

Language, Gender, and Judicial Power: A Feministic Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Rape Judgments

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Abstract

Rape is not a purely legal phenomenon, but a gendered social phenomenon that is influenced by relations of power, ideology and institutional discourse. In this research paper, the language used in Pakistani Rape Judgments is analyzed from a feminist perspective to construct the victimhood, credibility and criminality. The study adopts Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework and selected rape judgments are analyzed to explore the linguistic representation of the victim and the rapist and the role of judicial discourse in the manifestation of the larger gendered power relations. The analysis is conducted regarding the following linguistic elements: gendered lexis, evaluative language, transitivity, modality, nominalization and representation of participants. The results show that female victims are being constructed by judges with discourses of vulnerability, suffering and credibility assessment, and male perpetrators are represented with varying degrees of agency and responsibility. The analysis also shows how socio-cultural ideas of gender roles, morality and proper conduct for women shape judicial narratives. The study, using a feminist approach, supports the assertion that law is not free from gender bias, but can embody and perpetuate existing male-dominated ideologies in society. Other judgments, meanwhile, reinforce conventional gender norms, placing the emphasis on victims' rights and reaffirming notions of justice and accountability.

This study draws on Critical Discourse Analysis and feminist language and power analysis to add to the existing literature on the gender and judicial discourse in Pakistan. It underscores the importance of language in the context of legal interpretations and sexual violence public perceptions, and the necessity of gender responsive judicial language that fosters equality and justice.

Keywords: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, Rape Judgments, Judicial Discourse, Gender, Patriarchy, Victimhood, Pakistan.

Introduction

Rape is one of the most severe types of sexual violence and is a serious breach of autonomy, dignity and human rights (Brownmiller, 1975; World Health Organization, 2021). Rape is a social and ideological issue, and one which is socially constructed by gendered power relations and institutional practices, in addition to its legal definition. Today, rape is seen in scholarship as an

event that is not only physically violent, but also discursively constructed as a legal, media and cultural event in which meaning is literally put into words (Ehrlich, 2001; Fairclough, 1995). Language is used largely in this construction. Laws are written, enforced and explained in terms of discourse, and it is language that is the backbone of legal systems. Judicial judgments are thus not representations of facts, but institutional stories with a set of ideological assumptions and linguistic choices. Linguistic analysis of judicial discourse and forensic studies of language have demonstrated that legal language reflects institutional power and helps to construct social realities (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010; Tiersma, 1999).

According to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), legal discourse is regarded as a place where power relations are reproduced and legitimized using language (van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 1995). This view is further developed in Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), which shows that the gender ideology can be found in the institutional discourse and that language can create gendered identities, especially when talking about violence against women (Lazar, 2005; Mills, 2008). In recent years, the study of rape discourse has started to shift to a linguistic and semiotic approach in Pakistan. For example, it has been found that the rape is often portrayed through the absence of perpetrators and the victimization of the victim in the media and visual discourses (Riaz, 2021). Likewise, the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021 has been subject to critical scrutiny to expose the ongoing institutionality of the survivor in the legal language and foregrounding of institutional power (Aziz & Naeem, 2025). Other studies on how the language is used in Pakistani courts have shown that rape sentences are multifaceted linguistic constructions of agency, credibility, and responsibility (Sher & Saleem, 2026). Together, these results suggest that legal and institutional discourses in Pakistan are highly entangled in the process of generating gendered meanings.

Research Gape

Despite this, an extensive research gap is still found in conducting systematic linguistic analysis of Pakistani rape judgments especially from the feminist discourse perspective. Previous studies have focused on media depictions, on legislation, and on individual case studies, but little has been addressed on how judicial reasoning itself creates victims and perpetrators using language in binding legal documents. The space between fact and fiction in the judicial sentence is hugely important as it is the judicial sentence that defines legal truth and gainfully influences people's perceptions of sexual violence. In view of this, the present study aims to fill this gap and will analyze selected rape cases in Pakistan with the aid of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using feminist interpretive approach. It analyzes how linguistic choices shape the notions of victimhood, credibility, agency and institutional authority in judicial discourse. The analysis draws on the three-dimensional model of CDA suggested by Fairclough but also draws on feminist theoretical issues of gender, power, and patriarchy for interpretation of findings.

Objectives

The objectives that guide the current research are as follows:

- To determine the linguistic characteristics which show gender biasness in the judgments of rape cases in Pakistan.
- To investigate the effects of such language on the description of victims and accused.
- To investigate how gendered legal discourse affects the outcomes of judicial decision

The research objectives are to reportedly, rather than critically, record the linguistic characteristics that influence the language used in judicial proceedings of rape. It is descriptive and analytic and

offers enlightenment regarding how institutional language defines conceptions of justice and gender. This question adds to the interdisciplinary discourse of linguistics, gender studies and law, as it underlines the role of discourse practices in shaping the concept of justice in a culture-specific setting.

Research Question

1. What are the linguistic depictions of victims of rape and the perpetrators of rape in Pakistani rape judgements?
2. What are the discursive methods that build up credibility, agency, and responsibility in judicial discourse?
3. What does the language choice say about wider issues of gender and institutional power?

The aims of this study are to discover important linguistic patterns in rape sentences, to examine the role of social actors in legal discourse and to understand the role of language in the creation of gendered judicial meanings. This research is a contribution to forensic linguistics, legal discourse analysis and feminist scholarship because of the evidence provided for the role played by judicial language in the reproduction of gender ideologies. Furthermore, it contributes to the on-going study of rape discourse in Pakistan by analyzing court judgments in a systematic manner from a linguistic perspective, which is a gap that links the study of law with critical discourse studies.

Literature Review

Legal discourse has been a growing area of forensic linguistics and critical discourse studies, especially concerning the social reality that is constructed by institutional language. Legal texts are not the neutral representation of facts; they are products of ideological, cultural and institutional frameworks which influence interpretation and decision making (Tiersma, 1999, Coulthard & Johnson, 2010). In the judicial context, language is used as a means of exercising and legitimizing power, and therefore legal discourse is a strong field of social norms and power relations (**van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 1995**).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach which offers a theoretical lens for the analysis of language as an expression and perpetuation of structures of power and inequality. In the study of discourse in institutions, such as in legal judgments, Fairclough (1995) has adopted his three-dimensional model (text, discursive practice, and social practice). Judicial language from this point of view is not just descriptive but also constitutive and constructs meanings about crime, responsibility and identity. When dealing with sexual violence, CDA has been especially useful in uncovering the role of linguistic form in the formation of agency and blame (Ehrlich, 2001).

Feministic Critical Discourse Analysis

FCDA extends CDA, by specifically foregrounding gender as a key category of analysis. According to Lazar (2005), FCDA is concerned with revealing the reproduction and/or contestation of patriarchal ideologies that are contained in institutional practices. Feminist legal scholars make special note that the language of the courts frequently reflects gendered notions of sexuality, consent, and credibility that can lead to the portrayal of women as victims and men as perpetrators (Mills, 2008). This is especially important when dealing with rape where questions

of credibility, moral judgement and bodily autonomy are negotiated linguistically in institutional contexts.

Judicial Discourse as an Institutional Language

This judicial discourse can be perceived as a kind of institutional discourse as it is produced within a formal law system which is regulated by a set of procedures, a set of power structures, and conventions. The institutional discourse is not like normal communication because it is authority bearing and has both direct social and legal implications. Institutional power is exercised by judges, lawyers and legal institutions by use of language since the decision made by the judicial system does not only interpret the facts but also creates legal realities. Judgments of the court are not mere accounts of reasoning within the law, thus they are institutional texts, which influence how people interpret justice, legality, and social norms. Judging language is the way of how the power relations inherent in the legal system are reflected, and it can shape the perception of the victim, the accused persons and the crime, Judicial language, discourse-wise, is a part of institutional authority legitimization. Legal reasoning is often presented by the formal and authoritative tone of court judgments as objective and beyond doubt. But discourse analysts believe that institutional language can also reproduce hegemonic ideologies such as gendered assumptions, via repetitive linguistic patterns and representational practices.

Feministic studies on rape:

Research on rape discourse has always shown that language is a significant factor in the perception of sexual violence. Ehrlich (2001) points out that rape narratives are not neutral, but rather created by the discursive options used, and how these options are interpreted affects the understanding of responsibility and consent. This work also highlights the current feminist research, which demonstrates that victims are invariably described in terms of vulnerability or passivity, while it attributes a range of agency and/or mitigation to the perpetrator in institutional discourse. These linguistic discourses have implications for larger narratives of gender and sexuality. Studies on rape discourse in Pakistan have seen a significant increase over the past few years, especially after the arrival of significant rape cases and the enactment of the law. The social constructs of honor, morality and shame are reflected in the media and legal discourses and can shape public views and government responses to rape (Zia, 2019; Ali & Gavino, 2008). For example, a content analysis of rape-related media reporting in Pakistan shows an increasing tendency to blame victims and exclude their voices from the narrative by emphasising on their behavior, location or credibility rather than liability (Khurshid et al., 2025). In the same way, CDA research on media coverage of sexual violence shows how agency is linguistically decentered from the perpetrators by using passive structures and euphemistic language (Ihsan & Irshad, 2025).

Recent Studies

In recent years, research on legal texts has also started, in particular on legislative reforms and judicial reasoning. Feminist discourse analysis of the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021 in Pakistan has shown that although the law is progressive in its intent, the language still depicts the survivors in passive positions and puts forth the institutional power, including police and courts (Aziz & Naeem, 2025). Similarly, in Pakistan, SFL research of Appellate Court judgments reveals that judges' rhetoric is created by using transitivity and evaluative framing which creates the reality of the victim and perpetrator within the context of the legal discourse

(Sher & Saleem, 2026). The findings from these studies all point in the direction that even the most reformist legal regimes can subtly reinforce patriarchal ideology in the language.

An important area of study is the ideology construction in the legal discourse in Pakistan. It has been observed that the attitudes and values of the society regarding women's conduct, morality, and credibility shape judicial reasoning on sexual violence. A study of Supreme Court rulings throughout history shows that rape discourse has been embedded in the socio-cultural norms of acceptable and non-acceptable behavior of women, which may impact how the case is constructed and the evidence and testimony considered in the court. In fact, a study of Supreme Court rulings throughout history reveals that the discourse of rape has been markedly shaped by the socio-cultural norms of what women should and should not do and how they should and should not conduct themselves which may influence how the case is constructed and evidence and testimony taken into account in the court (Ahmed, 2021). These conceptual foundations underscore the interconnections of law, culture and gender and the impact thereof on judicial decisions.

However, there is a significant lack of systematic analysis of the Pakistani rape judgments in the feminist critical discourse perspective. In contrast to a more thorough study of judicial language as a discursive practice, existing research tends to concentrate on media representation, statutory analysis, or on case-by-case studies. In addition, there is also low integration of linguistic properties, like transitivity, modality, evaluative lexis and participant representation, in a single feminist interpretation system. This gap is important not only because judicial decisions have legal implications but because they also have social implications as well, in terms of the meanings of gender, violence, and justice. This study thus situates itself under a nexus of discourses from forensic linguistics, CDA and feminist theory to analyze the construction of meaning in Pakistan's judgments of rape, using language. The research combines the CDA of Fairclough with feminist interpretive principles, thus expanding the field of study and filling the gap in the literature on judicial discourse in rape cases in Pakistan. It helps inform an understanding of the role of language in legal judgments in relation to gendered power relations, and of institutional language in different perceptions of victimization, credibility, and justice in sexual violence cases.

Methodology

The present study is a qualitative research design that investigates the linguistic construction of gender, power and institutional authority in Pakistani rape judgments. The research is basically carried out in the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as developed by Fairclough (1995) in which language is viewed as text, discursive practice, and social practice. Furthermore, the analysis of the results is based on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) that highlights the interaction between language and gender in institutional contexts (Lazar, 2005).

The data used for this study are the selected rape judgments given by Pakistani courts from 2021 to 2025. These judgments were selected using purposive sampling which entailed selecting those which were relevant to the present study and had full written records of their decisions. The criteria for selecting the cases were (i) Judgments related to the provisions of Pakistan Penal Code regarding rape or attempted rape, (ii) Judgments that were publicly accessible, and (iii) Judgments that demonstrate variance in reasoning patterns. Trial court and appellate level judgement are included in the sample to reflect the variation in the use of legal language.

The analysis is based on Fairclough's CDA framework. The study addresses the linguistic aspects at the textual level, including the lexical choice, transitivity patterns, modality, nominalization and voice structures. Special focus is placed on the role of gendered lexical items, evaluative language and patterns of representation of participants in particular the representation of victims and

perpetrators in judicial discourse. The research level of discursive practice examines how judgements are created and understood in the institutional context of the judiciary, including the concepts of intertextuality and evidential framing, as well as reasoning strategies of the judges. The analysis is at the level of social practice, where judicial discourse is analyzed in its relation to the socio-cultural ideologies that are embedded in it. While the analytical structure is based on CDA, the interpretation of the linguistic patterns is oriented towards feminist theoretical concerns. FCDA is used in an interpretive way to analyze the role that judicial language can play in affirming or challenging the assumptions of patriarchy embedded in legal discourse. This involves focusing on the construction of victims in relation to vulnerability, credibility and agency, and the construction of perpetrators in relation to responsibility and mitigations.

The study uses descriptive and interpretive form of analysis. Linguistic features are initially identified and classified in a systematic manner, then an interpretive phase is brought in where the features are analyzed in regard to gendered power relations. In contrast to a new computational or a new statistical analysis of the data, this study reinterprets the results of the existing qualitative analysis of judicial texts using a feminist discourse perspective. To guarantee reliability, the analysis is carried out by the reading of judicial texts, with the aim to ensuring that the patterns of language found are repeated. Maintaining validity in the study is done by theoretical triangulation, which is the combination of two frameworks of CDA and FCDA to increase the depth of interpretation. Ethical issues are respected by using only information that has been published in judicial records, thus avoiding the use of confidential or sensitive personal data in the analysis.

On the overall, it is a methodological approach that allows for an in-depth analysis of the functioning of the language in the judicial process, and also adds the ideological and gendered dimension of the language of the judgments rendered in rape cases in Pakistan.

ANALYSIS

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis looks at the linguistic aspects of the judgments with a strict concentration on textual properties. This step determines vocabulary patterns, grammatical patterns, modality, transitivity patterns, nominalization, voice, sentence structure, cohesion, and representation of participants.

Vocabulary

The decisions made are very institutionalized in legal language. There are lexical items that are linked to judicial procedures that occur frequently and, in this case, terms like prosecution case, convict-appellant, benefit of doubt and beyond reasonable doubt can be observed. As an example, the text uses some expressions which are certainty-oriented and repeat numerous times:

“the prosecution has shown beyond reasonable doubt this case”

Evaluative Lexis

Furthermore, evaluative lexical items are also clearly visible. On the same note, evaluative repetition is observable e.g. Proved, established, confidence inspiring, trustworthy. The crime has been characterized using exaggerated terms of criticism such as:

- Heinous offence
- Ignominious act against her prospects in life
- miserably failed

- hardened, desperate and habitual criminal
- tender age

Legal Lexis

Crime-related and evaluative lexical items are repeated all over the judgments. The discourse is dominated by institutional legal terminology. There is a lexical area of criminality:

For instance:

- convict-appellant
- Prosecution case
- ocular evidence
- benefit of doubt
- beyond reasonable doubt
- false implication
- sentence enhancement
- medico-legal report
- cross-examination
- jurisdiction

Moral Lexis

Moralising vocabulary appears in multiple locations:

- ignominious act
- lust of the offender
- nefarious activity
- does not deserve leniency
- ends of

justice Gendered
Lexis

Gender-related lexical items include:

- victim girl
- minor daughter
- prosecutrix
- modesty
- tender age

Intensifiers / Hedges

The dataset demonstrates frequent use of intensifiers, particularly in constructions encoding certainty and evidential strength. Expressions such as “*crystal clear*,” “*fully established*,” and “*beyond reasonable doubt*” recur extensively. Evaluative intensifiers are also observed, including lexical items such as “*heinous*” and “*ignominious*.” Hedging constructions occur less frequently and are primarily associated with evidentiary ambiguity, including expressions such as “*appears*,” “*may*,” and “*possibility*.” Negation-based certainty constructions, including “*no possibility*” and “*did not exist*,” are also prominent within the judgments.

Overlexicalization

The research reveals definite trends of overlexicalization, which is represented by the occurrence of semantically related lexical items in judgments. The lexical domains related to criminality are repeated in more expressions like: offence, commission, conviction, guilt, and culprit.

Essentially, the certainty of evidence is strengthened by the occurrence of expressions such as: proved, established, crystal clear and beyond reasonable doubt. The use of constructions of negation like: no possibility, did not exist, cannot be believed are common, creating a semantic field that is repeated on the issue of doubt eradication. Evaluative lexical items such as heinous and ignominious are also used across a few times. Along with that, there is lexical repetition of the participants that is specific to the participants in the form of using the word victim, specifically, the victim girl and minor daughter.

Transitivity

Research shows that most of the material processes which organize the description of actions and events are dominant. Verbs often place the accused in the position of the grammatical Actor, the victim in the position of the affected player.

- Committed zina
- Made attempt of rape
- Enticed the victim
- accused committed rape
- offender enticed the minor
- convict absconded

Victim as Goal / Affected Participant:

- victim was subjected to rape
- minor was taken

Mental processes

The research indicates a prevailing factor of material processes that organize representation of actions and events. The most common verbs used to encode physical acts include: committed, kidnapped, enticed and made attempt and usually the accused will be in the grammatical position of Actor and the victim is in the position of the affected. The mental processes are the ones that are mostly found in verbs like, stated, alleged and identified, which are forms of thinking and seeing. Relational processes are very wide in the constructions of classifications, especially in identity attributions, which are found in such expressions as the convict-appellant is not an ordinary culprit. Verbal processes, such as deposed, submitted and argued, are highly used in structuring testimonial discourse. Existential processes are also presented, especially in constructions of certainty like there is no possibility of false implication.

Modality

The research shows that most of the modality constructions that are high certainty are the prevalent ones. The phrases like it is proved, it is completely established, and beyond reasonable doubt are repeated many times, which is an indication of a high level of epistemic commitment. The markers of lower certainty modality (appears, may and could) are less common and tend to be linked only with evidentiary ambiguities. Obligation-oriented modality is also much used

especially in sentencing situations, using such constructions as: does not deserve leniency, shall not be less than. There are also negative framing modality expressions as seen with techniques such as no possibility, cannot be believed, did not exist, and are grammatically encoded as categorical exclusion of doubt.

Nominalization

The use of nominalizations is wide over the dataset where processes and actions are often changed into an abstract noun. Nominalization of criminal acts is also done using phrases such as attempt of rape and act of zina. The nominalized structures are often used in judicial reasoning, especially when saying things like there is no enmity here and the false implication is possible. Similarly, evidentiary assessment is defined by forms of nominalization such as, corroboration, identification, and contradiction.

Identified Forms

- false implication
- benefit of doubt
- commission of offence
- cumulative reading of evidence
- sentence enhancement

Narratives construction:

Passive Constructions

- rape was committed
- victim was subjected to
- sentence was enhanced
- evidence was produced

Active Constructions

- accused committed rape
- offender enticed the minor
- Prosecution proved its case

Sentence Structure

- Long complex legal sentences
- Frequent embedded clauses
- Conditional reasoning structures

Cohesion

The research shows good levels of cohesive organization because logical connectors like there, however and further were used repeatedly. These connectors arrange judicial argument and reasoning. There is also referential cohesion, which is achieved by using consistent labelling of participants, such as when they are referred to as a convict-appellant, a victim child girl, or a complainant. Coherence of legal nature is also achieved with the repetition of major legal words, such as offence, evidence, and conviction. Causal and conditional cohesive structures are also commonly found especially in constructions like in absence of. and "Once the accused..."

Patterns of Representing the participants:

The subjects of the research are mostly constructed based on institutional and role-based terms. The victims are often referred to with age- and gender-based terms like victim girl, minor girl, and minor daughter. The individuals who are accused are always classified as per the legal-institutional labels such as accused, convict-appellant and culprit. Evaluative qualifiers are often used with the references of accused, such as the phrase of a habitual criminal. Formal procedural titles represent institutional actors, such as legal counsel, witnesses and medical professionals.

Interpretive analysis

Interpretive Analysis (Discursive Practice)

The interpretive analysis focuses on the functioning of linguistic pattern identified during the descriptive phase in organizing meaning in the judgments. This phase is concerned with the structuring of discourse, interpretive framing, evidential logic, positioning of identity and discursive closure mechanisms.

Discursive Organization of Judicial Narrative

The judgments in the dataset have a very conventionalized discursive arrangement. As it was noticed in the descriptive analysis, the texts are structured in a repetitive organizational pattern, consisting of the introduction of the version of prosecution, the defense arguments, the evaluation of the evidence, the judicial reasoning and the final determination. This sequencing of procedures renders an argumentative discourse as opposed to an experience narrative. Institutional categories of events are re-constructed in terms of prosecution case, commissioning of offence and benefit of doubt, meaning that the organization of meaning is carried out in legal rationalization. Logical connectors that were identified during the cohesion analysis such as "Therefore," "However," and "Furthermore" serve as the major tools that drive the interpretive progression. These bridges provide causes and effect relationships, argumentative, and discursive continuity.

The previously established logical connectors such as There, however, and furthermore are the key tools of steering the interpretive flow as this has been revealed in the cohesion analysis. These connectors create causative associations, argumentative transitions and discursive continuity.

Interpretive Modality Role

The patterns of modality that are determined during the descriptive phase are central in influencing interpretive certainty. High-certainty phrases like it is proved, fully established, beyond reasonable doubt, etc., are dominant and serve as a stabilizing tactic of judicial implications.

These constructions are perceived to conclude into discursive closure, as they decrease variability in interpretation. The modality expressions that are based on negation like no possibility of false implication, work further as linguistic tools of throwing out alternative interpretative positions.

On the other hand, constructions of lower certainty, such as those containing appears and may, are found mainly in the ambiguity of evidence areas, indicating a low degree of interpretation flexibility.

Evidential Framing and Hierarchy:

The judgments are highly structured by framing through evidence to construct the meaning. Witnesses, victim testification and medical report are discursively located as interpretive anchors as represented in the transitivity and verbal process analysis. Victim testimony is often a key

apparent evidential tool: “even isolated indications of the sufferer... enough”.

It is such a positioning of evidence that creates interpretive authority by assessing credibility and not by telling a story. The discussion of medicine, and by use of lexical terms like medico-legal report, redness, and swelling, it is in contact with legal reasoning. This interdiscursive incorporation brings about hybrid interpretive validity.

Transitivity and Interpretive Positioning:

The transitivity patterns, which are known in Stage 1, bring about the contribution to interpretive structuring. Preeminence of the material processes prefigures actions and occurrences: “accused committed...” and at the same time as relational processes stabilize classification and identity: “convict-appellant is...” These grammar options arrange interpretive focus with acts, responsibility and categorization getting the upper hand. Evidential assessment and testimonial power is structured mentally and verbally using such constructions as stated, deposed, and identified.

Nominalization and Discursive Abstraction

Nominalized constructions that had been discovered earlier, including "false implication," "commission of offence," and "occurrence" all lead to interpretive abstraction. The discourse reduces complex actions and turns them into a legal concept through the institutionalization of dynamic processes. The organization of meaning is therefore conceptualized within the legal framework as opposed to narration of events

Construction of Participant Identity Discursively

Interpretive positioning relates a lot to the patterns of participant representation. Victims are mostly built using the terms that underscore age and vulnerability: victim girl, minor daughter, child girl. Accused are classified using institutional and evaluative labels: accused, conviction, culprit, habitual criminal. Relational clauses are important identity stabilizing mechanisms: “convict-appellant is not a common criminal”. The identity is thus created discursively through categorization instead of an account.

Machines of Discursive Closure.

The mechanisms of interpretive closure are similar across the dataset in terms of judgments. Judicial reasoning is stabilized using certainty-oriented modality, evidential sequencing, logical connectors and negation structures. Phrases like proved beyond reasonable doubt are discursively end points that limit interpretive contestation.

Summary:

The judgments in the dataset are organized institutional discourses, which are defined by the sequencing of procedures and evaluation of evidence. The texts are structured in a traditionalized organizational format of prosecution submissions, defense submissions, evidentiary evaluation, judicial reasoning and final decision as found in the descriptive analysis. The use of logical connectors is the key to the organization of argumentative progression. Patterns of modality aid in interpretive stabilization by using high certainty constructions frequently. Framing based on evidence is attained by ranking the testimony, witness testimonies, and medical reports. Transitivity decisions are the ones that structure responsibility attribution and responsibility classification whereas nominalization plays a role in discursive abstraction. The identities of

participants are created based on institutional labelling and relational categorization. The discourse also has regular interpretive closure mechanisms.

Social analysis

The social analysis places the discursive patterns that were observed in the descriptive and interpretive stages within the wider framework of the socio-legal, cultural, and ideological frameworks. Discourse, as explained by Fairclough, is not taken to be just about language-in-use but a social practice that reflects as well as creates institutional realities. The verdicts discussed at this dataset are thus socially consequential documents that engage in the formation of legal truth, social identities as well as normative interpretations of sexual violence.

Judicial Discourse as an Institutional Authority:

The projection of institutional authority is pervasive and can be regarded as one of the most salient characteristics of the dataset. The common categorical modality constructions, including, but not limited to, proved beyond reasonable doubt, fully established and no possibility of false implication, carry out more than evaluator functions of evidence. These constructions perform epistemic finality, which puts judicial reasoning as absolute and irrefutable.

According to the point of view of Fairclough, these types of certainty constructions are the mechanisms of discursive closure. Discourse stabilizes the truth of the law by reducing the number of interpretive options and enhances the power of judiciary as the final interpreter of events. This effect of closure is further enhanced by the repetition of the negation structures: did not exist, cannot be believed, etc.

Also, interdiscursive integration increases institutional legitimacy. The medical discourse (medico-legal report, redness and swelling) that is implemented into legal reasoning creates a hybrid authority principle. Scientific language is parallel with the law analysis, and they work together to create the illusion of objectivity. Judicial discourse serves, therefore, as an adjudication of the law and as the production of truth at the same time.

The Structuring of Victimhood Gender

Gendered structuring can be seen in the patterns of participant representation that have been determined in the previous stages. The construction of victims is always done using descriptors that focus on age, vulnerability and dependency: minor girl, victim child girl, minor daughter.

Though these descriptors have legal pertinence, they are repetitively used, and that is why they are a part of a discursive structure where victim identity is highly correlated with frailty and protection. Youth, innocence and dependency are linguistically predetermined to stabilize a specific type of victimhood. Notably, the agency-based constructions of victim representation are not common. In place of this, the passive structures are often observed: "victim was subjected to..." This grammatical structure changes the discursive focus to experience of hurt as opposed to action or opposition.

Construction of Criminality Discursively

Conversely, accused persons are mainly manifested in terms of material processes and evaluative relational clauses: "accused committed..." convict-appellant is not a common offender. These structures preempt agency, accountability and categorization. The common application of characterological labelling - habitual criminal, dangerous offender, hardened culprit, etc. goes beyond the episode of identity. Not only is the accused associated with an act; he or she is placed

in a larger category of morality and behavior.

The identity construction such is indicative of the way judicial discourse generates socially recognizable subject positions. The accused is discursively stabilized and made out to be deviant and the victim is stabilized and made out to be vulnerable.

Credibility and Cultural Presuppositions:

The data also shows that sometimes the process of credibility assessment involves the culturally embedded presuppositions. The remarks that false allegation is uncommon because of parental honour, societal stigma or moral implication are some of the expressions that depict how the reasoning collides with the wider social-cultural ideologies.

To take a single instance, “His support to save her family honour is reflected from the fact that he is pursuing the case “here it is clearly mentioned that the father went to court in order to save family honor not to seek justice. This statement shows how legal discourse impacts society and how society impacts legal discourse.

The constructions that suggest that a parent would not expose a child to an ignominious act that impacts her future give rise to moral and social assumptions in the context of evidentiary assessment. Credibility is thus formed discursively by referencing honour, shame and social implications. In the context of Fairclough, these presuppositions are the exchange between discourse and social cognition. The reasoning of the judiciary is based on common sense in society to stabilize interpretative judgments.

Nominalization and Legal Ideology

The high level of nominalization in judgments is indicative of a more general legal-ideological orientation. The processes are regularly turned into abstract institutional objects: False implication, commission of offence, occurrence.

This ideology is an important role of this abstraction. The discourse transforms the socially occurring events into procedurally manageable categories by turning dynamic human actions into law. Experiences that are lived are converted into institutional objects of analysis. Nominalization therefore helps in creating the illusion of legal neutrality through foregrounding categories and not actors

Discursive Impact on Identity Closure:

The judicial discourse has a great influence in constructing identity outside the courtroom. The frequent linguistic creation of victims as vulnerable subjects and accused people as deviant agents create stabilized identity systems.

For instance “Briefly a little doll in sixth year of her blossom” this is how a little girl of 9 in being addressed in the court. The identity of the victims is linked to weakness, plausibility, and protection of morality. Accused identity is linked to agency, criminality and moral classification and at some point agency is given to other factors like for example “the lust one day, turned a human into a Satan who grabbed the opportunity to catch her prey on 12.05.2017 at about 10.30 a.m.” in this phrase the responsibility of the act is given completely to the Satan not the person. These discursive formations are spread both in the legal, institutional and the public sphere, leading to wider social identifications. Language is hence a place of identity production as opposed to description.

Judicial Speech and Popular Conception

Rape judgments are powerful public texts considering that courts have symbolic powers. The overuse of moralized terminology, the heinous offence, ignominious act, lust of the offender, etc. places sexual violence in the legal and moral frame.

This is a moral framing that carries the meaning of rape further than what the law considers to be a violation, and encompasses it in social discourses of honour, shame and deviance. Judicial language thus takes part in influencing the popular opinion concerning:

Severity of sexual violence

1. The credibility of victims
2. The accusing of accused people
3. The ethical aspects of crime

The discussion adds to the meaning-making processes in society about sexual violence

Replication of the Socio-Legal Norms:

On a larger socio-discursive level, the verdicts are the result of legal rationality interacting with socially constructed norms. The identified patterns of language use indicate that judicial language is not technical but socially contextual. The discourse engages in the reproduction of normative conceptions of crime, victimhood as well as justice through certainty constructions, evaluative labelling, vulnerability framing, and abstraction.

Findings and Discussion

The review of thirty to thirty-five rape case verdicts in Pakistani courts proves that the legal discourse does not only express legal verdicts but also displays and combines the larger social and gendered power order. The judgments are always expressed in a formal, procedural way and the terms of law are used like appellant, respondent, conviction and acquittal across the dataset. This official register creates the legitimacy of the courts and creates an image of objectiveness. A closer look however will show that in parallel to this procedural tone, the judgments regularly utilize the gendered and moralized language, such as the cases of referring to the credibility of the female complainant, moral character, and chastity. These diction words, reiterated throughout the set of data, inherently put the responsibility of the proof on the victims and strengthen the conventional societal norms about how women ought to act.

The grammatical forms of the judgments also accentuate the institutional authority at the expense of the voice of the victim. The use of passive constructions, e.g., “it was observed that the evidence was found to be insufficient”, or “the testimony was found to be inconsistent”, hides agency, especially the agency of the accused and keeps the story on a formal and objective note. The prescriptive character of the legal system is further strengthened by modal verbs like shall, must and may which imbue the legal system with the image of an undisputed power over the process and the interpretation of evidence. Even phrases such as consideration of evidence and examination of witness statements are nominalizations and make the narrative even more formal, essentially putting the text out of touch with the social and human realities of sexual violence cases.

The system of such decisions is always based on procedural logic of the court. Usually, the story follows the introduction of facts, evidence review, witness testimonies, and analysis by the judge, and the verdict. In this chain of linear progression, the voice of the victims is often mediated or paraphrased, and the accused is often directly represented. This imbalance highlights the fact that the institutional system favors legal power above the real life of women, that is, it constructs

narratives in a manner that perpetuates social inequalities. Furthermore, repeated moral assessments of the actions or reliability of victims implicitly transfer a part of responsibility to them and it shows how the language of courts can be used to represent the patriarchal culture of society even in the name of being unbiased.

There are extensive intertextual references and decisions are often made with reference to previous case laws and statutes. Although these sources make the courts appear legitimate, they tend to drown out social and human factors, presenting the case more as a case of precedent than the conditions of the victim. This tradition brings out a structural conflict where the judiciary is bound to correct the process; nevertheless, the language of the decisions might inadvertently recreate societal prejudices and alienate the people that it is meant to safeguard.

Generally, the results show that judicial discourse systematically entraps institutional power and recreates gendered relations of power. The use of impersonal language, moralized examination of the victims, and the selective mediation of voices all lead to a narrative in which law is more important than justice. Such trends directly correspond to the research problems of this paper, demonstrating that legal texts can also be seen as the vehicle of social ideology in addition to being viewed as the tools of law. The data indicates that legal terms that are formally neutral do have implicit social implications and support patriarchal ideals and shape the way the audience perceives a case of sexual violence.

These findings have far-reaching implications to the practice of law and the reform of the linguistic system. The individual biases within judicial writing can be improved by focusing on the victim-centered narrative, the lack of use of moralized and gendered terms, and the thorough consideration of the agency and the representation of the court decision, which will make the judicial results more fair. Courts can help to promote social justice not just in the procedural sense but also in the social sense by appreciating the social effects of language in law. This paper, hence, points to the two-sided relationship between law, language, and ideology and emphasizes that the urgent reforms are necessary to make judicial texts legal and socially responsible.

Findings:

- Patterned vulnerability framing, passive victim constructions, and asymmetrical evaluative categorization are the ways in which Gender Biasedness is generated.
- Identity Construction is carried out in the form of relational classification, agency distribution and moralized labelling.
- Public Perception Shaping is done by means of judicial authority, certainty projection and moralized discourse.

Conclusions

This paper analyzed thirty to thirty five rape case judgments in Pakistani courts with a view to comprehending the role of language in legal constructs, victims and their representation, as well as, social and gendered power dynamics. The study had a set of goals: to find out the linguistic and discursive patterns in court decisions, to determine the way these patterns filter the voices of victims and defendants, and to evaluate the social and ideological consequences of legal language. These objectives have been met in full through systematic analysis of the data set and this has given insight into the interplay of law, language, and society.

The results show that the language of the judiciary is very formal, procedural, and authoritative and always uses the legal terms of an appellant, respondent, conviction, and acquittal. Meanwhile, gendered and moralized vocabulary e.g. credibility of the female complainant, moral

character, chastity is used repeatedly and shows how women are expected to be in society, as well as demonstrates latent patriarchal attitudes. This shows that even when judgments by law are supposedly neutral, they can reproduce social hierarchies by making minor decisions in using language, which directly responds to the research question of how language creates meaning in judicial texts.

It was also demonstrated in the study that they tend to mediate, summarize, or paraphrase the voices of victims and provide direct representation to the accused. The use of passive constructions, modal constructions and nominalized sentences also formalize the discourse and conceal agency. These results answer the second research question, as they demonstrate how judicial accounts define credibility and responsibility perceptions, which actually give institutional power more preference than personal experiences. The review supports the fact that the legal language is not a passive mirror of the reality but a subject of social and gendered power relations.

Also, the heavy reliance of the judgments in the previous case law and statutory reference contributes to the institutional legitimacy at the same time as it subdues the social context of sexual violence. Through prioritizing procedural correctness over the lived experiences of the victims in a systematic way, the judgments reflect how the legal system recreates ideological presumptions, which meets the aim of the study to evaluate the social implications of judicial discourse.

To sum up, the study indicates that the judgments of rape cases in Pakistan serve several purposes at the same time: they both determine legal issues, institutionalize the power of a particular institution, and articulate dominant social ideology. The paper has demonstrated that judicial language may unwillingly support patriarchal standards, mediate the representation of victims in such a manner that undermines agency, and focus on formality in the process rather than social justice. This study helps to gain a better insight into the interaction between language, law and gender by addressing research questions and fulfilling the above objectives.

There are also significant practical implications of the findings. Judicial writing reforms, including the encouragement of victim-focused narratives, the minimization of moralizing and gendered language, and the provision of fair representation of all parties involved, would make the legal system fairer and inspire greater citizen confidence in the judicial system. Finally, this paper has shown the importance of language in the process of administering justice and the necessity of being both legal and linguistic sensitivity when handling cases of sexual violence.

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