



An Analysis of How Women's Rights Are Framed in Pakistani English Newspapers: A Corpus-Based Discourse Study

Research Article

Correspondence:	Nosheen Akhter <nosheenakhter10@gmail.com>	PhD Scholar, Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.
	Dr. Syed Kazim Shah <kazim.shah@gcuf.edu.pk>	Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Publication Details

Received: October 30, 2024**Accepted:** September 28, 2025**Published:** November 30, 2025

Abstract

This research examines women's rights framing within Pakistani English newspapers with a focus on how the media shapes popular perception and social norms. While the media can work to further gender equality, it tends to offer one-sided and sometimes contradictory depictions of women's rights based on cultural, political, and ideological variables. Past studies have had the tendency of studying English media in isolation, overlooking a dedicated examination of English-language newspapers in Pakistan. This study rectifies this by drawing on an integrated model of analysis that combines Goffman's micro-level framing theory and Entman's macro-level framing framework. Drawing on corpus-based discourse analysis, the study examines the linguistic and rhetorical strategies of framing women's rights, with a view to identifying the cultural and ideological constituents that influence these narratives. This study shows that there are different framing patterns employed in Pakistani English dailies, echoing wider society-based divisions. This study makes a contribution to media and gender studies by providing a better understanding of how women's rights are framed within the English-language media and generates practical recommendations for policymakers and activists seeking to promote more balanced and inclusive



portrayals of women's rights. This research highlights the role of media framing in generating social awareness and promoting gender equality interventions.

Keywords: women's rights, Pakistani Print media, corpus-based study, discourse analysis, framing

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

1.1.1 Importance of Women's Rights Discourse in Pakistan

Women's rights in Pakistan continue to be a pivotal concern, intricately intertwined with the country's social, cultural, and economic order (Narlı et al., 2019; Asghar & Akhter, 2022). Although progress has been made in some areas, gender inequality is a reality, where women continue to experience obstacles of restricted access to education, gender-based violence, and social expectations that uphold patriarchal norms (Noureen, 2024; Thomas & Shukul, 2016). The cases of honor killings, child marriages, and workplace discriminatory practices also highlight the compelling need to discuss women's rights in Pakistan (Prendergast & Quinn, 2020). Media, as a powerful forum, contributes to shaping both popular opinion and discussion regarding these salient issues, but its coverage does also differ based on the newspaper or media outlet as well as the audience it caters to.

1.1.2 Media's Role in Shaping Public Opinion and Societal Norms

The media are pivotal in influencing societal attitudes, especially on gender matters, by shaping public opinion and defining societal norms (Kigula, 2024; Khalil & Shafiq, 2021). Newspapers, being significant information carriers, are powerful in defining narratives about women's rights and can reach broad and diverse audiences (Oh et al., 2020; Musa & Waseem, 2015). Specifically, editorial pages are a central battleground for expressing and influencing the ideological positions of media. Editorials not only play a major role in shaping public opinion but also help frame policy discussions. In Pakistan's pluralistic media culture, English-language newspapers constitute a unique audience, frequently holding divergent political, social, and cultural ideologies than their Urdu equivalents (Adewunmi & Aleshinloye, 2024). The representation of women's rights in the newspapers, thus, captures the particular linguistic and ideological fault lines within the wider society.

1.2 Research Problem

1.2.1 Inconsistent and Biased Framing of Women's Rights in Pakistani English Newspapers

While media can contribute to gender equality, women's rights in Pakistani English newspapers are usually characterized by bias and inconsistency (Asghar & Akhter, 2022). Editorials might present these themes through conceptual frames such as victimhood, moral conservatism, or empowerment, determined by larger cultural and political ideologies (Noureen, 2024; Narlı et al., 2019). This inconsistency prevents a unified discourse on women's rights, reinforcing stereotypes and inhibiting healthy discourse (Thomas & Shukul, 2016). The power of these biased frames is not merely within the media, but also influences the general societal attitudes towards gender equality.

1.2.2 Lack of Comprehensive Analytical Models to Study Framing in Multilingual Contexts

Past studies on media framing in Pakistan generally cover English or Urdu media only, with little use of comparative or multilingual approaches (Noureen, 2024; Kigula, 2024). Moreover, theories used in past studies do not often embed the different levels of framing and ignore the dynamic relationship between micro-level framing devices and macro-level functions (Oh et al., 2020). This analytical gap requires a more integrated method of study of media framing, particularly in the case of multilingual societies such as Pakistan, where framing an issue like women's rights can vary significantly from one linguistic group to another.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Identify the predominant framing strategies used in English editorials on women's rights in Pakistani newspapers.
2. Propose an integrated framing model that merges Goffman's micro-level framing theory with Entman's macro-level framing model to better explain the framing strategies in English-language media.
3. Investigate the cultural and ideological factors influencing how women's rights are framed in Pakistani English newspapers.

1.4 Research Questions

The key research questions addressed in this study are:

1. What are the predominant framing strategies used in English-language editorials on women's rights in Pakistani newspapers?
2. How can an integrated framing model better explain these framing strategies?
3. What cultural and ideological factors influence the framing of women's rights in Pakistani English newspapers?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study advances the discipline of media and gender research by proposing an integrated analytical model that bridges micro and macro framing approaches (Thomas & Shukul, 2016; Asghar & Akhter, 2022). Through its application to corpus-based analysis of English-language Pakistani newspaper editorials, the research yields new understanding of the framing of women's rights narratives in the Pakistani media. The results carry important implications for gender advocates, policymakers, and media practitioners (Khalil & Shafiq, 2021; Narlı et al., 2019). Knowledge of the framing strategies and the cultural dynamics involved in English-language media can inform attempts to enable more balanced and inclusive accounts, raising societal awareness and affirming gender equality policy (Adewunmi & Aleshinloye, 2024; Kigula, 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Framing and Discourse Analysis in Media Studies

In media research, "framing" is how the media frames an issue by deciding which aspects of a story to report on and which to leave out. This helps the audience comprehend an issue in some way (Entman, 1993). For instance, when the media speaks about women's rights, it may speak about them in terms of some aspects such as women's victimhood or empowerment. The manner in which these frames are presented shapes the way individuals perceive and feel about the issue.

Discourse analysis, especially Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), examines how language in the media represents and constitutes social attitudes. The language in the media does not merely represent reality but actually constructs the way the world is perceived, says Fairclough (1995). Thus, media can reinforce or counter the prevalent power relationships in society. In the case of women's rights, framing in the media will reinforce the traditional gender roles, or it will subvert them by portraying women as independent and strong.

Feminist Media Theory (FMT) also is concerned with the way women are most frequently represented in stereotypical roles, such as being victimized, instead of demonstrating their accomplishments or leadership (Mendes, 2011). In societies such as Pakistan, where political and cultural influences have a large part to play in media messages, these frames are particularly critical in the consideration of how women's rights are presented.

Moreover, it is informative to consider how Pakistani media frames women's rights globally. While international media tends to depict women's rights as a common global concern, Pakistani media oscillates between conservative local perceptions and international demands for gender equality. Through a comparison of how gender concerns are framed in Pakistan and globally, we are able to observe how ideas in the world shape or challenge local presentations of women (Thomas & Shukul, 2016).

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks and Key Concepts

2.2.1 Framing Theory

Framing Theory, developed by Goffman (1974), discusses how the media frame some elements of an issue and omit others. The frames assist the audience in comprehending a subject and determining their opinions. Frames, Goffman explained, function as "interpretative schemata," which define the manner in which individuals comprehend intricate issues (Goffman, 1974). For instance, when the media reports on women's rights, frames may emphasize issues such as gender violence or inequality at the workplace, shaping the public's interpretation of the matter.

Entman (1993) extended Goffman's theory to state that framing determines the problem, illustrates the causes, and posits solutions. This theory is highly applicable in examining the construction of women's rights by the media and the influence it has on public opinion, particularly in Pakistan, where media generally reports about women's issues in a manner that either supports or subverts conventional gender roles.

2.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach applied to research the language of media and how it indexes power relationships in society. According to Fairclough (1995), language in media not only reflects reality, but also actually constructs the way we think and what we believe. CDA enables us to analyze the way the language of media can reaffirm or challenge norms of society. For instance, media may employ discourse where women are described as weak or victimized, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. For Pakistani English newspapers, CDA is able to demonstrate how language use reinforces or subverts gender biases (Mowri & Bailey, 2022).

2.2.3 Feminist Theory in Media Studies

Feminist Media Theory (FMT) examines the way media portrays women and their roles in society. FMT contends that media tends to marginalize women by describing them in terms of their body or presenting them as victims, instead of depicting them as active actors with power and accomplishments (Mendes, 2011). FMT is crucial in Pakistan to understand the way women are represented in the media, particularly in the light of local cultural and societal norms. Media has the power to reinforce these traditional roles or subvert them by presenting women as leaders or agents of change (Lerner, 1986).

2.3 Framing Women's Rights in Pakistani English Media

2.3.1 Local Framing Strategies

In Pakistan, English newspaper framing of women's rights tends to be based on local social and cultural norms. Asghar and Akhter (2022) research identified that women are frequently not covered in the news, but when they are, it is on how they are victimized. This is a mirror of wider social stereotypes in which women are viewed as passive, not as active members of society. Parallel to this, Noureen (2024) examined the ways in which language in media reporting of violence against women tends to employ passive voice, perpetuating the notion that women are powerless victims. These tendencies underscore the importance of more positive and empowering narratives of women's rights in Pakistani English newspapers.

2.3.2 Representation of Gender Roles

How gender roles are depicted in Pakistani media tends to reinforce the conventional notion of women as passive and reliant. Research conducted by Noureen (2024) and Asghar and Akhter (2022) reveals that women tend to be depicted as victims of abuse or secondary roles in society compared to men. This traditional representation confines women from actualizing their potential and perpetuates stereotypes. Yet, there are exceptions to this. For example, Musa and Waseem (2015) discovered that women journalists in Pakistani English dailies are more likely to depict women as being empowered, portraying them as agents in society. This discrepancy indicates that the journalist's gender may have an impact on framing women's rights within media.

2.3.3 Regional vs. National Media Perspectives

There are also variations in the reporting of women's issues by regional and national Pakistani newspapers. Khalil and Shafiq (2020) established that regional newspapers such as Daily Kawish tend to report women's rights in more detailed and sensitive matter compared to the national newspapers such as Dawn. This variation could be because regional newspapers are more integrated into local communities and may be more sensitive to the gender concerns that are important to those readers. National newspapers tend to be more interested in wide-ranging, mainstream accounts that are likely to be more conservative and less challenging to conventional gender beliefs.

2.4 International Perspectives on Framing Women's Rights

2.4.1 Comparative Framing Studies

Examining how other nations construct women's rights can provide insight into how media coverage is constructed differently across cultures. For instance, Prendergast and Quinn (2020) contrasted the framing of sexual violence in Spanish and Irish media. Spanish media framed more about the social consequences of sexual violence, whereas Irish media framed it primarily in terms of individual cases. This demonstrates the way the cultural environment media exists in can shape the framing of women's rights. In a similar vein, Narlı, Ozaşçılar, and Ipek (2018) discovered that Turkish media tends to frame gender problems in terms of victimhood, a trend that also occurs in Pakistani media.

2.4.2 Cultural Stereotypes and Orientalism

Cultural stereotypes, particularly those rooted in Western conceptions of the East, are central to how women's rights are constructed within media. For example, Muslim women are commonly presented by Western media as oppressed and in need of salvation. This Orientalist construction can be witnessed in media representations of Saudi women, where they are frequently presented as victims of a traditional society (Bashatah, 2017). This kind of representation also appears in the Pakistani media, in which women are stereotypically presented in passive roles, constricting their agency and perpetuating cultural prejudice (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013).

2.5 Cross-Cultural Insights and Comparative Analysis

2.5.1 Similarities in Framing Patterns

Both domestic and foreign media tend to present women as passive victims, reinforcing cultural gender roles. Media studies conducted by Noureen (2024) and McDonald and Charlesworth (2013) reveal that media tends to apply victimization-orientated language when describing women, instead of emphasizing their strength or leadership capabilities. This trend exists across most nations and reveals a global trend where media restricts the representation of women's agency.

2.5.2 Differences in Cultural Contexts

Though there are shared patterns, cultural context has a significant influence on how women's rights are framed. In Pakistan, the media tends to reflect more conservative cultural values, while in Western nations, individual empowerment and social movements could be the focus. This divergence underlines the need to understand the local context when examining how gender concerns are framed in media (Ethomas & Shukul, 2016; Prendergast & Quinn, 2020).

2.6 Conclusion and Research Gaps

2.6.1 Synthesis of Key Findings

Research indicates that Pakistani media commonly frames women's rights in terms of affirming gender-based traditional roles. Women are commonly portrayed as passive victims, while their agency is rarely portrayed. These trends follow similar trends in international media, where women's issues are frequently framed around victimhood. Yet, local Pakistani newspapers such as Daily Kawish provide a more liberal and compassionate representation of women's rights, indicating that there is scope for more integrated representation in the local media.

2.6.2 Identified Research Gaps

There are still areas of ignorance regarding how women's rights are constructed in various forms of media in Pakistan, especially in Urdu-newspapers. Most of the studies are biased toward English-language media and leave out the important role of Urdu media. Future research should examine these areas of ignorance to better understand the construction of women's rights in Pakistani media.

2.6.3 Implications for Future Research

Subsequent studies will involve comparative analysis of gendered media representations within English and Urdu dailies in Pakistan, conducted through mixed-methods studies for acquiring more in-depth knowledge regarding framing practices. These studies can facilitate more gender-sensitive media representations and enable the development of more balanced and empowering stories on women's rights.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This research takes a corpus-based discourse analysis approach to investigate the framing of women's rights and empowerment in Pakistani English newspaper editorials. More particularly, the analysis targets editorials published near "International Women's Day" for the previous five years. This method supports the systematic exploration of language patterns and framing strategies employed in media discourse. Through an examination of English newspaper editorial content, this research seeks to find out the recurring themes, rhetorical strategies, and ideological positions employed in representing women's rights, thereby lending insight into media framing in Pakistan.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Corpus Construction

In order to gather data, 200 editorials were chosen from two prominent Pakistani English-language dailies: Dawn News and The News International. Various keywords related to women's rights, e.g., "women's rights," "women empowerment," "women's education," and "women's health," were employed to search for the relevant editorials. These editorials were chosen from February 25 to April 20 over the past five years (2021-2025), specifically those published near International Women's Day.

3.2.2 Time Frame and Sample Size

The data collection included editorials that appeared between February 25 and April 15 of the last five years, a time frame that covers both the pre- and post-event narrative on International Women's Day. 200 editorials were identified to provide a balanced number of viewpoints of both Dawn News and The News International regarding women's rights issues.

3.2.3 Data Extraction Procedures

Editorials were retrieved from Dawn News and The News International using the pre-determined list of keywords related to women's rights issues. Relevant editorial content was used and non-editorial articles like advertisements or opinion pieces not related to the issue were avoided. Highlighting editorials helped ensure that the data captured the opinion and editorial position of the newspapers and showed how women's rights are constructed in the Pakistani English-language press.

3.2.4 Data Size and Distribution

The same number of editorials (100 each) were gathered from Dawn News and The News International. This split enables comparative analysis of framing techniques and topical matter between two top English-language dailies in Pakistan.

3.2.5 Data Processing and Preparation

The editorials were preprocessed by eliminating non-editorial material and non-relevant articles so that the corpus reflected the editorial discussion on women's rights. The preprocessed data was then analyzed in a machine-readable format after ensuring all texts were formatted in an identical way so that it could be utilized in corpus analysis tools.

3.2.6 Procedure of Data Collection

The procedure of data collection started by collecting 200 editorials that had been published within five years from February 25 to April 15. Utilizing predetermined keywords ensured that the articles collected were relevant to the themes of women's rights and empowerment. Upon removal of non-editorial items, the final corpus was cleaned and processed for analysis. The study endeavored to

determine recurring linguistic patterns, framing devices, and thematic configurations employed to portray women's rights in Pakistani English-media.

3.3 Analytical Framework

3.3.1 Discourse Analysis Framework

This research applies two main theoretical models of discourse analysis: Entman's media framing theory and Goffman's framing theory. They offer the basis for the identification of important framing strategies including empowerment, victimization, and gender equality in the editorial texts. Through a combination of the two theories, the research aims to analyze how framing strategies shape the audience's perception of issues of women's rights in Pakistani media.

Alongside these well-established frameworks, the research also offers a novel model for corpus linguistics analysis of women's rights discourse. The model combines linguistic features of lexical optionality, modality, and syntactic patterns to detect and classify framing mechanisms employed in the press. The framework is aimed at capturing the cognitive, discursive, and interactional dimensions of language employed to frame women's rights stories in editorials.

3.3.2 Corpus Linguistic Tools and Techniques

In order to analyze the data, corpus linguistic techniques like AntConc were used. Corpus linguistic techniques facilitated keyword analysis, collocation analysis, and concordance analysis, which helped the researcher to detect patterns of language use, collocates, and the frequency of particular words related to women's rights. Using such methods, the research examined how various lexical words and phrases are employed to frame women's rights issues, which assisted in the detection of shared frames and motifs in Pakistani English-language media.

3.4 Sampling and Data Analysis Procedures

3.4.1 Keyword and Collocation Analysis

Keyword analysis was used to determine the most common words related to women's rights in the editorials. Analysis of collocates of the keywords led the research to discover frequent phrases and patterns that express the way media outlets present women's rights. Collocations including "empowerment," "gender equality," and "women's health" were investigated in order to determine how these ideas are presented in the context of International Women's Day.

3.4.2 Qualitative Analysis of Frames

A qualitative content analysis of the editorials was performed to interpret the identified frames in the research questions. The analysis centered on how the discussion of women's rights and empowerment vary, as well as how the framing varies with the context of International Women's Day. Furthermore, the study explored how various kinds of editorial strategies (e.g., passive vs. active voice, the use of evaluative language, and thematic structures) operate in order to deliver specific ideological positions on women's rights.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

3.5.1 Corpus Representativeness

The 200-editorial sample of Dawn News and The News International represents the diversity of views on women's rights in English-language Pakistani dailies. The selection of editorials guarantees that the findings represent the editorial position of the dailies on gender matters and hence constitute a legitimate ground for studying media framing.

3.5.2 Validity in Cross-Language Analysis

Although the research is on English-language press, care was exercised in considering possible cross-linguistic problems when making editorial framing comparisons. The sensitivity of language-specific frames was used with utmost care so that the data can be interpreted validly and compared across editorial viewpoints.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research is conducted in an ethical manner by employing public editorial content. Cultural sensitivity to the conceptualization of women's rights is noted, and treatments are made in a considerate manner that avoids undermining the varied perceptions in Pakistan.

3.7 Limitations of the Methodology

3.7.1 Corpus Limitations

A limitation of the methodology is that it is based on 200 editorials, which are unlikely to represent all views on women's rights in Pakistan. While the concentration on English-language media is useful, it will not necessarily show the full picture in Urdu-language media, which contributes strongly to public opinion in Pakistan. Additionally, the cultural and linguistic differences in the wording of women's rights can pose difficulties in cross-linguistic comparison, especially in the case of English versus Urdu media reporting.

In conclusion, this methodology sets out a systematic process for exploring how women's rights are framed in editorials of Pakistani English-language newspapers. Through the use of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, the research proposes to identify linguistic patterns and framing strategies that influence public perception of gender topics. The methodology sets out a wide-ranging process for exploring how media create narratives around women's rights, with a specific emphasis on editorials appearing during International Women's Day.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The critical discourse analysis of 200 Pakistani English newspaper editorials shows evident patterns in gender equality framing, where different linguistic strategies are employed to construct gender equality perceptions. The findings indicate differences in how language is utilized in various

framing categories: Cognitive Frames, Discursive Framing, Interactional Dynamics, Salience and Resonance, and Contextual Adaptation. The next tables concisely describe the main findings, along with a discussion on how these strategies are used in framing women's rights in the editorials.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Cognitive Frames in Media Discourse

Category	Total Frequency	Percentage
Modality: Modal Verbs	421	56.36%
Evaluative Adjectives/Adverbs	119	15.93%
Conditional Clauses	168	22.49%
Social vs. Natural Frames	6	0.80%
Cultural Lexicon	33	4.42%

4.1.1 Cognitive Frames Analysis

The frequency analysis reveals that modality (56.36%) prevails over cognitive framing, most notably modal verbs such as "will" and "can," and reflects an optimistic, future-focused discourse regarding women's rights. The verbs convey that gender equality is possible and unstoppable. The adverbs and adjectives of evaluation (15.93%) regulate the discourse, imposing an element of approval or disapproval, whereas conditional clauses (22.49%) highlight actions needed for progress, presenting women's rights as contingent upon change in society. The low frequency of social vs. natural frames (0.80%) and cultural lexicon (4.42%) indicates that although there is recognition of society's structures, the discussion tends more towards the potential for change rather than deep-seated cultural and social constraints.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Discursive Frames in Media Discourse

Category	Total Frequency	Percentage
Passive vs. Active Voice	8	1.28%
Causative Constructions	6	0.96%
Repetition and Emphasis	474	75.96%
Thematic Keywords	136	21.79%

4.1.2 Discursive Frames Analysis

The frequency and stressing (75.96%) of the prominent words such as "equality" and "rights" profoundly influence the discourse, highlighting their significance in the media's presentation of women's rights. The thematic keywords (21.79%) utilized such as "empowerment" and "justice" further emphasize the core concerns of the discourse. While passive vs. active voice (1.28%) and causative constructions (0.96%) are somewhat infrequent in use, this suggests that the discourse will place greater emphasis on outcomes (i.e., rights being guaranteed) than on the agents creating those outcomes.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Interactional Dynamics in Media Discourse

Category	Total Frequency	Percentage
Personal Pronouns	1237	70.16%
Rhetorical Questions	67	3.80%
Direct Address (Second-Person)	113	6.41%
In-Group/Out-Group References	346	19.63%

4.1.3 Interactional Dynamics Analysis

The dominance of personal pronouns (70.16%) indicates a collective action in addressing the issue of gender rights for women. The extensive use of in-group/out-group terms (19.63%) induces solidarity among protagonists fighting for gender rights for women, whereas direct address (6.41%) and rhetorical questions (3.80%) address readers directly, making the discourse more participative. All these characteristics imply that the editorials seek to engage readers personally and invite them to take personal responsibility for gender rights.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Salience and Resonance in Media Discourse

Category	Total Frequency	Percentage
Thematic Structure	6	0.51%
Foregrounding/Backgrounding	10	0.84%
Parallel Structures	53	4.46%
Embedded Clauses	1082	91.08%
Lexical Choices for Emotional Appeal	37	3.11%

4.1.4 Salience and Resonance Analysis

The predominance of embedded clauses (91.08%) gives extensive information and background, lending the speech depth and sophistication. Parallel structures (4.46%) and emotional appeal via lexical selection (3.11%) indicate sporadic attempts to highlight essentials and create an emotional impact, but neither are as prevalent as extensive explanations offered by embedded clauses. The low application of thematic structure (0.51%) and foregrounding/backgrounding (0.84%) implies that the discourse emphasizes conveying detailed information more than framing the story around particular themes or oppositions.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Contextual Adaptation in Media Discourse

Category	Total Frequency	Percentage
Political References	13	3.06%
Cultural and Regional Lexicon	313	73.65%
Ideological Frames	94	22.12%
Social Norms References	5	1.18%

4.1.5 Contextual Adaptation Analysis

The high prevalence of regional and cultural vocabulary (73.65%) indicates how the editorials modify the language to suit local cultural settings, using words such as "patriarchy" and "women empowerment." Ideological frames (22.12%) such as "religious" and "traditional" indicate the influence of wider ideological constructs in defining the discourse over women's rights, whereas political references (3.06%) and social norms references (1.18%) occur at lower rates, revealing that the media are more concerned with cultural and ideological aspects than interacting directly with political or social frameworks.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Cognitive Frames

4.2.1.1 Modality: Modal Verbs

The application of modal verbs in English editorials is crucial in determining the framing of women's rights, expressing certainty, obligation, and possibility for social change. For example, "It is only with a spirit of inclusivity that the rights of all women will remain protected" (Dawn News) employs the use of the modal "will" to express a strong conviction that women's rights protection is an eventual inevitability, hence promoting a collective sense of responsibility for gender equality. In the same way, "Women should be treated equally" (The News International) uses "should" to suggest a moral obligation, where it is stressed that it is the duty of society to attain gender equality. The pervasive use of these modal verbs in English editorials demonstrates optimistic framing where attainment of women's rights is both necessary and achievable. Modality, in Fairclough's (1995) words, determines the way social acts are viewed, shaping public opinion regarding what can be done and what is needed to be done. Less frequent occurrence of "may" and "might" conveys lower certainty, opting for more tentative and conditional framing of the discourse. This variation of modality draws attention to the forward-looking, assertive formulational use of women's rights in English editorials, which contrasts with more passive formulations in other situations.

4.2.1.2 Evaluative Adjectives

Evaluative adjectives are critical in constructing women's rights, determining the emotional tone and cultural meaning of women's roles. For instance, in "My cousins and family think that a girl should be a doctor so that they get good marriage proposals," (The News International) the adjective "good" is applied to construct the societal expectation of women's roles based on marriageability, which could circumscribe women's autonomy. This places women's value in a social context instead of as self-determined. The adjectives "empowered" and "strong" that are used commonly in English editorials, for example, "The women who are spearheading the protest are empowered agents of change" (Dawn News), are used to place women as agents of their own empowerment. This employment of adjectives of evaluation has the potential to create an image of women as agents acting in the struggle for their rights, agreeing with Fowler's (1991) argument that language builds ideologies, either affirming or validating gender roles. But the employment of judgmental terms such as "good" also suggests a need to reconsider how women's value is defined,

and to shift towards a development of narratives that permit women to define their value separate from judgment by society.

4.2.1.3 Evaluative Adverbs

The English editorials' use of evaluative adverbs supports the construction of women's rights by indicating the frequency, intensity, and type of women's struggles. For example, "It goes without saying that sailing has never been smooth for these illustrious Pakistani women" (The News International) employs "never" in order to signal the ongoing nature of women's struggles, constructing women's efforts as an enduring effort. This adverbial use implies that gendered barriers to women's rights are systematic and persistent, and in so doing reinforces the suggestion that gender equality needs constant work. Likewise, the adverb "often" in "Women often face discrimination at work" (Dawn News) indicates the frequency of such problems, implying that gender inequality is common. Following van Leeuwen (2008), the employment of evaluative adverbs puts forward the issue of women's rights as not a one-time or exceptional phenomenon but as a ubiquitous, ongoing struggle. This construction, while accepting obstacles, also implies that continuous efforts must be put forward to prevail over these inequalities.

4.2.1.4 Conditional Clauses

The application of conditional clauses in English editorials is a typical framing tool that connects women's empowerment with particular actions or social changes. For example, "If we are women, the males should ask themselves if they are really treating their mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives in the right way" (Dawn News) puts the onus for change on men, portraying women's rights as something that hinges on others' recognition and response. Though this makes women's rights dependent on what is outside themselves, it does so while also demanding that society consider gender roles, thus demanding transformation. "If cultural norms change, progress will follow" (The News International) ties the achievement of women's rights to overall change in societal attitudes, placing cultural norms at the center of what needs to transform in order for gender equality to exist. As noted by Mendes (2011), the deployment of conditional clauses tends to put the question of women's rights as contingent upon the occurrence or non-occurrence of specific events or actions, thus circumscribing women's agency to act independently of other forces. It would be useful for this framing to trend towards an empowering model where women's empowerment is conceptualized as a fundamental right as opposed to something that has to be dependent on other people's actions.

4.2.1.5 Cultural Lexicon vs. Local References

In the English editorials, the cultural vocabulary is very likely to present global ideals of "empowerment," "freedom," and "justice" and thus project women's rights as universal human rights. For instance, "The participants of the 'Aurat March' were holding placards inscribed with slogans for women empowerment and freedom" (Dawn News) emphasizes women's empowerment not only as a domestic issue but as an international cause. This application of universal themes makes women's rights correspond with universal human rights discourse, so they become inalienable and necessary. The English framing is more globalized in understanding women's rights. This difference is indicative of the ideological and cultural disparity in conceptualizing women's rights, wherein English editorials prioritize universal human rights.

4.2.2 Discursive Framing

4.2.2.1 Active vs. Passive Construction

In English editorials, active voice is used in English editorials to accentuate the agency of women in fighting for their rights. For instance, "They warned of extending their protest if the government failed to meet the demands listed in the 15-point agenda of the Aurat March" (Dawn News) focuses on the agency of women in the struggle for gender equality. This active construction supports the notion of women as activist figures who are actively engaged in the fight for their rights. Passive constructions in English editorials, on the other hand, such as "Rights were denied" (Dawn News), undermine women's agency and place blame for action on actors or institutions outside of themselves. McDonald & Charlesworth (2013) have noted that passive structures tend to de-agence and divert attention from the accountability of the actors or groups in question. The active voice in English editorials, however, emphasizes women as main agents of their own empowerment, echoing Entman's (1993) contention that issue framing determines actors' roles and responsibilities.

4.2.2.2 Causative Constructions

Causative constructions in English editorials tend to emphasize the connections between women's actions and social change. For example, "Social norms lead to discrimination" (The News International) identifies gender inequality with societal attitudes, placing cultural practices at the center of discrimination. This causative construction requires a change in cultural norms to redress gender inequality. Goffman's (1974) theory of framing contends that causative constructions assist in delimiting the causes of social problems, therefore influencing public acknowledgment of responsibility. With respect to women's rights, such framing asserts that societal reform is required in order to uproot discriminatory customs, therefore assigning responsibility for change to wider cultural and social systems.

4.2.2.3 Repetition and Emphasis

The repetition and stress on words like "rights," "equality," and "empowerment" in English editorials tend to underscore the significance of such terminologies in women's rights discourse. "Rights, equality, empowerment—these are the key principles that must guide our efforts to achieve gender equality" (Dawn News), for instance, employs repetition to emphasize the centrality of these values in conceptualizing women's rights. The strategic focus on these terms guarantees that they continue to dominate the reader's imagination, structuring the debate in terms of certain ideals that are central to the promotion of gender equality. For Mendes (2011), repetition within media discourse has the effect of making key ideas more salient and memorable, shaping public opinion as well as policy.

4.2.2.4 Thematic Keywords

Thematic terms like "empowerment," "victimization," and "equality" are used strategically in English editorials to set the boundaries of the story. For example, "Women's empowerment is central to societal progress" (Dawn News) makes empowerment a central theme of the discourse, setting it as pivotal both in individual and collective development. These keywords invoke the

attention of the audience towards the key issues at stake, determining how women's rights are framed. In line with Goffman's (1974) theory of framing, these thematic keywords frame how issues are viewed, leading the audience to perceive women's rights in a particular ideological way.

5. Conclusion

This research offers a detailed examination of the framing of women's rights in English-language media outlets in Pakistan, namely Dawn News and The News International. Through this research, it is found that English editorials uniformly frame women's rights in empowerment-oriented frames, highlighting women as agents of change and stressing themes of equality, justice, and institutional reform. These editorials are in keeping with an advanced, globalized conceptualization of women's rights, consistent with wider international gender equality discourses, stressing the potential for women's self-empowerment.

The combined analytical model applied in the study, as it fuses Goffman's micro-level framing theory with Entman's macro-level framing model, effectively explains how English editorials' linguistic options help frame women's rights. The research determines particular patterns of language, for example, the prevalence of modal verbs ("will" and "should"), evaluative adjectives ("empowered"), and active voice structures that create the feeling of urgency and possibility of change in society. These textual features are consistent with a framing approach that locates women's rights as possible and worthwhile, highlighting the possibility of advancement and the ethical responsibility to intervene.

The conclusions of this research highlight the important place occupied by cultural and ideological determinants in the construction of media narratives about women's rights. British papers in Pakistan, through their framing, contribute to the global debate on gender equality by emphasizing women's agency and the structural transformation required for gender justice. But although these accounts are empowerment-oriented and forward-looking, they also mirror the complicated intersection between political issues within the local context and international feminist ideologies. Highlighting women's rights as a more overarching movement for gender equality makes gender issues more prominent, but the research also urges greater complexity in accounts that consider the more general socio-cultural and political considerations that shape women's lived realities.

This study confirms that media framing is instrumental in influencing popular opinions of women's rights. Media framing of women's rights in English-language editorials in Pakistan focuses on empowerment, justice, and institutional reform and makes a positive contribution to gender equality discourse. Nonetheless, it points towards the necessity for diverse and more inclusive narratives reflecting the nuances of women's lives, their struggles, and triumphs. In depicting women as victims of structural imbalances as well as agents of transformation, the media have the potential to promote a more holistic awareness of gender issues.

In summary, this research promotes ongoing perfection of media representations of women's rights so that framing tactics reflect the richness of women's experiences. Future research would do well to examine how these media representations shape public opinion, policymaking, and societal attitudes toward gender equality. By fostering more representative and empowering narratives,

media can help drive gender equality in Pakistan and set a model for global action on women's rights issues.

Funding: This study was not funded in any shape or form by any party.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

Bio-note:

Nosheen Akhter is a PhD scholar in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Her research interests include corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, English language teaching (ELT), and natural language processing (NLP). She is actively engaged in exploring the intersections of language, technology, and pedagogy within applied linguistics.

Dr. Syed Kazim Shah is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. His academic interests encompass critical discourse analysis, critical thinking, language policy, and broader areas within applied linguistics. He has contributed significantly to these fields through impactful research publications and continues to advance scholarship in language-related social and educational issues.

References

- Adewunmi, O. E., & Oluwaseun, S. A. (2024). Media framing of women's issues on Television Continental (TVC)'s *Your View* and its influence on public perception in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(3), 2836–2838.
- Ashley, L., & Olson, B. (1998). Constructing reality: Print media's framing of the women's movement, 1966 to 1986. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(2), 263–277.
- Asghar, S., & Akhter, U. (2022). Representation of women: A corpus-based analysis of Pakistani English newspapers. *Journal of Communication and Cultural Trends*, 4(2), 61–80.
- Bashatah, N. S. (2017). *Framing analysis of British newspaper representation of Saudi women from 2005–2013*. University of Salford.
- Biscomb, K., & Griggs, G. (2012). 'A splendid effort!' Print media reporting of England's women's performance in the 2009 Cricket World Cup. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 48(1), 99–111.
- Card, D., Boydston, A. E., Gross, J. H., Resnik, P., & Smith, N. A. (2015). The Media Frames Corpus: Annotations of frames across issues. *Proceedings of the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*, 438–444.

- Hegarty, A. Q. (2024). Gendered framing and representation of women in Irish political television programming during the 2020 formation of the government of Ireland. *Feminist Media Studies*.
- Karimullah, K. (2020). Sketching women: A corpus-based approach to representations of women's agency in political Internet corpora in Arabic and English. *Corpora*, 15(1), 21–53.
- Khalil, H., & Shafiq, O. (2021). Print media coverage of women issues; National and regional newspapers of Sindh and the international perspective. *Mongolian Journal of International Affairs*.
- Kigula, P. (2024). *An analysis of print media's coverage of women in stories focused on economic activities*. Aga Khan University.
- Mardikantoro, H. B., Baehaqie, I., & Siroj, M. B. (2022). Construction of women in media: A critical discourse analysis on violence against women in newspaper. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9(1), 2146927.
- Matsuzaka, S., Avery, L. R., & Stanton, A. G. (2023). Black women's social media use integration and social media addiction. *Social Media + Society*, 9(1), 1–10.
- McDonald, P., & Charlesworth, S. (2013). Framing sexual harassment through media representations. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 37, 95–103.
- Mendes, K. (2011). Framing feminism: News coverage of the women's movement in British and American newspapers, 1968–1982. *Social Movement Studies*, 10(1), 81–98.
- Mowri, S., & Bailey, A. (2022). Framing safety of women in public transport: A media discourse analysis of sexual harassment cases in Bangladesh. *Media, Culture & Society*, 45(2), 266–284.
- Musa, K., & Waseem, F. (2015). Representation of women: A corpus-based critical discourse analysis of news columns of the *Daily Dawn*. *Biannual Journal of Gender and Social Issues*, 14(1), 28–30.
- Narlı, N., Özaşçılar, M., & Turkan İpek, I. Z. (2019). Turkish daily press framing and representation of Syrian women refugees and gender-based problems: Implications for social integration. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*.
- Noureen, F. (2024). *Representation of violence against women in Pakistani print media discourse: A corpus-based feminist stylistic analysis*. National University of Modern Languages, Rawalpindi.
- Oh, T., Kim, S., Love, A., & Seo, W. J. (2020). Media framing of the unified Korean Olympic women's ice hockey team. *Communication & Sport*.

- Okere, S., & Sam-Okere, J. (2013). Print media framing of women in entrepreneurship and the prospects for women empowerment. Babcock University.
- Parry, K. D., Clarkson, B. G., Bowes, A., Grubb, L., & Rowe, D. (2023). Media framing of women's football during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Communication & Sport, 11*(3), 592–615.
- Prendergast, M., & Quinn, F. (2020). Justice reframed? A comparative critical discourse analysis of Twitter campaigns and print media discourse on two high-profile sexual assault verdicts in Ireland and Spain. *Journalism Practice*.
- Terkildsen, N., & Schnell, F. (1997). How media frames move public opinion: An analysis of the women's movement. *Political Research Quarterly, 50*(4), 879–900.
- Thomas, E. A., & Shukul, R. N. (2016). Framing of Malala Yousafzai: A comparative analysis of news coverage in Western and Pakistani mainstream English print and alternative media. *Media Asia*.
- Velija, P., & Silvani, L. (2020). Print media narratives of bullying and harassment at the Football Association: A case study of Eniola Aluko. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 44*(6), 1–16.