discourse from a linguistic viewpoint. According to him, it analyses the literary texts through a linguistic lens. He asserted that what makes stylistics different from literary criticism and as well as linguistics is that it provides a connection between them. According to him, Stylistics is a combination of literary criticism and linguistics.

In other words, it can be said that Stylistics is a way of analysing a text in which language holds primary position. It is the different linguistic patterns, forms and structures that are used as the catalogue of the purpose of a text. This is the reason stylisticians put great emphasis on language. Moreover, when text is analysed at discourse level, it holds a functional importance (Simpson, 2004).

### **2.4.3 Feminist Stylistics**

Feminist Stylistics is the stylistic study or analysis of a text from a feminist perspective. Montoro (2014) defines feminist stylistics as a sub-field of stylistics, which has as its aim to explore the ways by which authors represent gender-related affairs through linguistic means in their writings. It does this by taking from the stylistic tool-kit.

Montoro (2014) has defined the expression 'gender concerns' from a different perspective. She states that feminism and the analysis of language together provide a framework or main analytical model. Such analytical framework shows the way gender concerns as well as language are integrated into literatures because of the influence of feminism on this field.

Mills (1995) is considered to be one of the pioneers of feminist stylistics. She established the framework of Feminist Stylistics in addition to setting its basis as she was the first to analyse a literary text through a feminist lens. She focused on subjects like gender-bias; the way the female characters are developed in literary text, and how they are portrayed and how gender interactions are shown. Thus, the main objective of

feminist stylistics is to create a consciousness of how gender is presented in texts" (p.165). It helps to develop a toolkit for the readers to understand the text's underlying themes (p.2). Feminist stylistics focuses on the explanations for the authors' choice of specific styles of writing, as well as the effects of language use (p.4).

Feminist stylistics aims to present the intersection of literary criticism and language through a feminist standpoint. In these terms, Feminist Stylistics can be defined as an analysis that relates to feminism and uses the analysis of language to analyse literary pieces of writings (Mills, 1995, p. 13).

According to these definitions, Feminist Stylistics includes the following key beliefs:

- There is an arbitrary relationship between men and women in society;
- Most of the human societies are patriarchal;
- Male dominance is visible in all major institutions including economic, social and political systems;
- To demonstrate the way gender is highlighted in different texts;
- How patriarchal system subjugate the rights of women
- Women and men have different styles of writing. There is a marked difference between the two;
- Apart from literature, woman is the subject of various other types of discourses as well.

Additionally, feminist stylistics provides insights to look into the ideological beliefs of different writers. It provides a method for the investigation of power relation, exploitation and disparity structures as fragments of the stylistics analysis. While doing so, it focuses on the linguistic and functional elements of the texts and its perception by the readers. (Davies and Elder, 2004).

Woldemariam (2018) adds that Feminist stylisticians believe that language has the power to frame and preserve a specific opinion or viewpoint about women. Feminist Stylistics attempts to explore any text at all those levels where the meaning is driven by the ideological awareness of the author. Mills cited by Woldemariam (2018), explains that Feminist Stylistics aims to:

- reveal how gender is dealt at various points and degrees in a text
- affect the way discourse is outlined
- suggest changes in the patterns and attitudes

- build the links between the levels of words and discourse
- influence to cause a change in the representative ways via analysis, instruction and creating new ideals for writing
- discover underlying conventions
- enable readers see and analyse the texts from a gendered perspective
- develop a system of spreading awareness.

According to the contemporary feminist stylistics, men and women differ from each other to the extent of how they see reality (Bahimnouris & Ghandeharium, 2020). There is another technical term used to refer to feminist stylistics, ‘genderlect’, which means there are linguistically different on how the two genders comprehend social truths and facts (Bahimnouris & Ghandeharium, 2020). Mills (1995) also believes that reality is shaped by gendered perceptions and language is controlled and shaped by repressive gendered, social, philosophical and economic structures. As a result, feminist stylisticians have to cope with written texts as well as reality (p.11).

For feminist stylisticians, language’s artistic function is not an area of concern (Leech and Short, 2007). Moreover, evidence suggests that in a variety of texts, certain representative patterns exist. This proves that language is accommodating and can be used to offer a variety to suit the purpose and conform to the ideologies of the authors. It is functional and purposive. For instance, authors use formal, dignified and figurative language for the aesthetic purposes. Similarly, repetition can be used as a technique to put emphasis and so on.

Consequently, feminist stylistic analysis also focuses on exploring the elements that have an impact on what the text intends to convey in a social setting. Feminist stylistics is more than merely asking simpler inquiries about the writer’s choice of particular expression, or the aesthetic effect the author intended to achieve it goes on to investigate the ways the linguistic factors like perspective, metaphor, power, or transitive devices are linked to gender concerns (Mills, 2000). Hence, it can be said that feminism stylistics deals with how linguistic features can be explored for gender discrepancies.

#### **2.4.4 Feminist view on Violence against Women**

Feminist movements aim at raising better awareness about the issue of violence against women. This perspective questioned former explanations of personal life and

focused on employing abuse against women in the public attention supporting females to combat gender-based violence. Mullen et al. (2009) identifies that the feminist movement reshaped the ideas associated with criminal atrocities committed against women like rape and less recognised practices of victimisation for example domestic violence, abuse by a family member or friend, stalking and harassment. Henceforth, feminism has attempted to transform the perception of the people about VAW from being a domestic/ personal affair to a major social problem. Just raising consciousness about the seriousness of the issues of violence against women is a victory for feminist movements; elimination of these crimes is a mission that requires media support, consideration by policy makers, the ruling class and general public at large.

Feminists like Sarnavka (2003) introduce a new perspective of viewing the cases of gender-based violence stressing that, VAW is here seen from dual views, social view of VAW and how it is presented in the media. The latter view refers to all kind of misrepresentations, sexism, inaccurate reflections and suppressing the voices of female, that go against the rights of women to have the same approach to discourses as men (p. 91).

Agreeing with this point, Ross (2010) points out that female representation in the media is not apt rather in a way media violates them. She affirms that females are pulverized and deprived of agency and humanity as they are reduced to their physical shape (Ross, 2010, p.46). She believes that the description of women in terms of her body parts is also a form of violence against them.

Therefore, rendering to the feminist viewpoint, in patriarchal societies, as women belong to an inferior group, their issues are not given importance and are misrepresented (Woods, 2005). This viewpoint identifies that applying common terms while describing incidents which are experienced by women only is a misrepresentation. For example, the media reports of violence against women do not paint a comprehensive picture of the gravity of this social problem. With time, female representation is getting limited in the media coverage particularly in the matter of significant issues. It encourages a male-dominant setting that is frequently unreceptive to women (Ross, 2010, p.47). The media do not give proper coverage to women's issues.

## 2.4.5 Lexical Level

### 2.4.5.1 Naming and Androcentrism

When it comes to feminist perspective of language, naming has always been an important factor. According to the feminist perspectives, all languages entail sexism in particular as they denote or label society through a male perspective complying with the gender-related stereotypes and beliefs already existing in society (Mills, 2005, p.78).

Andocentrism is described by Bailey, Dovidio, and LaFrance (2018) as the tendency to base the world round men's desires, values, and priorities as well as to marginalise women. It shows men as the norm or standard whereas women are marked as gender-specific. Its evidence can be seen in the use of male terms like he, man and such other male-specific vocabulary that is used to represent everyone.

Furthermore, according to Bem (1993), one of the negative aspects of andocentrism is that when men are positioned at the core of society, it only cares about the opinions, bodies and incidents happening to men. Thus, andocentrism puts men as superior beings whereas women are assumed to be subordinate to men. In addition, Bem (1993) contends, a difference needs to be maintained between male hegemony and patriarchy. Furthermore, androcentrism is not only about the treatment of men as superior and women as inferior. In fact, it treats men as humans whereas women are seen as 'others' and the function of andocentrism emphasises that men have higher social control. He adds that andocentrism withstands gender discrimination by obscuring the masculinity of man's dominance underneath the banner of the unbiased norms.

Bahman (2017) carried out research on the representation of men and women in English textbooks and discovered patterns of gender inequality and gender bias in textbooks. He noticed that in English textbooks women's representation is poor. The under representation of women is evident in the difference in assigning of professional roles to men and women which are not equal. Men are mostly given status-wise esteemed roles whereas female characters usually hold less dignified professional roles. The position of women is largely and predominantly as mothers or wives. Similarly, male characters get entitled to a broader range of occupations as compared to female characters. Reputable positions like doctor, advocate or engineer that hold a higher

position in society are often allotted to men, whereas women are usually assigned occupational roles such as secretary, nurse and schoolteacher. Andocentrism can also be seen when job titles vary for the two genders although they are doing the same job, for instance, technician- operator, assistant manager- manager's assistant, office manager- typing supervisor and chef-cook.

#### *2.4.5.2 Women as Marked Form*

Mills (2008) identifies other instances of gender bias in language for example most of the terms used for women are marked so they suggest sexual promiscuousness including the usage of terms like mistress, hostess or madam when it comes to the use of such terms for men, it is observed that they are unmarked for example the use of the term 'bachelor' which signifies freedom and independence. Use of the word like spinster is an example of such bias. While bachelorette and spinster have similar meaning, the term 'spinster' carries additional negative implications since this word refers to an over-age unmarried woman. There is no such term for men as an old, unmarried man is just a bachelor. This kind of representation is biased and it presents women as 'others' and suggests if they do not hold an equal status as men while in fact, they are equal members of society and deserve the same status.

Thorne & Henley (1975) also support this idea through another example of this bias; when suffixes like – 'esses, '-nne' or '-ette' are added to certain words in order to refer to the occupation as feminine. This is just another perfect instance of such marked forms. Such words normally have pejorative and demeaning implication on women, like 'actress'. Moreover, because of this distinction as these words are not marked when talking about the professions of men for instance, 'actor', 'poet' etc. so, language bsounds rather sexist (Hartman and Judd, 1978). Mills (2008) condemns the use of such occupational words and asserts that these occupations should not be made feminine by adding such affixes, in fact the words 'male and female' should be mentioned prior to the occupations, such as male chef or female chef

#### **2.4.6 Syntax level**

Contemporary linguists believe that textual analysis should not be carried only on the word level. Rather texts should be analysed with regard to the context of the words in which they are used as their connotations are not confined exclusively to within the words (Mills, 2005). It means that researchers or critics need to examine

texts at the level of phrases or sentences. Mills (2005) came up with particular criteria for investigating texts at the phrase-level built upon the former researches. They should look into ready-made phrases, presuppositions and inferences, metaphors and the choices of transition when investigating phrases to possibly explore structures which denote gender-prejudice (p. 98).

#### *2.4.6.1 Ready-Made phrase*

Mills claims that some phrases in language are pre-constructed and they are used to deliver sexist implications (Mills, 2005, p. 98). Mills (2005) presents evidence based on former studies carried out by some researchers that depict a number of ways by which discrimination against women is committed in different texts. One example is the usage of the phrase “A woman’s work is never done”; it implies the message that it is commonplace (p. 98). This phrase denotes that the problem of dealing with the burden of their daily jobs is not as much significant as the ‘fact’ that they always have a lot of tasks that they are simply do not complete. Another popular proverb which roughly translates as, in order to gain a man’s love, feed him well, accepts a variety of diverse meanings. Such proverbs implement that, just a woman who is exceptionally good at cooking will be successful in winning the heart of a man. It gives the message that personality attributes of a woman are not important and it is solely the job of a woman to appease and satisfy a man whereas men do not have to make any efforts in this regard. Other proverbs like ‘mutton in the clothes of a lamb’ which is used to refer to elderly women. It implies that old women should dress up soberly according to their age. But if men behave in a similar way, no such phrase is used for them. It shows that the use of such phrases is stereotypical to women and are in a way ridiculing and derogatory. Another example of pre-constructed phrase is the use of rhyming slang. For instance, slangs like ‘trouble and strife’ are used to refer to a wife. Such a phrase is sexist as it conveys that women are a problem since they create conflict and distress. Another similar proverb ‘women only belong at home’ is offensive as it reinforces gender roles and implies that women are not capable of working outside the house and they should be restricted to the confinement of their homes (Mills, 2005, pp. 99-100).

Other researchers have also pointed out that language entails certain sexist biases especially in the use of proverbs which contribute to social subjugation of women. It can be seen clearly in certain Persian proverbs, for example, a Persian proverb is translated as ‘when devil gets caught in his own wiles he goes to a woman’.



Such proverbs are clearly derogatory as this one implies that a woman is eviler than devil himself, suggesting that even if devil is trapped in his self-created deceit, he gets help and guidance from woman. Hence implying that women are even more deceitful and evil than devil (Nakhavaly and Sharif, 2013).

These studies prove that language is inherently sexist. So is the case with English, which is not much different as well. There are any examples of proverbs in English language that reveal the ethos, traditions, lifestyle and beliefs of societies but also show chauvinistic attitudes. Some of these proverbs as quoted by Zhan (2008) are as followed:

1. 'Woman is created with glass.'
2. 'Woman is born to cry.'
3. 'To see women cry is not more significant than seeing goose walking barefooted.'

The initial proverb refers to women as fragile as a glass. It denotes that women are weak and are unable to protect themselves. Moreover, it conveys that just like a glass has the qualities of being sparkling as well as transparent, and is used as a lovely decoration piece usually, so according to men, these features are similar to those of women. The following examples show women as whiny and imply that they cry for no reason, hence belittling, disregarding and demeaning their problems. Most of such proverbs show women as beauty objects. David (2010) concludes that such proverbs imply that the criteria for men for the selection of their life partners is having the qualities of fragility and beauty. This puts women in a submissive place where they need to live up to men's ideals to get their security.

Mills (2005) has identified that there are numerous contrasting gender specific pairs of words in English where the term used for women has developed completely different connotation than the one used for their male counterparts. According to her, different feminist studies on this topic conclude that most of the languages have hidden structures that denote men as positive while women as negative. Hence, chauvinism is concealed in language (p. 83). Mills (1990) refers to it as the semantic disparagement of women. It is the procedure through which words related to women start to have negative connotations (p.170).

Another significant feature of language that can be sexist is the use of

metaphors. Brown (1962) defines metaphors as an instrument for drawing interpretations grounded in perceived structural counterparts between two subjects belonging to different domains. Authors use metaphors and metonyms to discriminate against women. For example, metonyms like 'honey cheeks', 'sugar lips' and 'angel face' are descriptions of women in terms of their body parts. Such descriptions of women which break them down into their body parts are a lot more common than corresponding depictions of males. Montashery (2013) also points out such linguistic structures lead the readers to see particular situations in predominantly stereotyped manner. Another example of this is men commonly using love names for women like honey, sugar cake, peach and baby bear, kitten etc. Due to such titles, women are reduced to things like desserts that men can eat or a beautiful object needing admiration of men or like a pet that men can play with.

Mills (2005) asserts that sometimes it is inexplicable why some metaphors and endearment terms which may seem harmless and affectionate can also be used to degrade women. For example, the terms like 'my bird', 'my chick', which seemingly are used for endearments, but which can also imply a certain degree of similarity amongst women and adorable little pets. She contends that these metaphors may seem as completely harmless and maybe used with an intention to show affection and compliments, but they can be belittling. It is noteworthy that these terms are mostly used for women and not for men (p. 171).

Shen (2006) studied Chinese metaphors and concluded that they bear negative sexual and ethical implications to describe women. Words like 'bird' or 'chick' are used to describe women who are young and attractive. On the other hand, older women are referred to as 'pig' or 'dog'. On the contrary, no such terms exist for their male counterparts.

Moreover, it can be said that the use of such metaphors reflects the philosophy or contextual knowledge one makes use of, that can reflect their thoughts about specific thing. For instance, the use of the word 'predator' for men may be inferred as denoting to men or women's sexuality. Technically, this word is used to refer to an immoral man who is metaphorically, perceived to hunt women just as predators go after their preys. Mills (2005) concludes that former research conducted on the use of metaphors reveal that when the sexuality of men is frequently defined using metaphors of animalistic nature, it is equated to be similarly instinctual as animals and gives the

impression that they do not have any control over it (p. 105). The use of such metaphors has negative and dangerous implications as it absolves men involved in abusive acts of any responsibility in particular in the cases of sexual abuse against women. It implies that it is in the instinct of men to abuse women and they have no control over it.

#### *2.4.6.2 Passivisation*

Language entails many tools that can be used for the purpose of promoting certain underlying ideas and biases. Passivisation is one such tool. First of all, passives allow authors to take away the focus from the subject or erase it completely. Reilly et al. (2005) demonstrate that passivisation has the impact of putting the agent in the background and creates the effect of what is known as ‘impersonal prose’ that contributes to elevating the author above the text. For instance, in the educational discourse, passivisation creates a detachment of the writer from the source of information in order to give an impression of impartiality (Emeksiz et al. 2015).

Pertaining to the media coverage of sexual abuse, however, passive structures are used as a tool to abstruse the agency and lessen the responsibility of either the powerful people or groups or the ones having the same ideology as the reporters (Busa 2013; Fowler et al. 1979; Van Dijk 1995). In the terms of linguistics, a causal link is removed and agent is either detached or put in a position where the focus is shifted away from it. Consequently, passivisation as a tool that disseminates the accountability of the culprit hence presenting the events in neutral way and reporting the crime without pointing out the guilty (Lamb, 1991, p. 251).

Abraham (2006) and Wanner (2009) contend that the passive structures involve making the non-agent the subject of the sentence and doing its topicalisation as the patient of the original active sentence is moved to the place of the subject or topic. So, passivisation shifts the focus from the agent to the patient of the act and in this way, the agent is dismissed or put in the background. In passive constructions, the attention is not only deviated away from the agent of the act but it also puts the patient into the position of a passive receiver. In this way, passive voice can be utilized as a tool to portray people or groups as helpless receivers of the action by taking away their agency. So, in order to promote certain ideologies, writers can make use of passivisation as a tool, for instance, in order to maintain the certain stereotypes about social groups who are in minority by taking away their agency or credit for the good acts (Fowler, 1991).

Lamb (1991) further argues that correspondingly, passivisation can portray women as passive, powerless recipients of the acts of violence who are unable to protect themselves and need to be saved by others. Furthermore, when the responsibility of the act is shifted to the patient through passivisation, the agent is exempted from the responsibility of his wrongdoings and accountability goes missing.

Moreover, authors' linguistics choices such as the choices of lexemes, grammar, and rhetoric elements depict the ideology they support and they can use these tools to create identities. When the writers choose to use passivisation or active constructions, it can expose them in terms of their ideological positioning that includes taking specific positions towards the topic of their research (Ivanic, Camps, 2001). Consequently, while on the one hand, passive constructions without an agent shift the focus away from the original subject, on the other hand, they can also help disclose the position and individual stance of the writer about the particular subject (Baratta, 2008). Thus, authors' selection of voice is simply directed by who they think is more important; the agent or the patient of the act. This choice on the part of the authors is ideologically informed. In this way, voice is a tool that showcases and exposes the personal as well as institutions' beliefs and ideologies about a certain topic.

Bohner (2001) revealed that the inclination to write about the cases of sexual abuse using passive constructions is increasing with the authors' embracing of rape myths are increasing. If a man is shown as a criminal, the inhuman attributes of the agent are set forth with regard to power. In the context of Pakistani society, the established identities in the general circumstances are usually based on gender stereotypes for example masculine rationality, independence and activity and feminine passivity, dependence and emotionality. Similarly, different types of adjectives are associated with men and women. These adjectives are not neutral, rather they have certain implications as power relations and agency are concerned. In this case, research on the use of adjectives in the newspaper headlines is significant because they present the qualities that a particular society attributes to individuals or groups with regard to gender differentiation. When these attributes are reported in the newspapers, they depict the social acceptance devoted to them. These approaches about men are attributed to the language drive when portrayed in the newspapers e.g., the male agents are usually presented in terms of their brutality to attribute the idea of powerfulness. Whereas, woman victims are attributed with adjectives denoting powerlessness. The investigation

of these adjectives will help discover the problems in the way headlines are created to promote gender-related stereotypes instead of discouraging them.

Lastly, as Fairclough (1992) and Van Dijk (1995) point out that that the events are framed in discourse in a particular way that has an impact on how the reality is perceived by the readers/ audience and how they see the world. Passive constructions are one of these framing tools. Henley et al. (1995) demonstrated through their research on the audience/ readers' response that people who were presented with rape reports written in passive constructions showed relatively negative approaches towards the sexual abuse victims and seemed more recipient towards rape myths. Hence because of the use of passivisation, the readers were less empathetic towards the victim and showed indifference to the responsibility of the perpetrator. Passive constructions both show and represent reality infusing writers' own viewpoints as well as ideological and analytical schemes. Thus, passivisation is an important linguistic tool especially when it comes to the reporting of stories where one is a victim and the other, a perpetrator. This tool can shape media discourse which the authors can use to form public opinions and views to preserve or challenge the ideologies existing in society. However, as Billig (2008) argues, passivisation is not always a conscious choice on the part of the authors. In fact, sometimes the use of passive voice is inevitable. It can also be a reflection of the authors' typical way of writing. Nonetheless, even if the use of passive voice is a conscious choice or a reflection of the author's natural style, its analysis can help us discover about the ideologies that guide the authors' account. It offers us a chance to investigate the general gender commands of society where these reports are created.

#### **2.4.7 Analysis at the Level of Discourse**

According to discourse theory, content means the intervention of textual features and encryptions and factors external to the text that impact how the text is developed, as well as how it is perceived. Mills (2005) claims that discourse entails gender differences. She calls the use of such terms "gendered frameworks" (Mills, 2005, p. 123). It is important to explore gendered frameworks in order to discover the gendered ideologies present in discourse. Therefore, Mills (2005) argues that by analysing text at discourse level (i.e., investigating patterns and structures in texts), analysts can explore the linguistic elements reflecting gender ideologies. She suggests methods through which textual analysis could be carried out at discourse level by analysing three dimensions that denote gender stereotypes; including characterisation,

fragmentation and focalisation. Since characterisation and focalization deal with the literary texts and are not relevant to the current study, let us just look into the use of the technique of fragmentation to promote gender ideologies.

#### *2.4.7.1 Fragmentation*

The term fragmentation can be explained as a process through which people are defined with regard to their body parts rather than persons as whole. Representations of women fragmented into bodily parts happens a lot more often as compared to men. It is evident not only literary texts but also can be seen in the news media while reporting about the crimes of violence against women. Alternatively, men's descriptions are not done fragmenting them into their body parts but rather as whole bodies (Mills, 2005, p.166).

## **2.5 Linguistic Determinism**

Various views about sexism in language exist among linguists as some hold the view that sexism in language symbolises a sexist society, while some believe that it is the sexist language that plays a part in promoting sexism in society (Weatherall, 2002). Many scholars have demonstrated that it is language that facilitates sexist point of view and that powerful or influential members of society, e.g., men in patriarchal society are in position produce language and consequentially, construct the reality (Spender, 2010).

Hickmann (2000) defines linguistic determinism as the belief that linguistics structures confine and define our knowledge and perception besides other cognitive processes. According to Mills (2012), it refers to the variety in linguistic structures that define the various views social views about the world. Mills (1995) asserts that societal attitudes regarding gender have an impact on language and texts in turn influence the societal attitudes.

## **2.6 Previous Studies in Pakistani Context**

The previous studies that examined and drew insights about the role of media in promoting gender biases when it comes to the reporting of issues of violence against women give us peculiar insights into the issue. Results from the former researches bring forth some crucial observations related to media portrayal of the issues of violence against women.

Rasool and Irshad (2008), in their research examined the use of gender-specific adjectives in crime reporting. They discovered that media reinforces the conflict between masculinity and femininity and it normally tends to preserve cultural stereotypes of social values. Newspapers use condescending and gender specific language while presenting a weak, dependent and underprivileged portrayal of women in society. Gender-biased language in newspaper reporting remains evident in the stories of violence, cases of rape and other crimes against women. This type of media coverage of crime produces a stereotyped image of women in the Pakistani society, and endorses the negative portrayal of women as weak, vulnerable and powerless in particular situations. Submissiveness, vulnerability and inferiority are supplementary information which is added in the news about a female victim through the choice of adjectives. The particular use of adjectives for the victims attributes some type of power to men and incapability and agency for women. The results show that both the newspapers, whether English or Urdu, use gender specific portrayal. Nevertheless, overall Urdu newspapers tend to use gender specific adjectives somewhat more often. This structure of news pattern additionally supports the idea of reliance of women on men, and their submissiveness to men.

In Yasmeen's (2021) study, she used the methods of framing analysis and narrative analysis, media discourse was analysed to find out the key themes and designs of media representation of victims of violence against women (VAW) (Sarantakos 2019: 379–380). She has used CDA to find out the ways in which news discourse is guided by power relations and dominance in society, and the ways in which discourse itself plays an important part in constructing or destroying those relationships. She examined the linguistic representation of women in crime reporting, and how it influences readers.

Yasmeen (2021) stated that women are found more visible in crime reporting than their presence in other stories but are placed in middle pages as compared to men. Results of the study also reveal that there is asymmetrical portrayal of women as they are reported in crime news in terms of their relationship with men. She (2021) asserts that there is a lot of focus on factors like their marital status and age. The news about women victims are sensationalized more as compared to those of men. She further states that women victims are blamed for the crime and when it comes to the use of language, grammatical structure of passive voice is seen most frequently in the news

about crime against women than in other stories. The reporting style of the reporters is a by-product of patriarchal male-dominated society, as well as sensationalising practices and blame game. Another noticeable factor is that of not using the names. The absence of names can be a strategy to avoid revealing victim to save her from further humiliation and trauma. Yasmeen (2021) asserts that the purpose of hiding the identity of the female victim in sexual crimes is linked with the formation of cultural gender ideology as the idea of honour is linked with a woman's sexuality. On the other hand, the irrelevant details about her marital status, clothes, age and relationship with a man and the use of first names is a mark of immature reporting. Such type of careless and sensationalized reporting is found promoting negative awareness among readers and increasing gender discrimination against female victims. She also points out that negative impact of this depiction is likely to be more severe on female readers as compared to the male. Generally, in society, there will be more likelihood for women to be discouraged from playing an active role. They may also start thinking about themselves from a men's perspective. Overall, the depiction of a woman reflects the impact of socio-economic factors and culture.

## **2.7 Summary**

In the light of the literature, it is evident that sexism does exist in all languages and feminist stylistic analysis of the discourse can help uncover the biases in the use of language. Previous studies also show that media hold a power in shaping public opinion and beliefs about any subject. When it comes to the issues of violence against women, there has not been any significant decrease in the number of these cases despite several movements, more awareness, and more media coverage. Studies show that media coverage of VAW has not been apt since the language used by media can be biased and reinforce gender stereotypes that exist in society. A feminist stylistic analysis of the media discourse can help uncover the problems with the media portrayal of these issues. Previous studies have focused either on only one linguistic feature for example the use of adjectives, passivisation or on framing or narrative techniques. Mills (2005) believes that the best way to uncover these biases is to study them at the level of discourse. Such biases are concealed and often it is the underlying implications of certain words and phrases that uphold and promote gender ideologies. Hence, a deeper investigation of different linguistic choices as well as the hidden ideologies they convey is required for a comprehensive understanding of the problems with the use of language for the media



representation of VAW.

The current study tries to present a comprehensive analysis of the media discourse by uncovering the biases in these newspaper reports at different levels i.e. lexical, syntactic, semantic, and discourse levels. It will focus on linguistics features as well as the use of naming conventions, adjectives, passivisation and collocations to uncover the ideologies behind the choice of certain linguistic features and techniques and how reality is shaped by the use of these techniques. Moreover, the use of corpus method will allow a quantitative analysis as well as the use of a large amount of data so that its results can more authentic and applicable.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A mixed-method approach was used to capitalize on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches as it allows for a more comprehensive investigation of the research problem. As the study required numerical data on the usage of certain words and phrases linked to the concepts of gender biases, a corpus analysis was required. For the interpretation of the numerical data and an in-depth insight into the implication of the linguistic choices made by the writers of the articles, a qualitative approach was adopted. The data consisted of newspaper articles. The current study focused on print media because of its availability online and the public's daily exposure to it.

##### **3.1.1 Population**

As the study aims to investigate the reporting of VAW cases in print media, the population for the current study consists of articles covering the issues of violence against women in Pakistan published in four major Pakistani English newspapers: The Daily Dawn, the News, The Nation, and Express Tribune. These newspapers were selected because they are the leading national newspapers that have a wide-ranging readership and significant influence on public opinion. These sources covered a wide range of stories, including the stories covering significant social issues like VAW. Focusing on widely-read publications allowed the researcher to analyse the framing of violence against women and the way it influences the public. Initially, five newspapers were selected including 'The Daily Times' which is also among the top newspapers in Pakistan but later it was dropped because it did not cover ample stories of VAW in Pakistan.

##### **3.1.2 Sample**

As VAW is one of the major social issues, the newspapers covered innumerable stories related to the issue. Therefore, the research required an appropriate sampling technique. Hence, a systematic purposive sampling technique was adopted. The articles were taken from the online publications of the newspapers. The sample was selected

after a thorough browsing of the newspapers online. The researcher used the key words to find the relevant articles. All the articles that emerged as a result of browsing were skimmed. After skimming, a total of 110 relevant articles were selected. They were selected according to their relevance to the study on three grounds: they must cover the two main aspects of the study, domestic and sexual abuse against Pakistani women, they must consist of at least 200 words each so that the required corpus could be created and they must have been published between January 2019 and May 2023. The research was narrowed down to domestic and sexual abuse because these are the two major issues concerning violence against women in Pakistan. Moreover, it was observed during the research that these are the two most frequently reported forms of VAW in Pakistani media. The reason for the selection of the time frame was to portray the current situation of the representation of VAW so that the most relevant data is gathered and the results can be applicable to the current scenario as it is a major social issue.

Hence the selection of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select media articles that specifically address the issues of VAW in Pakistan. It was made certain that the data collected was according to the requirement of the research question, leading to a focused analysis of how this issue is portrayed in Pakistani print media. The use of purposive sampling technique further helped the researcher to focus on the most relevant and insightful data on the media portrayal of VAW in Pakistan. Moreover, it allowed the researcher to present an in depth analysis and understanding of the representation of VAW in Pakistani print media.

### **3.1.3 Corpora**

A corpus of 110 articles consisting of around 45,000 words was created. From the four English newspapers, the relevant articles were searched using keywords like ‘domestic violence’, ‘domestic abuse’, ‘sexual violence’ etc. The articles were taken from online newspapers and composed into a Word file.

## **3.2 Theoretical framework**

For the current study, the researcher has positioned herself within a feminist post-structuralist approach using feminist stylistic method of analysis. Social constructionism depends upon the idea that there is no objective reality or truth. The knowledge of truth is accessible to us through the ways we apply categorisation to make sense of the world around us. Reality should not be considered as a mirror reflection,

instead as an outcome of the way we categorise the world. According to the social constructionist view, knowledge is built and preserved in social practices. Daily conversations and other uses of language are instances of how and where knowledge is being constructed. Such constructions also lead to the implications for what is seen as normal or unusual, accepted or not. On account of this, constructions and power dynamics are related to each other, it sets the margins for what people can and cannot do, what is acceptable and what is not. Thus, the social structure of knowledge does become truth or reality with real complications (Burr, 2015).

Mills (1995) was the first to use the term 'Feminist Stylistics'. It is a branch of stylistics that according to scholars is politically motivated and that aims to develop and promote awareness about the way gender is presented in texts (Mills, 1995, p. 207). It tries to explore the language used in texts to answer questions investigated especially within a feminist perspective (Mills, 1995). Similar to post-structuralism, the feminist branch can be seen as a tool for literary analysis, however, it also tries to investigate relationships between language, sociology, and power relations as they all influence gender. Feminist stylisticians favour the type of analyses that criticise the presentation of females as helpless and ineffective, particularly compared to males.

Feminist Stylistics is a theory that explores the relationship between language and gender in different literary as well as non-literary texts. It offers tools to reveal the biased use of language against women. Feminist Stylistics offers an analysis model that relates itself to feminism and that makes use of linguistic tools to expose hidden agendas in various texts. Mills (1995, p. 207) points out that texts should be read deviously because the language used in any text is not only a tool for expressing ideas; instead, it is a tool that can shape ideas.

Accordingly, the researcher has put in a critical approach to how gendered structures and power dynamics are imitated, established and challenged. Moreover, the researcher has taken an intersectional angle on the interaction between identities and experiences and how they are communicated and manifested in different ways through different processes of relegation and exclusion.

Mills (1995) suggests that text need to be studied at the discourse level. She aims to link the word and the phrase with a "larger notion of ideology" (Mills, 1995, p. 123). Mills (2004) recommends that the analysis of discourse should be done about

gender since “discourse is profoundly gendered”. In today’s world, our actions and thoughts are largely influenced by the media which can affect the thoughts and perceptions of society by presenting a prejudiced view on the issues of VAW. Therefore, it is immensely important to investigate these representations to find out if they promote certain gender ideologies as claimed by Mills (2011). Feminist Stylistics equips us with such tools that could reveal the hidden agenda in the media representation of issues of VAW. For an in depth analysis, the researcher has further adapted from Machin and Mayr (2012)’s model. Hence, this study will analyse how different linguistic techniques like passivisation, nominalisation, modality, omission, over lexicalization are used to cover these issues in a biased way in light of Mills’ feminist stylistic theory.

Feminist stylistics allows a comprehensive analysis of how language portrays, represents and perpetuates gender biases. As the research question 1 required an analysis of the linguistic features from a feminist perspective, this model of analysis helped in the identification of the elusive ways in which language could perpetuate gender biases. It further allowed the researcher to investigate the ways language could perpetuate the gender stereotypes and contribute to the marginalisation of women as well as to restrain the severity of the issues of VAW which helped with the investigation of the third research question.

Hence as the current study focuses on how VAW is portrayed in Pakistani print media, Mills' model (1995) allowed the researcher to investigate the particular linguistic choices that influence societal perception of VAW. It provided with tools to carry out a more comprehensive analysis of the media discourse as it scrutinises language on different levels i.e. word, sentence, and discourse. This multidimensional approach allowed a thorough analysis of how single words (e.g. the preference of the words ‘victim’ over ‘survivor’), syntactic choices (e.g., active vs. passive), and wider discourse forms contribute to the representation of VAW. The application of this model allows not only to analyse what is said but how it is said. This is critical for the investigation of the underlying biases and ideological keystones in the media representation of VAW in Pakistan.

### 3.3 Analysis, Software and Tools

The data was analysed electronically by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. To analyse the use of language in the media news reports, two types of corpus software were used including AntConc and Lancsbox 6.0. First, the analysis was carried out on the lexical level. The lexical choices were analysed using the most frequently used words and the KWIC tool.

For quantitative analysis, using AntConc and Lancsbox 6.0, the most frequently used words were generated. An Analysis of the most frequently used words was done in binary opposition. Then, the GraphColl tool was used to analyse which words occur together. Words were also analysed in context. Moreover, passive constructions were also analysed using Lancsbox. A feminist stylistic analysis of this quantitative data focusing on the binary oppositions has helped the researcher to analyse the data on three levels; i. making inferences about the preferences and ideological undertones of the reporters' use of language ii. identifying general notions surrounding the issues of violence against women iii. identifying gender stereotypes. The newspapers are usually inclined to use a specific type of vocabulary for males and females. The use of particular adjectives and adverbs used for men and women presented can reflect certain ideologies and beliefs of the reporters and possibly expose their use of biased language. For the qualitative analysis, the researcher has used Mills' approach to 'Feminist Stylistics' since it offers a method of analysis of linguistic features from a feminist perspective. Mills' method of feminist analysis of linguistic elements is not just confined to linguistic stylistics, which emphasises finding out common patterns in texts. According to Mills' (2005) model, the analysis was carried out on three levels: lexical level, semantic and syntactic level. Textual analysis is carried out, while making use of a particular framework adapted from Machin and Mayr (2012). It was chosen due to the perks it provides in classifying choices made inside the discourse through socio-semantic as well as lexico-grammatical meaning. It gives a chance to examine the media discourse about the social context in which it is used. The main analytical tool (Table 1), used for the current research, included foregrounding, backgrounding, over-lexicalisation and omissions, naming conventions and suppression.

### 3.3.1 Analysis of the Binary Oppositions

As the data was analysed on account of gender discrimination or gender ideologies reflected in the choice of words by the authors, they were analysed in binary opposition. The gendered binary pairs that were analysed in the study are man-woman, he-she and victim-perpetrator. After that, all pairs were analysed in context by using the GraphColl tool in LancsBox 6.0 which is one of the most effective tools in Lancsbox. It is very convenient to identify collocations, KWIC, frequently used words and graphs with the help of Lancsbox. The tool GraphColl helps to identify collocational networks inside corpora which makes corpus analysis more effective and comprehensive. The collocation tool allows the analysis of any word or phrase in context. It presents a picture of the kind of words frequently occur with the word or phrase that is studied. (Scott, 2001). It helped to find out the frequency of binary pairs and what specific nouns, adjectives and verbs surround that word are analysed to see the lexical patterns. Using the tool, the researcher generated collocation graphs of different words for men and women. The researcher used these settings: cut-off and statistical measures (word span: five words to each side of the node/ name (in order to identify the strongest and closest collocations), a minimum frequency value of five was selected.

For semantic analysis, manual analysis was conducted. By checking the context in which the binary pairs were used, the adjectives and words modifying the binary pairs were discovered and categorised semantically. In order to identify the semantic categories, the researcher looked at the words surrounding a particular word or phrase. Some categories determined were: adjectives related to naming, age, marital status, description in relationship to men, residence, adverbs most frequently used with the key verbs, and key verb collocations. Then to analyse the data on the level of syntax, the frequency of active and passive constructions was found.

Furthermore, the researcher analysed the symmetry and asymmetry of the binary pairs which is one more feature of sexist language (Wareing, 2004, p. 77). For example, an asymmetrical pattern can be detected in the agency of the binary pairs by investigating the verb collocates of the binary words.

After conducting the corpus analysis of the binary pairs, the interpretations of the results were made from the perspective of feminist stylistics.

**Table 1**

*Selected categories and their representative meaning, adapted from Machin and Mayr, 2012*

Aggregation	When participants are quantified and treated like statistics.
Modality	<p>The tone of the text conveyed by the use of modal verbs, adverbs and adjectives. Modality can also be associated with hedging terms, such as 'I think', 'kind of', 'sort of', 'seems' or 'often'.</p> <p><i>Epistemic modality:</i> To do with the author's judgement of the truth of any proposition. In other words, epistemic modals show how certain the authors are that something will happen or is the case (e.g. 'I think this might be the correct procedure').</p> <p><i>Deontic modality:</i> To do with influencing people and events. Deontic mode is about how we compel and instruct others (e.g. 'Students must do the activity').</p> <p><i>Dynamic modality:</i> This is related to possibility and ability but is not subjective in the manner of the first two modalities (e.g. 'You can do your homework'). Here the author is not so much expressing her or his judgement or attempting to influence others but is indicating ability to complete an action or the likelihood of events.</p>
'Taken-for-granted' words and assumptions	<p>Using certain words that take certain ideas for granted. A reader is therefore unlikely to question what is known to be common knowledge. This is presented as having no alternative and obscuring what could have been stated, assigning a meaning without exploring any other meanings, because people are products of their cultures, experiences and society.</p> <p>'Assumptions' are statements that imply that the meaning of what is written is taken as true or is sure to happen, although there is no factual proof of this.</p>
Register	Single words can suggest that words that are spoken ring true.
Omissions or lexical absences or suppression	Leaving out certain things; a silence on pertinent issues. 'Omissions' are identified through the exclusion and suppression of information that can be motivated politically or socially.
Nominalisation	Changing a verb into a noun often used to generalise an issue. Nominalisations are also used to connote and imply a meaning through metaphors and figures of speech. Investigating metaphorical metaphors can be an effective tool in researching and identifying a particular ideology of a social system, as we use metaphors in our daily lives to explain events or things to others and ourselves.
Embellishments	Using diagrams and sketches to get the reader's attention. These can also be used to imply that the content is scientific, thereby adding weight to arguments.
Foregrounding, backgrounding	<p>Using keywords to emphasise certain concepts.</p> <p>A writer can use titles and keywords to stress the importance of certain ideas by placing them in a prominent place textually to influence the reader. This is called 'foregrounding', but if there is minimal mention of a concept, it is called 'backgrounding'.</p>
Presupposition	Using words that take certain things for granted, as if there is no alternative.
Over-lexicalisation	The availability of many words for one concept; it indicates the prominence of the concept in a community's beliefs and intellectual interests.



## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the researcher has delved into a comprehensive analysis and explanation of the data in order to identify the patterns, tendencies and perceptions that contribute to a deeper understanding of the media discourse for the portrayal of the issues of violence against women in Pakistan. Through a comprehensive corpus analysis, qualitative coding and interpretation of the data in the light of feminist stylistics, this chapter aims to offer a nuanced and deep understanding of the media discourse for VAW. Through the analysis of data, the researcher aims to not only answer the research questions but also to provide valuable suggestions and implications for practical improvement in the field as well as for future research.

#### **4.1 Lexical Level**

The analysis begins at the word level. In the analysis of VAW narratives, lexical choices are of supreme importance. The choice of words is crucial as it highlights the focus of the reporters. Through their choice of words, they can shape societal perceptions, policy-making and even the experiences of women in different cultures.

##### **4.1.1 Terminological Preferences**

In language, terminological preferences indicate the writers' preference for particular words or terms within the field. These choices are usually affected or guided by the writers' own beliefs or societal norms and conventions. When it comes to gender-related issues, the analysis of these preferences allows a deeper understanding of the underlying biases, beliefs and ideologies of the writers as well as general social trends.

###### *4.1.1.1 'Victim' Versus 'Survivor'*

A frequency analysis of the words 'victim and 'survivor' was carried out which presents some interesting insights.



the narrative, possibly strengthening the feelings of vulnerability and dependence.

The tag of ‘victim’ can reinforce social and psychological stigma, possibly preserving stereotypes and verdicts about individuals who have faced trauma. Stigmatization can induce a sense of shame, segregation or fright of judgment, making it difficult for individuals to look for support or to share their experiences.

The label of ‘victim’ can denote a static and constant state of victimhood, lacking the realisation of the individual's ability for healing, growth and strength. Such framing might obstruct the recognition of recovery, progress and the ability to develop coping mechanisms with time.

The overuse of the term ‘victim’ can be linked with a pathology-oriented point of view that puts the emphasis on the negative effects of the trauma instead of the individual's ability for healing. This point of view can contribute to an account of the incident that perceives survivors exclusively through the lens of their traumatic experiences, ignoring their multi-layered identities and resilience.

For some individuals, the term ‘victim’ may seem to disempower and so they may favour alternate terms that recognise their self-sufficiency and choices in the outcomes of trauma. Ignoring individual choices may hamper the formation of trust and can minimise the efficiency of support services.

In trauma-informed styles, there is a rising acknowledgment of the significance of language that empowers and authenticates the experiences of survivors. The overuse of the term ‘victim’ can contradict trauma-informed ethics that focus on respect, sensitivity, and an empowering perspective.

It is true that individual inclinations regarding the use of certain terminologies may vary. On the one hand, some individuals may relate to the term ‘victim’ very strongly and think that it precisely portrays their experiences, whereas, on the other hand, there may be other individuals who would like the term ‘survivor’. However, it is undeniable that using language that respects individual independence, acknowledges their strengths of healing and recovering and aligns with trauma-informed ethical rules is crucial in strengthening supportive environments for people who have faced trauma.

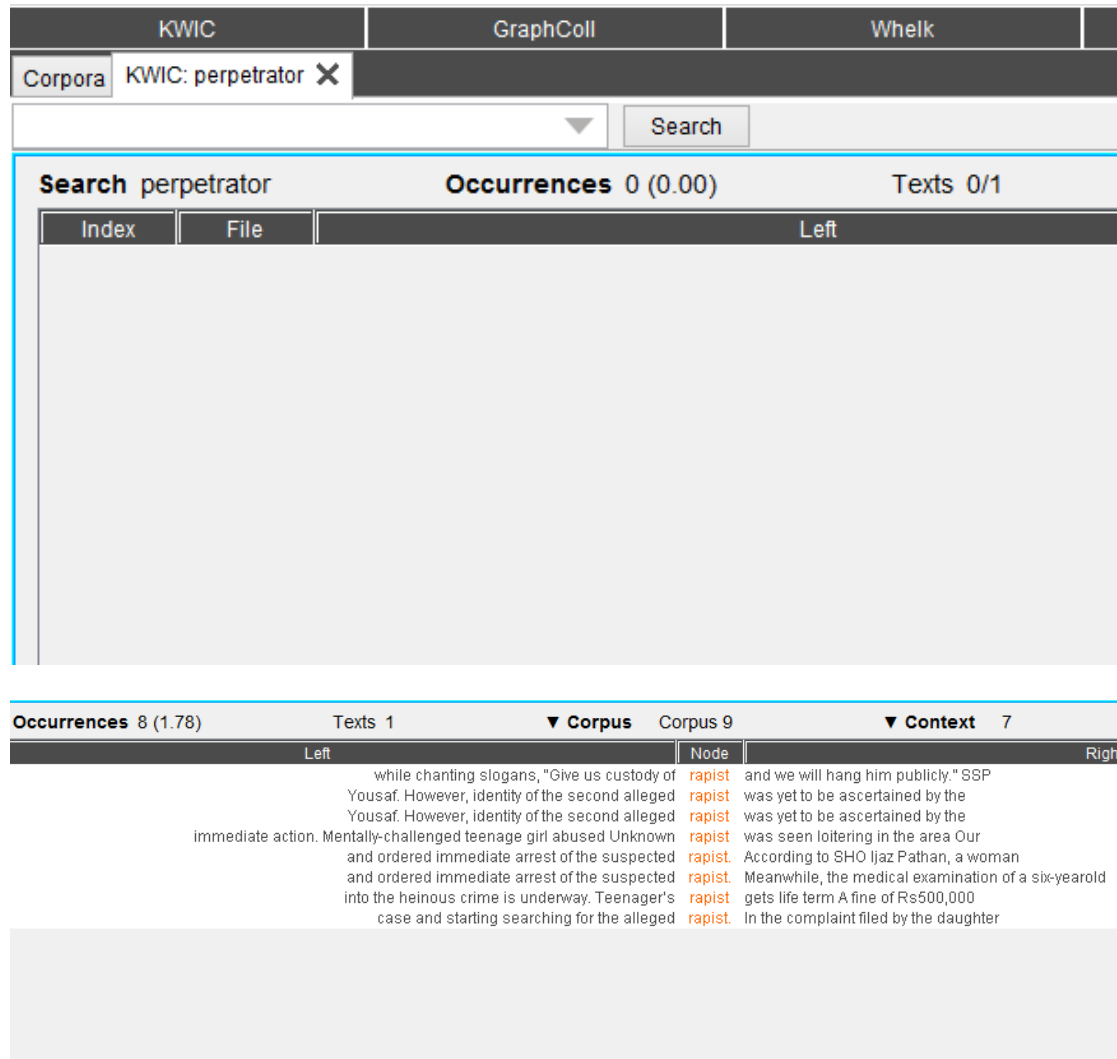
#### *4.1.1.2 Absence/ Omission of the Words ‘Perpetrator’ and ‘Rapist’*

Another prominent feature of these reports was the absence of the use of the

words like ‘perpetrator’ or ‘rapist’ that assign the responsibility to the culprit. A frequency analysis of both the words was generated and it was found that the word ‘perpetrator’ is completely absent from these reports and the word ‘rapist’ was used rarely i.e., only on 8 occasions with a relative frequency of merely 1.78.

**Figure 2**

***Frequency of the word ‘perpetrator’ and ‘rapist’ relatively***



**Discussion**

The absence of certain terms like ‘rapist’ and ‘perpetrator’ in the reports of Violence Against Women (VAW) can have numerous significant consequences and affect the perception, presentation and response to the events of violence. Some of the potential consequences include:

Avoiding the use of specific terms like ‘rapist’ may add to an obscuring of

clarity about the type of violence and can hamper the responsibility of the person who should be held accountable. This lack of precision can hinder efforts to identify the root causes of violence and can impede the detection of justice.

In addition, the use of generic language can restrain the gravity and delinquency of the act, possibly reducing the impact on survivors and the seriousness of the issue. Consequentially, it can lead to a lack of public understanding and acknowledgment of the magnitude of sexual violence, hampering efforts to battle it effectively.

Another factor is, by not exclusively identifying the perpetrator, there is a danger of unintentionally putting blame on the victim or suggesting that the violence was some out-of-control or unattributable incident. This type of framing may contribute to the development of a culture where victim-blaming is common and can demoralise survivors from sharing their experiences because of the fear of not being trusted or supported.

The importance of the use of language in shaping public opinion and perception about the issues of violence against women (VAW) is undeniable. Evading certain terms may add to a lack of understanding of who is guilty of these incidents. This can in turn propagate myths and typecast the incidents of sexual violence, obstructing efforts to encounter harmful stereotypes and beliefs in society.

Moreover, when VAW reports fail to name the perpetrator, it can impact the endowment of proper support services. Survivor-centered approaches need a clear perception of the nature of the violence. In the absence of a clear recognition of the role of the perpetrator, certain support services may not be designed effectively to meet the precise needs of survivors.

Concluding, VAW reports and associated discussions need to use language that is unambiguous, precise, and accountable. Identification of the perpetrator exclusively, using terms like ‘rapist’ or ‘perpetrator’, is a crucial step in recognising the nuances and precise factual details of violence and contributing towards averting, addressing, and eliminating violence against women.

## 4.1.2 Naming Conventions and the Use of Adjectives and Adverbs

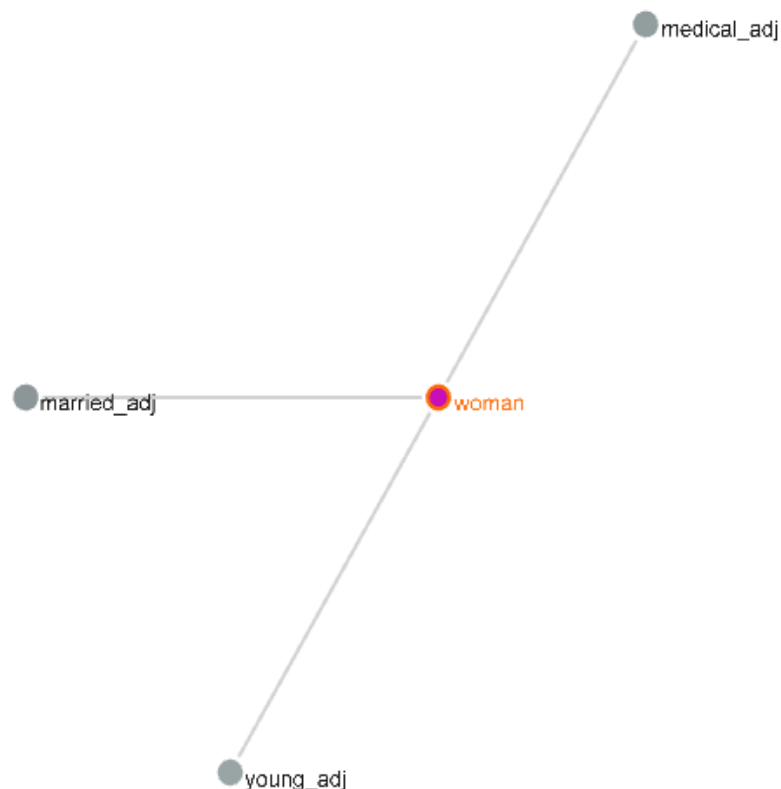
### 4.1.2.1 Adjectives

#### a. Age

Adjectives describing men and women were analysed to see how men and women are represented in terms of power relations and social dynamics. The results show that women are described more in terms of their age, marital status, the place they belong to and their relationship with men. On the other hand, no such descriptions were given of men. Men were described in terms of agency and the focus was only on the action that they did.

#### Figure 3

*Adjectives most frequently used with the word 'woman'*



#### Discussion

The results show that the most frequently used adjective with 'woman' was

‘married’ which was used 28 times for describing women but not a single instance of it was found when it comes to describing men in terms of their marital status.

Similarly, the adjective ‘young’ was used 27 times out of which only three instances were used for men while 24 times, it was used to describe women/girls. As the adjective "young" is frequently paired with women, it suggests a greater sense of weakness or innocence. It has a negative connotation as this type of framing implies that being young is one of the factors that play a role in the abuse carried out against women. In a society like Pakistani society, "young" women might be viewed as particularly weak because of age-related power dynamics. In Pakistani society, where child marriages are very common, the term "young" can be used to focus on the victim's age and lack of agency. Hence, it shifts the responsibility to the victim. Furthermore, it can intensify the perception of the tragedy of violence in certain scenarios, strengthening the societal perceptions that young women are more vulnerable and innocent and therefore undeserving of violence. This somehow trivialises the gravity of the same crime when it is carried out against older women. While all violence in general is tragic, the overemphasis on age can sometimes eclipse the broader issues of VAW.

In addition, the adjective "young" in the VAW reports objectifies women, emphasising their youthfulness as a prized trait. Such type of objectification can ultimately contribute to behaviours that diminish women, portraying them more as objects rather than individuals that have agency. It can also serve to infantilize them, possibly weakening their agency and independence. This can contribute to shaping the broader societal narratives where women's voices or experiences are marginalised.

The marked difference in how violence against younger versus older women is portrayed, for instance, as violence against younger women is emphasised more frequently or perceived as more tragic, might suggest ageist biases in societal perceptions of VAW. When violence occurs against such "young" women, it might be portrayed as not just an act of violence but also as a violation of cultural ideals.

## **b. The Description of Women in Relation to Men**

The results of the study show that women were described according to their relationship with men for a total of 23 times.

## **Discussion**

Describing women in terms of their relation to men in the context of VAW can

be wrong for several reasons. This approach can disseminate patriarchal norms, reduce the agency and identity of women, and divert attention from the main issue.

When women are described mainly as 'wives', 'daughters', 'sisters', or 'mothers' in the media reports of VAW, it diminishes their identity to their relationship with men. This suppresses their individuality and shows them as worthy not as independent individuals but because of their relationship with men.

Describing women in terms of their relation to men sustains patriarchal norms that describe women's roles and values based on their relationships with men. This can indirectly suggest that the violence to women is tragic because it affects men, rather than being naturally tragic.

When media or narratives emphasise a woman's relation to a man (e.g., a mother of four' or 'the daughter of') it can sometimes serve to prompt more sympathy for the woman. However, such an approach can unintentionally suggest that some victims are more 'worthy' of sympathy because of their familial roles, rather than sympathising with the natural value of every individual.

Moreover, it can also subtly shift the focus or blame to the victim's male relative. For example, when a woman is described as 'someone's wife' who was the victim of abuse can sometimes stimulate questions about the husband's actions, rather than addressing the actions of the perpetrator. Furthermore, it can overshadow their agency and identity. This portrayal can strengthen traditional gender roles and power dynamics where women are perceived as subordinate to men.

Additionally, in conservative cultures like Pakistan, women's conduct and experiences, particularly in the context of VAW, can be connected to family honor. Talking about women in terms of their relation to male family members can reinforce these cultural ideals of honor and shame. This can place unwarranted pressure on women to comply with certain societal standards to preserve family honor.

In the view of feminist stylistics, when media and public discourses frequently describe women in terms of their relationships to men, it can propagate the notion that women's main value or identity is derived solely from their roles as wives, mothers, or daughters, rather than as individuals. Many feminists and scholars have criticised how women's identities are built according to their relationship with men. Markedly, Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal work "The Second Sex" famously stated, "One is not born,



but rather becomes, a woman." She objected to how women have been traditionally defined with relation to men and are portrayed either as 'the other' or as secondary.

### **c. Marital status**

As can be seen in Figure 3, one of the most frequently used adjectives with the word 'woman' was 'married'. The collocation of the adjectives used with 'woman' suggests that the marital status of the women victims is somehow important to describe them.

Highlighting a woman's marital status can shift the focus from the main issue. The emphasis in the case of VAW should be on the act of violence and the perpetrator's actions. By revealing the marital status, the emphasis could shift from the offense to the victim's personal life, which can lead to victim-blaming or shift the attention away from the actual issue.

Moreover, emphasising marital status might solidify the stereotypes about which type of women are more prone to violence. For example, if reports recurrently state that divorced or separated women face violence, it might create an ambiguous narrative that married women are safer or less vulnerable or vice versa. People might doubt the reliability of a woman's account depending on her marital status, especially in a society where biases exist. For instance, a single woman being a target of sexual violence might not be taken as seriously owing to stereotypes about single women being 'accessible' or 'less virtuous.'

Feminists claim that women are multifaceted persons, and their identity isn't merely bound to their marital status. Frequently mentioning this aspect of their lives in the reporting of VAW cases diminishes them to just one facet, undermining their individuality. Primarily, revealing a woman's marital status while reporting VAW can be viewed as an invasion of privacy that may cause harmful consequences unconsciously. It's crucial to report such issues with thoughtfulness and focus more on the victim's well-being and security.

## **4.2.1 Adverbs**

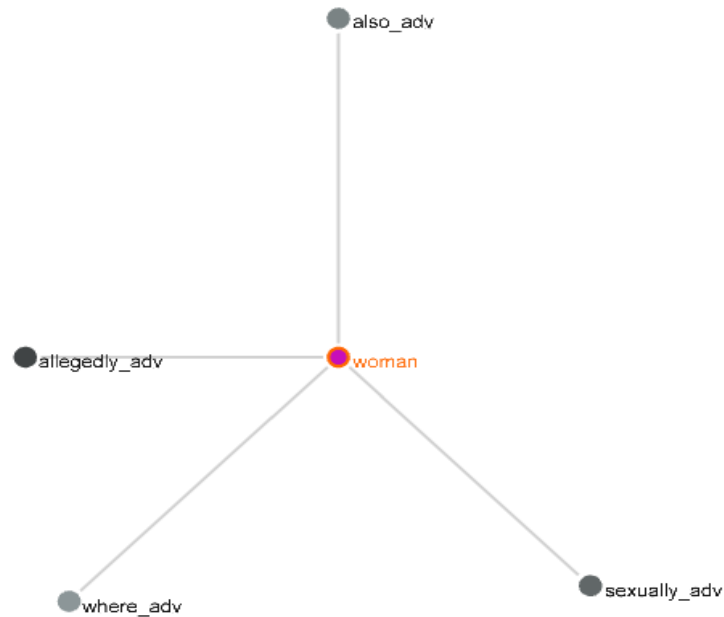
### **a. Allegedly**

The frequency analysis of the verb 'alleged' shows that it was used for 71 times. It has a relative frequency of 15.84%. The adverb 'allegedly' was used 283

times and has a relative frequency of 53.09% which is quite high.

#### **Figure 4**

##### *Adverbs most frequently used with the word ‘woman’*



As Figure 4 shows the word ‘allegedly’ is one of the most frequently used adverbs along with ‘woman’.

#### **Discussion**

The word ‘allegedly’ is frequently used in legal and newspaper/media contexts to suggest that there has been a claim that is not proven yet. While its use is sometimes inevitable to avoid defamation or biases, its overuse on the other hand, particularly in delicate matters such as reports on VAW, can have a variety of implications:

For the feminist stylistic analysis, it is crucial to examine language for its validation or invalidation of women's experiences. The frequent use of the word ‘allegedly’ can develop a perception that the author/reporter is doubtful of the claims, which could result in casting doubts on the victim's version or testimony.

The study of power dynamics in discourse is of utmost significance to feminist stylistics. The overuse of 'alleged' can subtly contribute to strengthening the power dynamics where women's versions/testimonies are frequently questioned whereas other sources are presented as arbiters of truth.

Feminist stylistics also studies the effect of language on the perception of the reader. As the recurrent use of the word 'alleged' may lead readers to view VAW reports with skepticism, it reinforces societal prejudices against believing survivors. Continually using the word 'allegedly' can reduce the effect of the perceived urgency or intensity of the events being reported. The frequent use of the word 'allegedly' may affect public opinion to be more skeptical or suspicious of the claims, possibly fluctuating perceptions of blame or innocence.

In the view of feminist stylistics, it is crucial to focus on how linguistic choices shape, build, or propagate gendered identities, gender roles, and power relations. From a feminist stylistic perspective, it is important to examine how this word interacts with, and potentially influences, the representation of women and their experiences.

When the experience of the victims of crimes, especially the crimes of personal or violent nature are constantly qualified as 'alleged', it can be re-traumatizing and overthrowing of their experiences. While media reports mustn't influence court proceedings, it is also noteworthy that they can influence public discourse. The overuse of the word 'allegedly' might inadvertently influence judges, eyewitnesses, or other people involved in a case.

Over the years, if a news channel/newspaper or reporter frequently overuses the word 'allegedly' in places where evidence is strongly in favour of the claim, listeners or readers might lose trust in that source, thinking it's either excessively cautious or biased. When used accurately, the word 'allegedly' indicates to the reader that what proceeds is a serious statement that has not been proven yet. Overuse of the word can alter this impact which may result in making genuine allegations seem less substantial. Using 'allegedly' in certain contexts more than others can convey bias.

Moreover, the overuse of any qualifier can make reports complex and more difficult to follow. It can shift away the focus from the main issues and lead to

ambiguity about what is a well-known fact as compared to what is being alleged.

One of the main areas that feminist stylistics focuses on is how language allocates or obscures agency. The word ‘alleged’ separates the action from the perpetrator. For instance, instead of ‘Mark assaulted Maria’, one might read ‘Maria was allegedly assaulted’, eliminating the agent and putting the focus on the woman as a passive recipient.

In history, women's voices have been downgraded, especially concerning their own experiences. The consistent use of the word ‘alleged’ inadvertently contributes to the spread of this trend of marginalisation and silencing.

In summary, while the use of the word ‘alleged’ is inevitable in certain journalistic and legal contexts, its overuse can influence general perceptions, shape public discourse, and raise questions of the trustworthiness of reporting. It is crucial to strike a balance in order to ensure non-bias, authenticity and sensitivity in reporting.

## b. Where (a resident of)

Another important adverb frequently used with the word ‘woman’ as can be seen in the Figure 4, is ‘where’, referring to the information about the place of the crime. Similarly, the phrase ‘a resident of’ was used quite frequently to describe the victim as it can be seen in the Figure.

## Figure 5

### *KWIC analysis of the word ‘resident’*

Occurrences	78 (17.40)	Texts	1	▼ Corpus	Corpus 1	▼ Context	7
	Left		Node				
		first reported to Rescue 15 by a	<b>resident</b>		of Wilayat Colony, named Colonel Sajjad. Col		
		not at home, raped her. Mohammad Daraaz,	<b>resident</b>		of Airport Housing Society, in the complaint		
		registered on complaint of the woman, a	<b>resident</b>		of Punjraeen in Bhakkar district, she was		
		suspect who was later identified as a	<b>resident</b>		of Muzaffargarh and registered a rape case		
		told her father everything. Meanwhile, another man,	<b>resident</b>		of Kallar Syedan complained to police that		
		persons in Gulzar-i-Quaid. The rape victim, a	<b>resident</b>		of Gulzar-i-Quaid lodged an FIR with the		
		gold jewelry worth Rs200,000. Mohammad Shakeel, a	<b>resident</b>		of Pindora lost gold jewellery worth Rs700,000		
		and Rs50,000 in cash. Mohammad Adeel, a	<b>resident</b>		of Kohistan Enclave, Taxila was deprived of		
		the investigators. According to sources, a woman,	<b>resident</b>		of Kohinoor Mills area, lodged a complaint		
		the investigators. According to sources, a woman,	<b>resident</b>		of Kohinoor Mills area, lodged a complaint		
		far, the woman in early 30s, a	<b>resident</b>		of Lahore's Defence Housing Society, was stuck		
		336B. According to the police report, a	<b>resident</b>		of Bismillah Town in her police complaint		
		Town, Lahore. The 27-year-old victim, a permanent	<b>resident</b>		of Pakpattan, had moved to Lahore for		
		of them identified as Ahmad Liaquat, a	<b>resident</b>		of Depalpur, Okara intercepted her near Jagawar		
		20-year-old Mehwish, daughter of Iftikhar Ahmed, a	<b>resident</b>		of Bawachak area of Millat Town, was		
		of Hasilpur, Punjab. Kulsoom Bibi, a 32-year-old	<b>resident</b>		of the Gulshanabad area of Hasilpur, was		
		Mahwish Bibi, the daughter of Nawshir, a	<b>resident</b>		of Chak No 534GB, was married to		
		Raza, the son of Zulfiqar and a	<b>resident</b>		of Chak No 448GB, eight years ago.		
		man named Fazal alias Faju, a	<b>resident</b>		of the village. Ali developed suspicions over		
		Bibi was married to Falak Sher, a	<b>resident</b>		of Chak No 459GB, 16 years ago.		
		suspects. According to the police report, a	<b>resident</b>		of Mohalla Usman Ghani, stated in the		
		Sadiq, and sister-in-law Rubina alias Saba, a	<b>resident</b>		of 232 Bawewali, allegedly forced the victim		
		Batapur, Lahore. The victim identified as Zainab, a	<b>resident</b>		of Lakhodar, was married to Ghulam Abbas.		
		and tried strangle her. The victim, a	<b>resident</b>		of the Ada Bachiana area near Landianwala,		

## **Discussion**

The reporting of VAW crimes where media consistently highlights information for example, the location of the incidents or the victims can lead to misperceptions that such areas are more likely to cater to violence or present women of those regions as more vulnerable. Such stereotypes can hurt the women of the said area in various ways, from job prospects to social perceptions.

By emphasising on where the victim lives, some may unconsciously start relating the crime to the location of the victims, indicating that being from ‘such a place’ was a factor that played a part in the incident. Moreover, frequently mentioning the location can unintentionally shift the focus from the action of the perpetrator to the victim's place of residence, subtly shifting the responsibility for the crime. Thus, providing specific details such as a victim's city in VAW reports can subsequently lead to or aggravate victim blaming. There are different types of stereotypes associated with different cities, regions, or countries. For instance, when a victim's city is established as being conservative or is stereotyped as ‘unsafe’, there might be an inclination for readers to respond in a way such as ‘What was she expecting living in/ going to such a place?’ Thus, shifting the blame to the victim rather than focusing on the actual problem or perpetrator. By emphasising on the area, city or location, the attention might shift from the crime itself to debating about the characteristics of that city. It diverts from the main issue and leads to conversations like, ‘This happens in [City Name] all the time’. If a woman belonging to a smaller town or a country area is subjected to violence in a bigger city, she might receive responses indicating she was ‘naïve’ or ‘should have been more cautious in a big city’ which again shifts the responsibility to the victim rather than the perpetrator.

In view of responsible journalism, while it's sometimes inevitable to reveal the city for context or consideration of the broader socio-cultural background, reporters should be careful about the way this information is presented. Avoiding unnecessary focus on location and always placing focus on crime as well as the broader issues of gender violence can help diminish the risks of victim blaming.

### **4.3 Semantic level**

#### **4.3.1 Collocations**

Collocations; the recurrent co-occurrence of words, can give a richer

understanding of context and more profound insights into patterns of language use for VAW. Collocations can give a vivid picture of how the terms associated with VAW are used. The keywords ‘woman’, and ‘man’ and their pronouns ‘he’ and ‘she’ as well as important terms like ‘victim’ and ‘suspect’ were analysed in context by looking at the collocates of these words. POS tagging of the contextual words helped with the analysis of the kind of adjectives, verbs and adverbs that occurred frequently with these words. Each collocation presents a varied understanding of the context, nature and source of the violence. The way words are used together can disclose underlying societal attitudes or prejudices. This could be suggestive of the victim-blaming tendencies in the discourse.

#### a. Said

**Figure 6**

*Collocations of the word ‘said’*



If we look at the GraphColl of the verb ‘said’, it is noteworthy that the word that is most frequently used with the verb ‘said’ is ‘he’ as it is closest, next is ‘police’ and then ‘she’.

**Figure 7*****Frequency and the collocates of the word 'said'***

<b>said</b>				
Freq: 300 - Collocates: 12				
Index	Status	Position	Collocate	▼ Stat
1	o	L	he	54.0
2	o	L	police	39.0
3	o	L	she	22.0
4	o	L	and	9.0
5	o	L	sources	8.0
6	o	L	further	7.0
7	o	L	report	7.0
8	o	L	they	7.0
9	o	L	complainant	6.0
10	o	L	officer	6.0
11	o	L	officials	6.0
12	o	L	victim	5.0

Figure 7 shows that the 'he' was used with 'said' for 54 times, it was used with 'police' 39 times, and only 22 times with 'she'. It shows that the voice of the female victims is minimal. It is crucial to include victim statements in reports on violence against women (VAW) for several reasons:

**Discussion**

In the reports of VAW, by quoting men more frequently as compared to women, the reporters might not precisely convey the experiences, perceptions and feelings of women who are crucial to the issues of VAW. Victim statements provide direct and personal accounts of the incidents. Without them, the understanding of the event might be incomplete and incomprehensive which may lead to misunderstandings or lack of context. Victims of VAW often face silencing in various forms, from mistrust to active suppression. Excluding their statements further marginalizes and silences them which eventually makes them feel unheard and increases their trauma. Excluding the victim's voice may diminish the credibility and authenticity of the report. It may raise questions about whether the report presents a holistic view or is biased against the victim. In legal matters, victim accounts can offer important evidence or context.

Another important dimension of this is that victim statements can be an important tool to raise public awareness about the seriousness and intensity of VAW.

Not taking victim statements into account might result in reducing public empathy and understanding of the issues. Having their voices heard and acknowledged in the media can be a crucial step in the healing journey for many of the victims.

Without the personal accounts provided by victims, reports may unintentionally promote or reinforce stereotypes or prejudices about VAW. This may lead to over-generalizations or misperceptions. Victim statements often call attention to problems in the system. When these perspectives are not included in the VAW reports, chances to improve services for victims might be wasted.

Frequently assigning direct speech to men can indirectly elevate their professed authority. Continually quoting men in direct speech may give the impression to the reader that male viewpoints are more trustworthy or more crucial to the topic. This discrepancy can uphold stereotypes that men are more rational, well-informed, or expressive, whereas women are sensitive or less reliable. Such narratives have been used over time to discredit women's statements or perspectives.

Direct quotes in media reports can help to humanise the speaker and enable readers to empathise with their feelings and viewpoints. If media reports do not quote female victims or experts directly, it can hinder the way of complete and comprehensive understanding of the issue and does not allow one to empathise with their experiences. Moreover, when males are predominantly quoted, it might give the impression that the report's main sources of information are men. This can lead to a biased or incomplete understanding of VAW.

When personal experiences or statements are shared in the victim's own words, they convey a unique legitimacy. Converting it into the reporter's own words or eliminating women's direct speech can deprive these reports of their authenticity. Moreover, paraphrasing can lead to miscommunications and misinterpretations. It can sometimes change the tone, degree or emphasis of what was originally stated. Direct quotes can help decrease the risk of misrepresentation.

Reports on VAW have an impact on policymaking, politics and public opinion. When these reports are based mainly on male voices, the subsequent actions might not address the real needs, problems, or experiences of female victims.

To sum it up, not adding victim statements in VAW reports can impact the comprehensiveness, authenticity and efficiency of such reports. valuing and respecting



the voices of victims enables a more accurate representation of VAW and can bring better results for victims and society in general. Thus, for an accurate, balanced and precise portrayal in VAW reports, it's crucial to make sure that both male and female voices are valued.

## 4.4 Syntactic level

### 4.4.1 The Use of Passive Constructions

The analysis of the passive constructions is vital to the study of media discourse for the reporting of VAW cases as passive constructions give an insight into how the language is structured and how media discourses representing VAW are structured and framed. The analysis started with the identification of passive clauses. For this purpose, the POS tagging of the corpus was done. Then, the passive constructions were found by typing 'PASSIVE' in the KWIC tool of the Lancsbox 6.0.

**Figure 8**

#### *An analysis of the passive construction via KWIC*

Occurrences 707 (157.70)	Texts 1	▼ Corpus Corpus 1	▼ Context 7
Left		Node	Right
by the deceased's father, the 48-year-old suspect		was angered	after the children raised their voices while
News Ali Akbar Published February 9, 2017 A woman		was gunned	down in Kohat's Astarzai area last Monday
told DawnNews, but a First Information Report		was lodged	after reports of the murder began circulating
Iqbal said the woman, Hina Shah Nawaz, had		been shot	four times allegedly by her cousin Mehboob
- A 10-year-old housemaid, Mehreen		was brutally tortured	by a doctor's family in Rahim Yar
abuse of domestic workers in Pakistan. It		is estimated	that there are millions of child labourers
of 16. However, these measures have not		been fully implemented	and child labour remains a significant problem
should ensure that perpetrators of such crimes		are prosecuted	and that victims receive the necessary medical
have not been able to grasp. This s		most recently exhibi	in a video clip that went viral
Registration Authority (Nadra) security guard in Liaquatabad,		was harassed	by a female reporter and lashed out
for allegedly slapping the reporter. A "counter-case"		was then registered	against the reporter of a private news
parties. Additionally, our state and its constitution		are based	on 19th century ideas of liberty that
12-year-old disabled and mentally retarded girl has		been raped	in her house in a locality falling
told this scribe that the suspect has		been identified	as Mohammad Riaz living in Nawab Plaza,
suspect and the disabled raped victim have		been sent	to examination as well as DNA test
adding that evidences of the offense have		been collected	to investigate the crime on scientific ground.
last year. Images of his alleged violence		were shared	by his wife, Fatima Sohail, in a
attack. Fatima Sohail revealed that she had		been dragged,	kicked and punched by her husband— while
Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act. It		was unanimously vote	in, however many members of the public
depending on your location. Meesha Shaif's case		was dismissed	on a somewhat similar technicality— that as
similar technicality— that as the people involved		were not engaged	in a standard employment contract, the workplace
hit her a few days after they		were wed,	suggesting that it was a common occurrence.
severely beaten body with the disfigured face		was found	on Indus Highway. Initially unrecognisable to police,
Indus Highway. Initially unrecognisable to police, it		was finally found	to be of a 24-year-old married girl,
murder. A joint investigation team (JIT) has		been set	to investigate the incident. Local witnesses say
incident. Local witnesses say that the murder		was carried	out in the name of honour. Marks
Marks on the body show that Waziran		was pelted	with stones and repeatedly hit with a
anytime soon. Every year, hundreds of women		are burned,	shot, strangled, drowned, and even decapitated in
the judiciary to stop these cases from		being treated	as "private family matters." Most importantly, a
file photo of the Lahore Railway Station		being almost deserte	as the Karachi-bound Khyber Mail waits for
Arif / White Star/File A 25-year-old woman		as allegedly gang-rap	on a train heading to Karachi from
statement. A first information report (FIR) has		been registered	on the complaint of the victim at

A total of 707 occurrences of the use of passives were found with the relative frequency of 157.7 which is quite high.

## Discussion

A total of 707 occurrences of the use of passives were found with a relative

frequency of 157.7 which is quite high.

The high frequency of the passive constructions shows that the reporters prefer to use passive voice when reporting on cases of violence. While using passive constructions is a general tendency among journalists as they attempt to keep objectivity and neutrality in their reporting, the use of passive voice also allows them to provide information without obviously assigning blame or responsibility. Sometimes it is crucial to use passive constructions to present a balanced and neutral perspective. However, in the cases of VAW, it can be problematic which will be discussed after further breakdown of the passive constructions.

In order to get a more precise picture of how and for what purpose, these passive constructions were used, further analysis was carried out. First of all, through the KWIC tool, an analysis of the word 'was' was conducted. The search results showed that there was a total of 597 occurrences of the word. These occurrences covered a range of actions including a description of the state of the victims, the crimes carried out against women as well as the steps taken by the police. Interestingly, 235 out of these 597 (39%) occurrences were passives and were surrounded by words like 'raped' 'allegedly raped' 'assaulted' 'molested', 'murdered', 'lured', 'strangled' 'beaten up', 'tortured, 'subjected to abuse', attacked with acid' etc. There were other passive constructions too which reported about the police investigations, so they were not included in the results. The high percentage of the reporting of crimes against women in general refers to the fact that the responsibility of the crimes was not put where it was due, i.e. towards the perpetrators. It somehow suggests that by not making the perpetrators the subjects of the sentences, the responsibility of the perpetrators/ male criminals was diffused. Out of these 235 occurrences, 118 were about rape cases while 117 were other categories including domestic violence and acid attacks etc.

Figure 9

**KWIC analysis of the word ‘was’**

Left	Node	Right
user in Sindh's Matiari district. The victim	was	lured by some men as she visited
girl in Sabzazar area and a woman	was	gang raped in South Cantonment police limits.
in South Cantonment police limits. Another woman	was	allegedly raped in Green Town area by
wife by domestic violence. The deceased victim	was	identified as Sadaf from Lambanwali area. The
as Sadaf from Lambanwali area. The woman	was	married to the suspects approximately eight years
hired as a domestic worker in Rawalpindi	was	allegedly tortured by her employers for over
the report, the torture of the child	was	first reported to Rescue 15 by a
informed Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Sajjad Hussain, who	was	sent to investigate the matter, that Kinza
Mohsin's residence "to study" and that he	was	now taking his daughter back home to
file a report, due to which he	was	suspended. Shireen Mazari also shared the affidavit
the child had been injured when "she	was	climbing the gate in an effort to
officer. Rawalpindi Deputy Commissioner Dr Umar Jahangir	was	contacted for a response, but could not
Another torture case involving a child housemaid	was	registered in Islamabad on Saturday after a
Saturday after a 12-year-old alleged that she	was	physically abused and not allowed to visit
four years. A First Information Report (FIR)	was	lodged under Section 154 at the Golra
the owner of the house where she	was	detained and his mother. The two were
her complaint. The housemaid alleged that she	was	tortured with hot knives and beaten with
knives and beaten with leather belts and	was	not once allowed to visit her family
late December 2016, when 10-year-old Tayyaba, who	was	allegedly tortured by former additional district and
Raja Khurram Ali Khan and his wife,	was	rescued from the accused's house in Islamabad
in Islamabad with visible wounds. An FIR	was	registered in that case against Khan him
the Islamabad High Court (IHC) said it	was	reserving its decision regarding which court will
Union Council Chairman Mian Asim's house and	was	beaten up regularly. Upon finding the girl
violence again. No FIR or police report	was	registered in the case. Husband and employees
burned it. My clothes were bloody. I	was	bound by a pipe and hung from

Through the KWIC tool, the words ‘was raped’ were searched and a total of 198 occurrences were found. The words ‘were raped’ were used as passives 117 times which is 59.1% of the total occurrences while on 81 occasions (40.9%), it was used to describe the actions of the perpetrators. This means that most of the uses of the words were in passive voice. In other words, in the VAW discourses reporting sexual crimes/rapes, it was more likely for reporters to use passive voice when describing rape survivors/victims than the actions of the perpetrators.

Figure 10

**KWIC analysis of the phrase ‘was raped’**

Occurrences	20 (4.46)	Texts	1	▼ Corpus	Corpus 3	▼ Context	7
Left		Node					
9, 2022 LISTEN TO ARTICLE1x1.2x1.5x KARACHI: A teenage girl		was raped				and murdered allegedly by a man, who	
4, 2022 DERA GHAZI KHAN: A woman		was raped				by the conductor of a private bus	
along with a male companion when she		was raped				by the suspects at gunpoint. The capital	
station, according to which a four-year-old boy		was raped				by a man in the fields in	
where the car stopped, where the woman		was raped				and the area pointed out by a	
basis of medical reports that the victim		was raped				by more than one man. He also	
along with a male companion when she		was raped				by the suspects at gunpoint. The capital	
of sexual crimes, a mentallychallenged teenage girl		was raped				by a young man inside her house	
or the victim's families. Girl found hanging		was raped				killed in Karachi Autopsy reveals 12-year-old victim	
there. On August 25, a minor girl		was raped				by a suspect identified as Hafeez. On	
the Fort Munro hill station that she		was raped				by Muzmal Sipra and Shehzad of Rajanpur	
found dead in Burewala Police suspect girl		was raped				before murder Malik SaleemJune 21, 2022 PHOTO:	
29, 2021 PHOTO: EXPRESS KURIANWALA: A woman		was raped				and a minor boy was molested in	
in Punjab. On December 14, a woman		was raped				at gunpoint and a minor boy was	
started searching for him. Meanwhile, another woman		was raped				at gunpoint. The complainant told the police	
girl working for a phone company franchise		was raped				by her boss after she was abducted	
registered with the police, that his daughter		was raped				by accused Dutta. The suspect reportedly lured	
a medical examination to ascertain whether she		was raped				by the armed men. Meanwhile, RPO Syed	
CorrespondentMay 10, 2021 The applicant alleges she		was raped				by certain policemen and the owner of	
of the woman have proven that she		was raped				A spokesperson for the motorway police said	

## **Discussion**

When it comes to the reporting of sexual offenses/ rape cases, it is important to note that in rape, rapists are the agents of sexual violence and rape victims/ survivors are the patients. Therefore, the use of active voice in rapists' actions attributes the responsibility of the rape where it is undoubtedly due i.e. on the rapist/ perpetrator. Using passive constructions in media reports of VAW is not entirely wrong, but in certain contexts, it can be problematic. The problem with passive voice in media reports of VAW can be located in the probability of blemishing responsibility, reducing the impact, and not being able to hold perpetrators answerable. Passive constructions can make it vague who to hold responsible for the violence. Such lack of clarity can reduce the responsibility of the culprits and diminish the visibility of the problem.

Passive voice can be problematic as it can downplay the responsibility of the offenders by avoiding direct assigning of the action to a particular individual or group. It can develop a sense that violence just "occurs" rather than being committed by someone. Moreover, passive voice can cause violence to appear less severe or important than it actually is. By not declaring the responsible and affected parties, the gravity of the issue may be reduced.

Passive voice can unintentionally shift the attention from the perpetrator to the victim and sometimes even on the situation, which can add to victim-blaming and preserve dangerous stereotypes. Using passive constructions can fail to emphasise the agency of victims in voicing their side or asking for help, which can be crucial for giving others the courage to speak up and seek support. Media outlets need to report on VAW in a way that precisely conveys the truth, the impact, the responsibility and accountability for the violence. This means using active voice, where the subject of the sentence does the action, thus making it obvious who is to be held responsible for the violence and focusing on the agency of victims. While there can be cases where the use of passive voice is more suitable or inevitable for stylistic or grammatical reasons, it is important to be careful not to use it in a way that conceals the facts about VAW or reduces the responsibility of perpetrators.

### **4.5 Summary of the Findings**

The analysis answers the research questions. As far as the first question is concerned, different linguistic features were investigated to find if any biases or

differences existed in the portrayal of men and women in the news reports of issues of violence against women. These features include the choice of different adjectives, adverbs, verbs, terminological preferences and words that frequently occur together as well as the use of voice on part of the writers. The results show that certain biases were evident when it comes to the portrayal of men and women in these articles. The articles focused on providing more contextual details about the female victims than their male perpetrators. The choice of adjectives shows that women were described in terms of their age, location, and their relation to men. No such adjectives or adverbs were used to describe men and their actions. So, there were biases and discrepancies in the use of language used for men and women.

The second question regarding the portrayal and framing of the issues of violence against women was answered by analysing different linguistic choices as stated before. The use of certain terms like ‘victim’ instead of ‘survivor’ was a highly preferred choice. The use of such terms focuses on helplessness rather than giving hope and courage to women. The reporters scarcely used the terms ‘rapist’ or ‘perpetrator’ which shows that the news report never focused on the accountability of the perpetrators. Similarly, the writers preferred to use passive voice in order to describe the acts of violence. Hence, taking away the responsibility of the perpetrators. Furthermore, as the analysis uncovered, there were hardly any statements by the survivors showing that the news reports do not care about the survivor’s side of the story. Women in these cases have no voice and they are deprived of any agency. The results show that the portrayal of issues of VAW in Pakistani newspapers is faulty. The framing of these issues is done in a way that shows prejudices and conformity to the stereotypes rather than challenging them.

Thus it is vital for reporters to be careful and sensitive while reporting VAW cases as the representation of VAW cases in media can significantly inform real-life practices in society. Especially when it comes to the print media, it has a wide reach and can easily shape the public view of violence against women. The reporting of violence can impact how the public views the pervasiveness and seriousness of VAW. On the one hand, the sensationalized or exaggerated reporting of these issues can normalise it, while on the other hand, the underreporting of these events may curtail their importance.

The framing of VAW cases in print media affects the public perception of these

issues. It depends on the framing of the headlines and article content whether the public views them as isolated events or parts of larger societal problems like patriarchy and gender inequality. It further influences public attitudes toward victims, culprits and impending solutions. While responsible coverage of VAW cases can help challenge the harmful gender stereotypes, an improper portrayal can further reinforce these stereotypes that trivialize or justify violence against women. For example, the use of language that shifts the blame towards the victim or portrays women as passive objects can encourage victim-blaming tendencies. The reporters of these issues need to consider their use of language as language has the power to shape perception and ideologies. It is essential to humanize survivors, presenting their sides of the story and focusing on the complications of their experiences to raise empathy among the public. However, in case of irresponsible and insensitive reporting, issues like victim-blaming arise which discourages the survivors from even report these issues.

The language that undermines or euphemizes acts of VAW can help normalise such issues. When violence is reported in neutral or trivialising terms, it reduces the gravity of the issues and can desensitize the issues among public. Prejudiced language can lead to downplay or misrepresentation of such issues. In a patriarchal society, the biased use of language in media reports can help reinforce power dynamics that preserve gender discrimination and violence. Biased use of language such as the adjectives of power strengthens the male dominance and the suppression of women in a subtle manner, hence contributing to the preservation of asymmetrical power dynamics.

The media's job is not limited to highlighting social problems but presenting them in a manner that calls for action by those in power. Cases such as VAW that affect a big portion of society need the immediate attention of the policymakers in particular. In such cases, while the proper portrayal of these issues can convey the gravity of these issues, misrepresentation or biased media discourse, on the other hand, affects the policymakers' understanding of the issue and hampers effective policy-making. An incomprehensive understanding of the scope and gravity of these issues leads to less inclination to the allocation of resources and implementation of effective measures to curb the issues.

In general, biased media discourse for the coverage of VAW issues in Pakistani print media can result in grave consequences including the reinforcement of detrimental

stereotypes, normalising violence, and obstructing struggles to address and prevent VAW on a large scale.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Summary

In conclusion, the analysis of the representation of VAW through media discourse is valuable as it offers vital insights into how this critical issue is portrayed and perceived in society. Such an analysis presents a deeper understanding of the merits as well as deficiencies of media reporting in shaping public attitudes and perceptions toward the issues of violence against women can be gained. Some crucial key points emerge from this analysis:

##### 5.1.1 Linguistic Choices

The choice of language can carry implicit biases and hidden ideologies. As far as the media representation of the violence against women in Pakistan is concerned, the stylistic analysis of linguistic features can uncover these biases and hidden ideologies. Therefore, the researcher analysed the use of adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and active and passive constructions. The words were analysed in the context to examine these reports at the level of discourse. These features were analysed in binary opposition, i.e., man/woman, he/she, victim/perpetrator. The results demonstrate that there was an excessive use of adjectives and adverbs related to a female victim's age, marital status and location. News reports that added explicit information about the lives and personal characteristics of the survivors disclosing their identities rather than the perpetrators contribute to creating a connection between the act of violence and the social as well as personality attributes of the survivors. Such type of reporting shifts the focus of the issue from the perpetrator to the victim, somehow reinforcing the stereotypes that certain women are typical victims of violence. Media reports that focus on the personal and social information of the survivor gives an insight into the reporters' perceptions about the acts of violence especially rape cases. While it has been established that it is one of the responsibilities of the media to challenge the harmful stereotypes in society, it has been observed that the choice of language does not challenge and rather supports the already existing ideologies and biases in a society where victim blaming is a serious issue.



### **5.1.2 Omission of Victim's Voices**

Another important feature that was consistent throughout these reports was the use of the word 'said' and its context. It has been found out that the media reports mostly focus on the male version of the stories as the word was mostly used for men and not the female victims. Such type of reporting gives an impression that the women's voices are not as significant. While there has been a significant amount of research on how media reports must provide first-hand information about violence by including victim's statements to empower and validate the victims, challenge the stereotypes, humanise the issues, raise awareness and advocate for policy change, the results of the current study present a different picture. The victim's statements were mostly missing from the reports of VAW. Media reports of VAW thus suggest a bias that male accounts of VAW are more important. Such type of depiction does not give a complete picture of the issues, takes away from the credibility of the incident and prevents the readers/audience to empathise with the victims on a human level.

### **5.1.3 Assigning and Shifting Responsibility through Active/Passive Constructions**

The results of the study show that when reporting the issues of VAW, there was frequent use of passive constructions. The use of passive voice in VAW reports can contribute to shifting responsibility from the culprit by concealing or de-emphasising their part in the acts of violence. By omitting the subject or changing its position in the sentences, the focus is shifted away from the perpetrator. Such use of passive voice can cause ambiguity, making it vague as to who to be held accountable for the acts of violence. This lack of precision can create a sense of vagueness, thus reducing the emphasis on the perpetrator's responsibility. Passive constructions in the cases of VAW contribute to downplaying the agency of the perpetrator by giving the impression that an event just happened rather than it being a deliberate act performed by an individual. Passive constructions shift the focus of the sentence from the perpetrator to the victim or the impact of the violence rather than on the person responsible for the act. While it is crucial to convey the survivor's experiences, it should not come at the expense of preventing or obscuring the perpetrator's accountability.

The media discourse can considerably contribute to creating and spreading awareness about VAW. It works as a platform to focus attention on such cases, present survivor stories, and stimulate discussions about this issue on a communal level. The

way VAW is structured and framed in media reporting can have a significant influence on public perception. It has been found very often that media framing can either propagate harmful stereotypes and victim-blaming or challenge these kinds of narratives to develop a better understanding of these issues and create empathy for the survivors.

Sensationalised reporting of VAW can draw attention but may also propagate harmful myths and misunderstandings. The analysis depicts that media outlets need to play a poised role as informers keeping ethical considerations in mind. In summary, the analysis of media discourse on VAW serves as a critical lens through which to understand how the issue is depicted and perceived in society. It helps shed light on both the positive and negative aspects of media coverage, and it contributes to the ongoing conversation about how media can play a more constructive role in addressing and ultimately preventing VAW. Researchers, activists, and media professionals can collaborate to promote ethical and responsible media portrayals, foster empathy and understanding, and drive societal change in the fight against VAW.

The analysis demonstrates that media discourses reporting the cases of VAW in Pakistan need a lot of improvement. News about gender crimes in Pakistan needs to focus on the violence rooted in these crimes and the criminal accountability of the perpetrators and refrain from denunciation and re-victimisation of the survivors. Moreover, a suspicious study of the media discourse on lexical, lexico-grammatical, semantic, syntactic as well as pragmatic levels is required to find out the discrepancies found in language for the improvement in media discourse in the future. There is also a pressing need for training for reporters to reflect on the gender ideologies they believe in and constantly imitate them in their choice of discourse.

It is important to keep in mind that media is diverse, and different outlets may use language in various ways. There have been many movements and studies that focus on the improvement in the use of language. Guidelines related to the reporting of sensitive cases for journalists are also available. Additionally, there's a growing awareness of the impact media can have on gender perceptions, leading to efforts to use more inclusive and balanced language.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Adopting a responsible media discourse on Violence Against Women (VAW)

is vital for raising awareness, improving understanding, and playing a part in bringing about a change in society. Based on the analysis, here are some of the recommendations for the use of discourse while covering the issues of VAW in media:

The choice of language matters so the language should be inclusive, respectful, and free from stereotypes. Media reporters should avoid the use of language that preserves gender norms and biases. A balance should be maintained in the selection of lexical items when it comes to gender. Reporters should be careful that their choice of words and structures must not be guided by their gender ideologies and bear in mind the impact of their linguistic choices on the perception of the reader on the issues of VAW. They should see media discourse as a powerful tool to change the perceptions of society about the issues of violence.

Media discourse should prioritise the voices of survivors and avoid gender biases. They need to adopt empowering language to focus on the strength and resilience of survivors. The narrative needs to be shifted from victimhood to empowerment, highlighting their courage and agency. Media reports should refrain from sensationalising the stories of violence. They should highlight the facts as well as the impact of the experiences of survivors on society rather than exploiting or sensationalising these issues.

Media reports should strike a balance between the use of active and passive constructions when reporting on issues of VAW. Particularly, while reporting the acts of violence, more active constructions should be used thus assigning the responsibility for the violent acts to the perpetrators. Media discourse should refrain from the use of language that puts the blame on victims for the violence that they experience. Emphasis should be placed on the responsibility of perpetrators and societal practices that perpetuate victim-blaming should be challenged. Media reports must identify perpetrators when possible and focus on their accountability. This will help to enhance a culture of responsibility and challenge the normalisation of violence.

One important aim of the reporting of VAW issues is not merely to report but also to help the survivors. Media reports need to be more comprehensive and must add information about existing support services for survivors, such as different helplines and counseling organisations. This will contribute to poisoning the narrative by offering resources for those who may be in dire need of assistance. In this regard, reporters may

seek advice from experts in the field, including advocates, academics, and linguists, to ensure precise, comprehensive and nuanced reporting. This collaboration can improve the quality and profundity of media coverage.

To sum it up, while there has been a lot of improvement in the media discourse reporting the issues of VAW, there still needs more improvement in this area. Reporters need to realise that they have a significant part to play when it comes to challenging the existing norms and stereotypes related to VAW in society. Media reports play a significant role in shaping public opinion, perception of the issues, their causes and impacts. By considering these recommendations, media outlets can play their part to portray these issues in a more informed, empathetic, and responsible manner. Consequently, it can contribute to challenging societal norms, increase understanding, and most importantly help to prevent and reduce violence against women.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

While analysis of print media discourse on Violence Against Women (VAW) is valuable, it comes with certain limitations. As it was limited to the print media, the research could not give a wholesome picture of the overall media discourse that includes electronic media and most importantly, social media which is the most popular form of media nowadays. Moreover, the researcher aimed to investigate the reporting of VAW including domestic and sexual violence. In the course of collecting, it was realised that a high ratio of these cases was of sexual violence. Domestic abuse cases are underreported and hence, it is a challenge to comprehensively analyse whether these forms are appropriately reported by the media. Some forms of violence against women, such as violence against marginalised groups in society or certain regions, get less media attention. This can result in underrepresentation in studies, leading to an incomplete understanding of the issue.

While analysing the media content, it is difficult to directly measure the impact of media portrayals on public perceptions and attitudes as the research deals with the media content only and not the audience's perception. Moreover, Media outlets may selectively cover particular cases or angles of VAW while overlooking others. This kind of selectivity influences the public perception of the matter and makes it difficult to generalise the findings.

Social media is a big reality of today's world which plays a significant role in

shaping perception and attitudes. Orthodox media nowadays goes hand in hand with and is influenced by social media. Studies limited to print media may not completely capture the evolving role of social media in influencing and forming discourses on VAW.

Regardless of these limitations, exploring media discourses about VAW remains crucial to the understanding of the role of the media in formulating public perception and responses to this serious issue.

## **5.4 Challenges**

Although for the most phases, the research was smoothly carried out. However, certain challenges and limitations were faced by the researcher. First, an inadequate access to archives or gathering of the articles published in the print media hindered the ability to gather a wide-ranging data. Some publications were not even digitized. There were availability and accessibility issues.

Another challenge faced by the researcher was the selection of the relevant articles. As it has been mentioned in the third chapter, there were numerous articles published in the selected newspapers related to the issues of VAW in Pakistan. In order to select the articles relevant to the study, the researcher had to skim hundreds of articles. The reading of all these articles for their relevance was a tedious and time-consuming task. Moreover, the length of these articles varied. Hence, the initially decided number of articles had to be increased for a decent amount of corpus to be created.

The practical application of the theory and exploration of the relevant linguistic features were challenging. Initially, the researcher had to test and try a number of words in the software to find relevant data. It required a very careful and objective approach as well as a thorough study of all the linguistic features that could carry implicit biases to finally get the required elements.

As Feminist Stylistics majorly deals with an analysis of the literary texts, it was challenging to apply the exact same analysis on a non-literary text like news stories. There are certain lexical and syntactic choices which may seem to carry biases in literary texts but are inevitable in non-literary texts as they may be the requirement of the reporting. Hence, a very careful investigation of these linguistic choices was required so that the study does not overlap the boundaries of literary and non-literary

texts and presents a nuanced analysis at the same time.

The study required a thorough knowledge of interdisciplinary fields like feminism or gender studies, stylistics, sociology, media communications. It was quite complex and challenging and required a thorough study of the relevant materials available in all these fields.

## **5.5 Implications of the Study**

This research has substantial practical implications across multiple domains, including policy-making, public awareness, media practices, and societal perception of the issues and their attitudes towards it.

The most significant impact of this study will be on the media practices and their accountability. By emphasising the biases and harmful stereotypes in the media coverage of VAW in Pakistan, this research will hopefully encourage media outlets to be more careful about their discourse choices. As the study highlights the terms and patterns that reflect certain biases, it can serve a guide for the journalists about what words and structures to avoid while reporting VAW cases. It will also help them reflect on how their linguistic choices can influence the public perception and attitudes and hence will contribute towards a more nuanced representation of these issues.

Another aim of the any research in the fields of humanities and social sciences is to bring about a change in the society. This multi-disciplinary study will help to create public awareness. It can encourage to the social workers and feminists to start campaigns to educate society about the negative effects of biased media coverage. it can help challenge the harmful gender stereotypes and inspire the public to critically evaluate the media coverage especially examining the linguistic choices and the biases they could be conveying.

As in the west, there are proper media guidelines especially for the reporting of sensitive issues, the findings of this study can help the government to develop media guidelines for the reporting of VAW in Pakistan. It will also encourage the media houses to organize training sessions for journalists on how to report such sensitive issues to contribute towards social change. Guidelines on which specific terms and structures to avoid in discourse can be devised which can help minimize the practices of victim blaming and shift the narrative from victimhood to empowerment. As the research contributes to a nuanced understanding of all the false practices of the media

for the representation of VAW in Pakistan, it will guide the policy makers to not only realise the severity of the issue but also inform them about the development of new policies and revision of the existing ones. Further, it can serve as a basis for the integration of these guidelines in the media curriculum as well.

Furthermore, as this research adds to the existing body of knowledge in the fields of media studies, gender studies and sociology by presenting a comprehensive analysis of VAW representation, it can be used as a reference point for future studies in the same field. The similar research can be carried out in other regions as well. The results of this study can be used as the foundation for a more comprehensive analysis for example, the analysis of discourse used across different media outlets and a comparative study can also be carried out.

In conclusion, the findings of this research can raise collaboration between different stakeholders, for example, government bodies, media administrations, educational organisations, and social welfare organisations. Through this collaboration, these groups can create more holistic policies to improve the VAW reporting in Pakistan and hence contribute to a more educated, unbiased, and empathetic society.

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