
Linguistics Construction of Generational Conflict in Pakistani Television Drama: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Parwarish Drama

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1845>

Abstract

Domestic dramas not only serve the purpose of entertainment, but they also mirror society. Pakistani drama *Parwarish* highlights societal tension and the generational and understanding gap between parents and Gen Z through dialogue and storytelling techniques. The present study of the drama serial *Parwarish* demonstrates a generational understanding gap through a close examination of parent-child interaction. Moreover, it pays attention to narrative techniques, especially to dialogue composition, which reflects cultural values, power, and conflict within the fabric of Pakistani society. This study uses Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework using purposive sampling on selected episodes. This research analyse dialogues to differentiate authority marker, imperatives, pronouns, and rhetorical questions. On the other hand, the discursive level of analysis is to connect drama discourse to the immanent ideological and sociolect-cultural background. Conversely, parental discourse highlights the authority, respect, and obedience. These narrative techniques highlight the contrast of two different thought processes and portray how the clash between two generations is linguistically framed. The investigation illustrates that *Parwarish* reflects the Pakistani family's everyday problems where usually modern generational values often disputes with conventional expectations, dramas such as *Parwarish*, not only reflect but constructs the societal reality perceptions and challenges the traditional norms. The findings of the study uncovers that Genz's discourse focuses on individualism cooperation, vulnerability. Conversely, parental discourse highlights the authority, respect, and obedience. It also point out media's discourse role in building national identity and generational self-perception.

Keywords: Intergenerational understanding gap, CDA, Discourse analysis, Gen Z, Pakistani media

Introduction

In many cultures of the Global South, particularly in Pakistan, relationships between elders and younger generations are deeply shaped by traditions of respect, conformity, and collective family responsibility. Family structures often emphasize obedience to elders and adherence to cultural norms. However, these expectations sometimes come into tension with the perspectives of Generation Z, who increasingly emphasize self-identity, education, and personal autonomy. Such tensions create what scholars describe as a generational understanding gap, defined as differences in viewpoints between parents and children regarding values, attitudes, and cultural expectations (Sattar et al., 2010). These differences often lead to misunderstandings and conflicts within families, especially as societies experience rapid cultural and technological

transformation. The concept of the generational gap has long been examined in sociology and psychology. Karl Mannheim (1952) argued that generations develop distinct worldviews shaped by the historical and social conditions in which they grow up. According to Mannheim, individuals belonging to different generations interpret social realities differently because they share different formative experiences. Similarly, Margaret Mead (1970) suggested that rapid cultural change can intensify misunderstandings between generations, particularly when younger generations adapt more quickly to evolving social environments than their elders.

In contemporary societies, technological advancement has further widened generational differences. Marc Prensky (2001) introduced the concept of “digital natives,” referring to young people who grow up immersed in digital technologies and therefore develop distinct communication patterns and learning habits. Similarly, Jean M. Twenge (2017) argues that the generation raised with smartphones and social media—often described as “iGen”—exhibits unique behavioral patterns shaped by digital environments. These technological transformations influence how younger generations communicate, construct identity, and negotiate authority within families.

Psychological perspectives on family relationships also provide insight into intergenerational tensions. Studies by Laurence Steinberg (2001) and Judith Smetana (1995) suggest that conflicts between parents and adolescents often arise from disagreements regarding autonomy, authority, and decision-making. Cultural expectations can further complicate these dynamics. For instance, Andrew J. Fuligni (1998) highlights that strong family obligations in collectivist societies sometimes conflict with young individuals’ desire for independence and personal choice.

Technological developments and social media have also reshaped youth identity and communication practices. Scholars such as Sherry Turkle (2011) and Danah Boyd (2014) argue that online platforms influence how young people construct identities and maintain social relationships. Similarly, Henry Jenkins (2006) and Sonia Livingstone (2009) explain that participatory digital media environments empower young people while simultaneously creating a cultural and technological divide between generations. In the Pakistani context, social media platforms such as Instagram can significantly influence young people's mental well-being and social perceptions, highlighting how digital engagement shapes youth experiences and identities (Qamar & Ali, 2025).

Within South Asian societies, generational tensions are often intensified by strong cultural traditions and expectations regarding family authority. Khan (2023) illustrates how generational differences in the Pashtun community arise when traditional cultural norms interact with modern educational and technological influences. Similarly, Mishra and Singh (2023) demonstrate that changing parenting practices in India reflect broader societal transformations between traditional authority and youth autonomy. Cultural expectations related to gender, identity, and social appearance also influence youth experiences. For instance, Bint-e-Khalil and Ali (2025) show how young women in Azad Jammu and Kashmir negotiate body image and beauty ideals within complex cultural expectations, illustrating how social norms shape young people's identity formation in South Asian societies.

Media plays a significant role in reflecting and shaping these social transformations. In Pakistan, television dramas function as powerful cultural texts that portray and influence public perceptions of family relationships, gender roles, and generational dynamics. Research on the drama *Ranjha Ranjha Kardi* demonstrates that the language used by characters can influence viewers’ perceptions of gender roles and family expectations (Rehman, Rafi & Baig, 2024). Similarly, Hussain (2023) finds that romantic television narratives significantly influence youth attitudes and expectations about relationships, highlighting the strong impact of television content on young audiences.

Recent scholarship has also examined how Pakistani dramas portray power relations and social hierarchies. For example, Noor et al. (2025) analyze the drama *Noor Jahan* and demonstrate how changing generational values are represented through struggles over authority and social expectations within families. Likewise,

Saleem and Shafiq (2025) reveal that Pakistani dramas frequently portray tensions related to gender, class, and power, suggesting that television narratives serve as a space where social inequalities and ideological conflicts are both reflected and contested.

Language plays a crucial role in shaping these representations. It also serves as a key medium through which younger generations express identity and resistance. Ali and Naz (2023) highlight that Pakistani Generation Z often uses informal and hybrid linguistic styles on digital platforms to express individuality and challenge traditional norms. In the context of television narratives, Khan and Mahmood (2020) observe that teenage characters frequently employ colloquial language to assert independence and question outdated cultural expectations. These linguistic practices suggest that media discourse becomes an important space where generational tensions are articulated and negotiated.

Within this broader media landscape, the drama *Parwarish*, broadcast on ARY Digital, gained significant attention for its portrayal of generational conflict within Pakistani families. The narrative focuses on the emotional struggles of young characters who attempt to communicate their aspirations while navigating strong parental expectations and societal pressures. Many characters are depicted as suppressing their personal desires in order to conform to traditional family norms, which intensifies misunderstandings between parents and children.

Despite the growing body of research on generational conflict, youth culture, and media representation, relatively few studies have examined how generational tensions are linguistically constructed within Pakistani television dramas. Most existing research focuses either on family dynamics, youth culture, or media influence separately. Consequently, there remains a gap in understanding how language and discourse in Pakistani dramas construct and communicate intergenerational conflict.

To address this gap, the present study applies the three-dimensional framework of Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995) to analyze the discourse of *Parwarish*. Fairclough's model examines discourse at three interconnected levels: the textual level, which focuses on vocabulary and linguistic structures; the discursive practice level, which analyzes how dialogues are produced and interpreted; and the social practice level, which explores how cultural traditions, social values, and emerging ideologies shape the broader social context. Nasia et al. (2025) emphasize that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can uncover how media language constructs particular social meanings and influences audience interpretations of reality. Similarly, Gauhar et al. (2024) demonstrate how CDA can reveal persuasive language strategies in Pakistani media discourse, illustrating how linguistic choices communicate social values, identities, and power relations.

This study therefore investigates how the generational gap between parents and Generation Z children is represented in *Parwarish* through language, communication patterns, and narrative strategies. Specifically, the research addresses the following questions: (i) How does *Parwarish* linguistically construct the generational understanding gap between parents and Gen Z children through communication and storytelling techniques? (ii) What power relations and ideological tensions emerge in *Parwarish* that reflect or reinforce intergenerational conflict within Pakistani society?

2. Methods and Materials

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how generational conflict between parents and Generation Z is represented in the Pakistani television drama *Parwarish*. CDA was selected because it allows researchers to explore how language constructs social meanings, power relations, and ideological tensions within media texts. Specifically, the study applies Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA (1992, 1995), which analyzes discourse at three interconnected levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The qualitative approach is appropriate for examining dialogue, narrative structures, and communicative strategies that reflect the generational understanding gap within the drama.

Data Source and Sampling

The primary data for this study consist of selected episodes and dialogues from the Pakistani television drama *Parwarish*, broadcast on ARY Digital in 2025. The drama was chosen because it explicitly centers on tensions between parents and children within contemporary Pakistani families, making it a suitable case for examining the representation of generational differences. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select scenes and dialogues that directly portray conflicts or misunderstandings between parents (primarily representing Generation X) and their Gen Z children. Episodes containing key interactions related to issues such as education, career expectations, personal identity, and communication styles were identified and transcribed. These scenes were selected because they most clearly illustrate linguistic expressions of disagreement, authority, resistance, and negotiation within family relationships.

Data Collection

The selected episodes were viewed multiple times to ensure familiarity with the narrative context. Relevant dialogues depicting intergenerational conflict were transcribed verbatim in their original language. The transcripts included both verbal exchanges and contextual information such as tone, emotional expressions, and conversational setting to capture the broader communicative environment. Field notes were also maintained during viewing to document recurring linguistic patterns, themes, and narrative structures related to generational tensions.

Analytical Framework

As mentioned earlier, the data were analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which consists of the following stages:

1. Textual Analysis (Description)

At the textual level, the study examined specific linguistic features used in the dialogues, including vocabulary, tone, metaphors, pronouns, and conversational strategies. Particular attention was paid to how parents and Gen Z characters use language to express authority, resistance, frustration, or negotiation.

2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

At this level, the analysis focused on how the dialogues are produced, circulated, and interpreted within the narrative context of the drama. This stage explored how storytelling techniques, character positioning, and interactional patterns construct the generational gap and shape viewers' understanding of family dynamics.

3. Social Practice (Explanation)

The final stage situates the discourse within the broader socio-cultural context of Pakistani society. The analysis examined how the language used in *Parwarish* reflects wider social debates about tradition, authority, youth autonomy, education, and modernization. This step connects the media representation to larger ideological tensions between traditional family structures and emerging youth identities.

Ethical Considerations

Since the study analyzes publicly available media content, no human participants were directly involved. The research therefore does not require informed consent or ethical approval related to human subjects. However, the study maintains academic integrity by accurately representing the dialogues and acknowledging all original sources.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To enhance analytical reliability, the selected scenes were repeatedly reviewed and cross-checked during the transcription and coding process. Themes and discourse patterns were identified through iterative analysis to ensure that interpretations were grounded in the textual evidence.

Results and Discussion

1.1 Linguistic patterns of generational understanding Gap in Parwarish

Words create social realities and thus are the scale for analyzing the intentions. Our words decide how the situation will turn out. Similarly, in the drama, a dialogue shapes the scene and builds a conception or misconception in its audience's mind. As Fairclough (1995) in *Discourse of Media* points out that TV dramas use narration techniques and word selection and reinforce the idea of a societal chain of command. The conversation between Wali and Jahangir in Parwarish gives the best example of it, where Jahangir's commanding and controlling dialogues strengthen patrimonial supremacy. On the other hand, Wali's defensive arguments show independence and opposition. These different language patterns demonstrate two generations in two different positions that create a conflict. Because Gen Z challenges the traditional concept of obedience.

Language connection with authority is more elaborately explained in Fairclough's *Language and Power* (2001); this talks about how dominance is formed by using pronouns, modal verbs, and imperatives. This theoretical framework is specifically related to Pakistani dramas. Where power relations can be analyzed through dialogues like "I said go to your room", making the father's position more dominant. In contrast, a son's mitigated strategies, like "Dad, listen to me, don't do this," confront independence while negotiating respect.



Moreover, the situation and context of words are equally important because, based on context, the listener decides the meaning and reacts accordingly. As Wodak and Meyer (2009) say in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, intertextuality is very important to understand

how generational identities are being constructed. So, in the Pakistani context, Saleem and Anwar (2023) further investigate the linguistic construction of social hierarchies in TV dramas. It uses Fairclough's *Critical Discourse Analysis* and uncovers class distinction ideologies and their resulting disdain with age-based power structures in the drama Parwarish. In parallel, Ashraf, Zahid, and Amjad's (2023) study of Pak-dramas on "*gendered linguistic variation*" shows that character dialogues depict more exhaustive societal expectations.

Woven into one thread, this research asserts that Parwarish clearly portrays the intergenerational

understanding gap between parents and child by dialogue strategies such as pronouns, open questions, and imperatives. Through these linguistic markers, the drama provides valuable insights into power relations and gaps in communication and understanding.

2.2 Power struggles and ideological tensions between parents and Gen Z children in Pakistani society are portrayed in the Parwarish drama

Pakistani dramas often represent domestic life, where mastery, moral principles, and ethical values are dared. As far as the Parwarish TV serial is concerned, clashes between parents and children have been highlighted through language or dialogue. Most of the time, parents use commanding language; in an ordering way they use imperatives. To teach, they give moral lessons. And if children question any traditional concept in words, they still get an intensely rude reaction; this depicts a broader understanding gap in Pakistani society where children's independence challenges elders' respect standards. Similarly, in the scenario of the Parwarish drama, the hierarchal figure Jahangir reinforces his power or domination by using declarative sentences like "Who are you to take decisions?"



This suggests that only elders can talk; only they have the authority. In contrast, Wali, his son, asks rhetorical questions in reply, for example, "Really? You are the only one who can make decisions in this house?" This shows the collision of two different mindsets, opposition in opinions of two generations.



Wodak and Meyer (2009) put stress on the social context of discourse. In context of Pakistan, elder's respect is a social and cultural value. On the very other hand, new generations like Gen Z are influenced

and mentally affected by global ideas, western culture, and that is because they believe in self-expression and openness of emotions. Dramas demonstratively portray these clashes with language where children often say, "I respect you, but I want to share my opinion." Signals the divergence towards give-and-take or discussion instead of blind obedience. Some studies have been conducted on Pakistani dramas that acknowledge it as well. One of the research projects of Saleem and Anwer (2023) reflects the role of language in TV dramas in the making of social hierarchies. Most importantly, by using class and authority markers. It reflects that language variation, like cross-questioning or directness, indicates different identities. That is visible in generational clash. As Fatima and Moin (2022) investigate ideological change through language by characters in Pakistani dramas. Representing that discourse can change the meaning of values over time. In Pakistani society the daily routine struggle is that the children are bound to parents' expectations; they are forced to follow traditional paths in education, profession, and even marriage decisions. In contrast, the younger generation desires liberation.

For instance, in Parwarish, Jahangir forces Wali to become a doctor and not to choose singing as his profession, while singing is his innate passion, and he really wants to chase his passion and has no interest in MBBS.

Excerpt 1

("Arey pagal, this is not how it works here.")

Excerpt 2

"You keep lecturing me about responsibility all the time, now tell me."

Both excerpts demonstrate the intergenerational clash, the main theme of the drama parwarish. In the first excerpt the father "Jahangir" uses instructive language ("crazy") and a statement in an assertive tone ("it's not how it works here") to declare his authority and consolidate deeply rooted traditions. Linguistically, it mirrors high modality (Fairclough 1989), representing father figures as the keepers of the traditions and class structure.

By contrast, the second excerpt displays resilience by using questioning modality markers and expository language ("*lecturing*") that shapes the parental discourse as some kind of repetition and oppressive or exhausting. The use of the imperative ("*Now tell me*") drags the control or supremacy and asks for accountability from the parents. This transformation and reversion reflect the discursive practice dimension (Fairclough 1992) in which children demand self-determination while maintaining elder respect. At the level of social practice, this chitchat depicts widespread tensions in Pakistani society. Where deeply constructed, the phenomena of respect, obedience, and traditional values always contradict Gen Z's level of autonomy, selfhood, and expressing emotional intensity. Collectively, these excerpts reflect the linguistic construction of disharmony and integrity disputes. It used imperative dialogues, rhetorical questioning, and evaluative linguistic markers to represent the intergenerational understanding gap.

Excerpt 3

("chaar faake pare na to ishq ka bhoot yun ese uter jayga")

Excerpt 4

("Koi choti moti job mujhe mil jayegi mujhe apki zaroorat nh hai")

These excerpts 3 and 4 delineate at the peak level of generational clash in Parwarish. These portray two opposite ideologies and emotional expressions in bold language. Excerpt 3 tells that the parents use conditional modal verbs (you will see) and appraisal language (Madness of romance) to deny children's emotional states or sensational intensity as an illogical and foolish act. He

uses a metaphor in the phrase (go hungry) that refers to the hardships of life, emphasizing the parents' conviction of rationality and practical approach over the longing of the spirits. As mentioned by Fairclough (1992), this choice of words makes the speaker's personality dominant, and a person who considers love and emotions meaningless or insignificant.

While contrary, in excerpt 4 depicts the child's refusal of dependence and power. Here, the declarative sentence (me kerlunga koi choti moti nokri) "I will find some small job" and the emphatic (mujhe apki zaroorat nh h) "I don't need you" conveys liberty and disconnection of sentiments. Linguistic analysis of this speech confronts self-expression, distance from relations

, and high flow of emotions that reveal the departure from conventional family dynamics. Moreover, here another phrase (choti moti nokri) "some small job" reflects A transition in ethical tenets from showing off and the importance of people's opinions to self-confidence. This goes with the principles of Fairclough's discursive practice dimension, in which youth challenge the superior doctrines.

At the social practice level, this conversation reflects deep-rooted conflicts within Pakistani society where Gen Z demands self-assurance and voluntary decisions. People often face old customs and hardening, although the Gen Z generation focuses attention on individual assertion and self-determination. These conversations not only reflect family struggles but also portray broader societal conflicts as well; they show cultural differences, authority, and power dynamics. Dramas show how differences in thoughts shape national identity.

Excerpt 5 Wali: (Son)

nh nh dad me apko ye nh kerne desakta. I am so sorry. Meri sari zindagi ap logon ne apne hisab se design ki hai. Me kia khaonga, kia piyunga, Sab to ap log kerte aye hn. Kahan parhunga, parhunga ye bhi ap logon ne decide kia h. Ab shadi ki baat aayi hai, to wo bhi ap log dekhenge. Thk h, mujhe ek baat bataen. Kon hn me? Kia hn? Koi kachra hn? Koi janwar hn apka paltu?

Kon hn ap mujhe bataen? Aapka apna khoon hn. Is tarha se ap mujhe treat karte aaye hain! hn! Kiyun?? Puri zindagi apne apni Jahangir Ahmed Ahmed ban k guzar li hai, to Wali Jahangir banne ki kia zaroorat h??

Excerpt 6 Jahangir: (father)

Kiyun k mene paida kia hai tumhen. Mene! mene pala hai tumhen. is qabil banaya hai. Tumhari zindagi per tumhari ek ek sans per sirf mera haq h, or jab tak me zinda hn tum wo sab kuch keroge or sunoge jo me chahunga. Or kuch? is it clear?

This exchange of dialogue between a father and a son clearly represents contradictory ideas about individual identity and predominance. The child "Wali" starts his conversation with little hesitancy and a gesture of apology. However, instantly, he changes his tone and becomes assertive, whereas the father, "Jahangir," claims his possession over his son's life. He explicitly mentions control over his "eat," "drink," "study," and "marriage" to express his frustration. He explains that his whole life has been designed by others. His queries ("kon hn me? Kia hn me?koi kachra hn? Koi janwar hn apka paltu?") ("Who am I? Am I trash? An animal? Your

pet?"). Through this, he expresses his pain and aggression. He tells how he has been ignored in his life's important decisions. Here, the dialogue ("I am your own blood") recalls his association with his father and demands respect. Finally, his utterance shows a refusal to accept his father's name with his name, reflecting an urge for self-expression.

Father's response consolidates the command. His repetitive use of imperatives, "I did! I did!" gives an emphasis on bringing his son into the world and nurturing him. Jahangir affirms his ownership of every breath of his son. He uses declarative words that represent his complete guardianship. The line ("tum wo sab kuch keroge or sunoge jo me chahunga") reflects that it's final and you

are not supposed to argue.

The younger character's speech has more questions, words full of emotions, and repetitiveness that shows conflict. He points out certain important moments and decisions of his life, such as education, food, drink, or even marriage, and he emphasizes it by repeating phrases like ("what I eat, what I drink... where I will study...") just to talk about the consistent governance and control over his existence. It is an anaphoric repetition that is functioning as proof. So that the hearer or the audience can feel his continuous suffering. Here, Wali's questions ("Who am I? What am I? Am I trash? An animal?") are performatives and full of emotions. It's not for knowledge, but it depicts the indignity and internal emptiness of the character. He asks for acknowledgement and respect. When he asserts that ("Apka apna khoon hn") ("I am your own blood"), basically he tries to remind his father about his biological relation with him, and he is the protector; however, his treatment is totally opposite.

On the other hand, the father "Jahangir's" strong statements and the use of high modality sentences claim power, domination, and control. He repeats declarative words ("kiyun k Mene paida kia h tumhen. Mene! Mene pala h tumhen") here the repetition of "Mene" reflects the authority or domination. Emphasis on his role as a breadwinner and creator. His modal verbs and assertive ("tum wo sab kuch keroge or sunoge"), ("jab tak me zinda hn") generalize domination as natural and fixed. These all-textual references to modal verbs, pronouns, cross questions, and repetition show contradiction: father's language demands blind obedience, but son's dialogues claim individuality and deny accepting suppression.

Analysis of language perception and production traces usual family conflicts, parents' teachings, and moral expectations. Where "Jahangir", the father's discourse, represents those cultural norms connect food supply with power. Since he affirms his ownership, giving life, raising his son and making him capable. So, according to him, making decisions is his right. It is a common thinking pattern in Pakistani society.

Wali's discourse connects global ideas about selfhood, identity, and individual rights in family dynamics. By giving everyday examples, he demands autonomy in day-to-day life that is meaningful for everyone. Reception of audience varies; senior audience may judge father's actions and responses as justified; they may see Jahangir as a responsible father. Meanwhile, the same dialogue pattern can be entirely different for other audiences, like the Gen Z generation, depending on the social context and beliefs. Their global rational ideas can perceive this thing as negative or even abusive. So, there are two sides to the coin; two perspectives of different mindsets. That shows how the interpretation can be changed because of context. This represents how meaning is produced based on both text and context.

Moreover, the dialogues are not just words, but it's beyond words; it portrays patriarchal society, traditional family values and ethics, and the economic division. Usually, in Pakistan older generation take decisions on the behalf of younger generation. This practice is common and considered to be justified in terms of respect and honor. When Jahangir says ("tumhari ek ek sans pe sirf mera haq hai") he claims his kinship and ownership, treating his son as object. Although Wali totally rejects this old school of thought. This creates a clash between traditional models and new emerging ideologies or personal autonomy

Conclusion

This study explored the understanding gap between parental worldviews and Gen Z perspectives as portrayed in the drama serial Parwarish. The results indicate that everyday family talk reveals a fundamental shift in how generations view themselves. Parents' use of communication is characterized by provision and communal responsibility. Whereas Gen Z characters use speech that emphasizes self-expression and individuality. This clashing discourse leads to frequent clashes over daily life and choices, making generational differences and emotionally charged. The present study uses Fraiclough's three-dimensional model, aiming to show how these generational gaps are produced and sustained in digital

media. First, on a textual level specific linguistic features like repetition, questions, and blunt commands underscore a struggle for dominance. Second, at the discursive level, the drama serial adopts the traditional family structure while giving youth a platform to question it. Ultimately, the findings indicate that digital media drama serials like Parwarish can help the audience navigate their generational conflicts.

Acknowledgments

Funding

No funding

Ethical approval

Since this study involves no human beings data, ethical approval was not required.

Competing Interests

The first author declares no financial competing interests.

Data availability

All data are part of this article.

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