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## Social Media Podcasts on Honor Killing: Analysing Language Patterns in Gender-Based Violence Discourse

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### Abstract

*In this paper, Junaid Akram's YouTube podcast episode "Challenges Faced By Women In Our Society," aired on April 27, 2024, is discussed to understand the show's discourse on honor-based violence (honor killings) in Pakistan. Using both thematic and discourse analytical approaches, the actual study discusses honor killings with references to Akram's Podcast and explores different sociocultural factors that contribute to such violence as well as the function of new media in constructing public understanding of the phenomenon. Subsequently, the findings show that Akram opposes honor killings, tries to break the process of constructing patriarchal norms, and underscores education and critical thinking. As a strength of social media, the study shows that social media can only go the extra mile of alerting society but cannot fully change strong cultural beliefs that are deeply rooted in society.*

**Keywords:** Honor Killings, Gender-based Violence, Digital Media

#### Authors:

**Noor Naeem:** (Corresponding Author)

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan.

(Email: [noornaembse23@gmail.com](mailto:noornaembse23@gmail.com))

**Muhammad Umar Razaq:** M.Phil Scholar, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan.

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Cite Us



## Title

### Social Media Podcasts on Honor Killing: Analysing Language Patterns in Gender-Based Violence Discourse

#### Authors:

**Noor Naeem:** (Corresponding Author)

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan.

(Email: [noornaembse23@gmail.com](mailto:noornaembse23@gmail.com))

**Muhammad Umar Razaq:** M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan.

## Abstract

*In this paper, Junaid Akram's YouTube podcast episode "Challenges Faced By Women In Our Society," aired on April 27, 2024, is discussed to understand the show's discourse on honor-based violence (honor killings) in Pakistan. Using both thematic and discourse analytical approaches, the actual study discusses honor killings with references to Akram's Podcast and explores different sociocultural factors that contribute to such violence as well as the function of new media in constructing public understanding of the phenomenon. Subsequently, the findings show that Akram opposes honor killings, tries to break the process of constructing patriarchal norms, and underscores education and critical thinking. As a strength of social media, the study shows that social media can only go the extra mile of alerting society but cannot fully change strong cultural beliefs that are deeply rooted in society.*

## Keywords:

[Honor Killings](#), [Gender-based Violence](#), [Digital Media](#)

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## Introduction

Among the most pressing forms of Gender-based violence (GBV) in Pakistan, honor killings are steeped in sociocultural norms and practices (Sharma, 2015). Gender-based violence, despite legislative measures and policy frameworks, continues to persist due to religious patriarchal tradition and societal settings

(Siddique & Shah, 2023). GBV brings forth its clearest manifestation in honor killings behind the veil of the hoary precept that it serves to preserve family honor (Tomer, 2015). Many reflect entrenched cultural beliefs about collective honor over the individual, particularly concerning women. In the Western world, honor killings are considered acts of extreme violation of the rights of the victim. They are



considered to be a violation of human rights with special reference to women from many cultures, especially those with patriarchal norms being accused. Western societies assert total freedom and equality for women; the law does not allow some of these practices. The scale and staying power of this phenomenon speak to the need for critical consideration of the processes that determine the ways people think about honor-based violence.

Pakistan's recent discourses on honor killings have been shaped by digital media and, in particular, have been shaped by YouTube podcasts. In terms of both tone and accessibility, podcasts offer a way for opinion leaders and activists to discuss complex societal issues in ways that can be (relatively) accessible to a wider audience. A Pakistani podcaster, Junaid Akram, uses his platform to start a conversation on certain topics, such as honor killings, that are not often discussed throughout the culture. This article takes a qualitative thematic and discourse analytical approach toward examining Akram's podcast episode "Challenges Faced by Women in Our Society" to identify how the language and framing of honor killings influence people's attitudes and perceptions with regard to the practice.

Digital media platforms like YouTube present an opportunity and struggle to engage with socially sensitive topics (Halpern & Gibbs, 2012). Such platforms can be used to amplify marginalized voices, draw out necessary and critical dialogues, and challenge deeply entrenched social injustices. But they can also polarize audiences and reinforce stereotypes just depending on how issues are structured and presented (Van Bavel et al., 2021). Akram's podcast was chosen because it's an example of how digital media can help us travel through these complexities surrounding honor killings through a balanced prism of cultural contradictions and calls for reforms. However, these discussions are extremely effective, provided the language is used correctly and framed appropriately.

### **Importance of Analyzing Podcasts on Honor Killings**

Particularly in the case of Pakistani social media, where discussions on the subject of honor killings

reflect the evolution of public attitudes toward gender and power dynamics, the analyses of discussions on the issue of these fora are especially important. Unlike other forms of GBV, honor killings wear a far more cultural connection of honor and shame, which has made them otherwise difficult to change. The podcast is a unique means of wading into and perhaps evolving these cultural narratives. Podcasts can serve as both mirrors of society's attitudes and agents of change by setting aside a space for nuanced, empathetic talks.

Some of the most popular Pakistani podcasters are Junaid Akram, Shehzad Ghias Shaikh, Haider Raza, and Taimoor Salahuddin (Mooroo), who have become voices for the underrepresented in society – things traditional media doesn't cover. Offering audience engagement on issues like gender inequality, societal taboos, and honor-based violence in Akram's case, these platforms come in handy. However, the language used affects how effective the talks will be. Language is not a communication medium; it contains thought and power dynamics and frames public reception. Words, tone, and framing in podcasts are powerful: they can either humanize victims of honor killings and help the audience sympathize, or they can reinforce the divisive stereotypes and cultural justifications that have allowed such killings to continue.

### **Language and Its Role in Shaping Public Perception**

It creates discourse regarding honor killings in public media. According to Fairclough (1995), media language can oppose or reinforce societal power structures. For Akram's purpose, language is both a means of reflecting certain prevailing community views on honor killings and of the constitution of audience predispositions. Certain emotions, vocal shifts, and vocab can swing the audience from feeling empathy for victims to acting to support the conservative view. Thus, a compassionate framing that encourages critical reflection by reminding us that victims are, first and foremost, human beings and are not mere objects of blame, can elicit critical



reflection, and a neutral or dismissive tone may instead resonate with cultural indifference.

The fact that Pakistani society is immensely polarised makes the impact of podcasts even more tricky. Audiences tend to fall into those supporting progressive narratives and those who think they're attacks on cultural or religious values. In assessing whether Akram's discussions on honor killings will contribute to an affirmative contribution to the ongoing social dialogue or, on the contrary, invoke further social tensions, his conceptualization of this divide becomes key. To evaluate the potential of podcasts as tools of social change, it is necessary to understand their language choices in the context of greater cultural and political discourses.

### Problem Statement

Although honor killings have become a critical problem and are gaining recognition, there is widespread resistance system-wide to address this issue in Pakistan. Podcasts have become a prominent medium for discussing social issues due to their ability to provide a forum for in-depth conversations and a variety of varied perspectives. Their impact isn't always positive, and their unregulated nature sometimes means spreading harmful stereotyping and divisive rhetoric.

The discourse and framing used in these discussions raise important questions about how sensitive topics like honor killings are represented, the tone and biases that may emerge, and the potential impact on the audience's

perceptions and attitudes toward such violence.

Consequently, to grasp the function of podcasts in setting up public discourse and dictations, it is essential to acquire a nearer standpoint by taking a basic look at how podcasts outline and write about Honor killing.

### Research Objectives and Questions:

#### Research Questions

1. What cultural and societal beliefs sustain the practice of honor killings addressed in Akram's Podcast?

2. How do YouTube podcasts influence public knowledge and perceptions of honor killings in Pakistan?
3. Why do YouTube podcasts act as effective tools for promoting critical attitudes and challenging traditional perceptions of honor killings?

### Significance of the Study

Making a contribution to the academic work on violence, gender norms, and the interplay of culture and power dynamics, the study offers an in-depth analysis of gender-based violence, with a particular focus on "honor killings," in the context of contemporary media platforms, including podcasts. By examining language patterns, the study demonstrates how honor killings are discussed and framed, shedding light on cultural and gendered representations that impact public perception and response to such violence. Awareness campaigns that aim to reduce gender-based violence, including honor murders, can benefit from the research's practical consequences. Identifying recurring linguistic patterns in podcasts can help guide initiatives to alter the way that violence is portrayed.

### Literature Review:

#### Honor Killings in Pakistan

Honor killings, or karo-kari, are a serious violation of human rights in Pakistan, where females and young ladies are often murdered by their kin in the honor's name (Amnesty International 2019). The karo-kari tradition has been introduced in Pakistani culture as the result of the adherence to patriarchal values that determine that the chastity of women is the honor of the family. Owing to the continued lack of vigorous social, legal, and policy countermeasures, honor killings have not been eliminated altogether in Pakistan despite attempts made to do so. The perpetuation of domestic murders and honor killings is still common in several cultures, which makes it challenging for the problem to be solved. Tribes in Balochistan and Sindh, including the Bugtis, Jakhranis, Mazaris, Jatois, and Marris, follow a strict code of honor which, if broken, demands ruthless retribution by the tribe. The karo-kari tradition

decrees that any man or woman who has an illicit relationship, thereby dishonoring the tribe, must be punished with death. Although equally applicable to men and women, in practice, it is used to harass, punish, and intimidate women (Amnesty International, [2019](#)).

The concept of honor killings may be understood through the lens of feminism because they are performed by patriarchal structures that try to regulate female conduct and sexuality. In such societies, the action of women is associated with family honor, and any transgression, especially in matters concerning sex, is punished violently. These killings demonstrate and sustain patriarchy (Gill, [2009](#); Wikan, [2008](#); Zvinkliene, [2020](#)).

### **Media and Gender-Based Violence**

Traditional media has been accused, for decades, of portraying gender-based violence in a way that celebrates the act and stigmatizes the victims (Wolf, [2013](#)). But with the coming of social media in particular and social networks in general, there are new and often more effective ways to conduct a sensitive and informed debate on honor killings (Alkowitz, [2020](#)). In this regard, podcasts have especially proved effective in dealing with cases of honor killings and generating public debate.

### **Fairclough's CDA and Media Discourse**

In the current context of the analysis of honor-killing media, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) remains highly useful (Fairclough, [2013](#)). Here, the role of language, power, and ideology as aspects of this framework seek to construct perception amongst the public (Fairclough, 2001). In studying how honor killings are currently being discussed in media, in which linguistic practices serve as discursive operations, the researchers could better understand how language constructs opinion (Fairclough, [2013](#)).

### **GBV's Impact on Pakistan and Reaction of People Towards It**

Gender-based violence, especially honor killings, continues to inflict deep, rooted social issues in the society of Pakistan and sustains and strengthens

patriarchal dominance. The implications of such violence are vast and have an impact on the families of the victims, the communities as well as the nation as a whole. The genders in Pakistan honor killings are thought to maintain the family honor therefore, they get social and cultural acceptance in some Quarters. Such normalization of violence fosters a culture of impunity in which offenders may not even be brought to trial because the legal system weakens the fight against violent offenders, and it allows for the pardoning of offenders by the victim's family through forgiving the offender (Habiba [2018](#); Khan [2020](#)).

The response to GBV, especially the honor killings, is usually extreme and consists of only two poles. On the other hand, various synch among the traditionalistic substratum within the Pakistani land regards these exploits as inevitable in the depiction of deviance and shield of individualistic morality. Indeed, on the other hand, the activists of women's rights and civil organizations question these practices in the country and demand legal reforms of women's human rights issues and protection for women (Habiba, [2018](#)). Social networking sites have taken a central role in pushing against these narratives since they offer victims and survivors a voice to make their situations seen and considered as injustice, something that has been inhibited by conventional social frameworks (Khan, [2020](#)).

### **Gaps in Literature and Study Contribution**

While various studies have been conducted to address honor killings in Pakistan, limited research has explored podcasts as a weapon to combat this problem. In addition, more research is required concerning linguistic and framing methods when honor killings are discussed in podcasts. To that end, this article seeks to add to the extant body of research by employing Fairclough's CDA to examine honor-killing narratives in podcasts to show the language and relations of power.

This study adopts a paradigm of qualitative research method to analyze the existing language patterns and contributions to the message construction surrounding gender-based violence (GBV) discourse in Pakistan. Quantitative research is

well suited for addressing language and social meaning because it focuses on the rich textual and contextual features of discussions of GBV. The main purpose of this study is to explore how language in podcasts encourages or sieves positivity into constructive dialogue on GBV or helps form factions that frustrate the narrative on GBV. The main concern is how language can be used constructively in developing agreements or destructively in stymieing debates on GBV in Pakistan.

## Methodology

Qualitative content analysis is used to identify how podcast creators on YouTube present information about honor killings in Pakistani society.

## Sample

The target podcast of this study was the episode "Challenges Faced By Women In Our Society" by Junaid Akram, aired on April 27, 2024. This episode became rather useful for analyzing how social media influencers responded to key social concerns that include honor killings and the position of women in Pakistani culture. The process of analysis included reviewing the conversations and narratives that Akram provided, to consider the regularities in the language behavior, argumentation, and examples of honor-based violence.

Three primary themes guided the analysis: the representation of honor killings, the cultural and social factors linked to this sort of violence, and how media engages or fails to engage with gendered violence. In accordance with these aims, the thematic analysis of the current article aimed to identify whether Akram's perspectives did or did not correspond to the prevailing social representations regarding honor killings and whether his approach steered the audience into a particular mentality. Moreover, the research assessed whether Akram's openness to talk about the issue aligned with or reacted to societal conventional or cultural beliefs regarding honor-based violence.

It also explored the use of social media, especially YouTube, in influencing people's perception of Gender Based Violence (GBV). With regards to the purpose of the analysis, the following merits were

highlighted for Akram's commentary to varying extents: Understanding whether the podcast aided or hindered societal attempts at combating practices that various communities have detrimentally adopted, such as honor killings and more; Gaining further understanding of the potential of podcasts in raising awareness and stirring group discussion over certain sensitive issues that are prevalent in today's society.

## Data Analysis

The analysis of the data involved thematic and discourse analysis approaches. Content analysis characterized the common topics and feelings that Akram had concerning GBV, including victim blaming and stereotyping, as well as feelings of compassion (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis, drawing from Fairclough's (1995) framework, was used to explore how language constructed social meanings at three levels: At the individual textual level, there was text production, text consumption, and text use all bundled together in what has been referred to as the level of discourse practice. This dual analytical approach helped to gain an understanding of the discursive practices employed in the podcast, as well as possible effects on the audience's perception of GBV.

## Ethical Considerations

Due to the discreet and complex nature of GBV research, the study followed a strict ethical standard. Since it was impossible to get consent for the published content, the study respected the discussions and podcast participants. The analysis did not perpetuate prejudice or prejudice-associated terminology and images. Particular attention has been paid to the depiction of honor killings and other related problems because there is no unique point of view on such matters. Ethical considerations were core to the methodology because it was important not to add to stereotypes in the fight against GBV while contributing to the literature with research that was helpful in the fight against GBV.

This chapter analyses the YouTube Podcast Episode of Junaid Akram, a Pakistani human rights activist, aired on April 27, 2024, with the topic "Challenges



Faced by Women in our Society." The main focus of this analysis was to discuss how Akram used digital media to raise awareness of honor-based violence (honor killings) back in Pakistan. By focusing on the approach that Akram Media-Centrik chose, we were to understand the epistemological, sociopolitical, and media-based aspects of podcasts and discuss how his discussion of honor killings reflected or deviated from the commonly given discourses in Pakistan's context. The study also looked at the role social media, especially YouTube, plays in creating awareness of honor killings, the extent to which social media is appropriate in achieving change in this culture, and the downside of utilizing such platforms.

### **Data Analysis:**

#### **Presentation of Honor-Based Violence in the podcast**

Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, Junaid Akram's Podcast on honor killings can be analyzed through its three dimensions: textual, discursive practices, and sociocultural practices. A deep understanding of the way that Akram and Kazmi use language and discourse to critique the systemic violence against women in Pakistan is provided.

In his podcast, Junaid Akram introduces the subject of honor killings—an issue deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of Pakistani society. Akram's approach to discussing honor killings is unique for several reasons. One of the key features of his discourse is the simplification of the complex reality of honor killings, making it more accessible to his audience. This approach is significant because it allows Akram to frame honor killings as not just cultural practices but as ethically unacceptable crimes that need to be condemned.

Akram makes things simple. With unambiguous language, he said: "We have to understand that no matter how much so-called 'honor' justifies taking a life, it does not." This brings out the word 'honor' by which these acts are frequently justified in the cultural context and delegitimizes them as perverted from what is right. Therefore, using this language reinforces Fairclough's focus on making discourse comprehensible and clear without meaning to trivialize the matter. Like Kazmi's account of women's

financial oppression, it is replete with vivid language. Tahira Kazmi, the guest on the podcast, says, "It begins with the basics" and gives a voice to the economic hardships that women have to face when working in a patriarchal world. She says, "Thousands of working women earn their wages fairly well but take the amount straight to the husband and get a slice of it as pocket money. And she can't do a thing about it because if she does, she will be abused mentally, physically and emotionally. That is the weapon of men against women." Here, "weapon" is a metaphor that represents systematic abuse while it exposes the patriarchal power structure. The rooted gendered hierarchy in the norms of a society is presented in Kazmi's narrative of everyday economic coercion, which means that women work; however, they continue to remain financially disempowered within the home.

Tahira Kazmi, while using the podcast, continues the thought of how, in patriarchal societies, women are objectified right down to their body language. She says that she remembers saying, "You are not supposed to stand like that," to emphasize how women are policed within society for their actions. Tahira also describes the sad story of Sidra from Mianwali, "the father killed his daughter for the honor due to her refusal to marry her illiterate cousin." This case is an excellent example of how far the tradition of male domination and the concept of honor still remains to justify the violence of women. The podcast takes viewers to this incident as a way of calling for change and eradicating such cultures in society. The language itself, from the references to a "tradition of male domination" to the "entire concept of honor," reveals the brutality covered in cultural norms. However, instead of generalizing the personal narratives within these instances of violence against women, the podcast takes a folk literary approach to situate these personal tales within a bigger critique that explores how patriarchal norms of violence against women are justified and sustained.

The commentary by Akram on the Qandeel Baloch case is a good illustration of his comment on the legal loopholes that facilitate the perpetrators of honor killings to go out of reach of penal action. As

Akram explains, “The state should have intervened because in our country, a citizen was killed, and the law was invoked. But on top of that, the victim’s family issued a forgiveness letter that led to his escape from punishment.” Therefore, this extends the discussion from individual choices to institutional failures to understand that crimes of this kind are not acts of personal disputes but rather crimes against state laws. Akram’s demand for structural reform fits into the discourse challenging systemic complicity, as Fairclough’s model also mentions demands for exposing institutionalized power imbalance.

Textually, the production and the consumption of the podcast demonstrate intertextuality and interdiscursivity in that feminist critique, legal analysis, and human rights advocacy are combined through a combination of personal insights and referencing high-profile cases like the murder of Qandeel Baloch, the podcast weaves in several different perspectives which makes for a complete critique of honor-based violence. This interdiscursive approach guarantees that the podcast will speak to a broad base of listeners while emphasizing the systemic nature of gender-based violence. The group’s conversational tone and Akram’s and Kazmi’s deeply personal narratives make the subject matter engaging to the audience. Akram locates the podcast within the digital sphere — a medium with an urban and tech-savvy potential audience — and, at the same time, undermines rural narratives that perpetuate honor killings. In choosing this strategic choice, one can agree with Fairclough’s view that discourse is also an evolving practice depending on the mediums through which the discourse is communicated.

What stands out in Akram’s presentation of honor killings is his clear rejection of the cultural justifications often used to excuse such violence. Many Pakistani media outlets, particularly in rural settings, frame honor killings as an unfortunate but culturally necessary practice. In contrast, Akram unequivocally condemns honor killings as human rights violations, transcending the cultural defenses traditionally provided in Pakistani media.

Through a powerful statement, Akram directly challenges the cultural narrative: “We have to

understand that no amount of so-called honor can justify taking a life.” Such a statement brings a lot of insightful meaning because it is not only a violent act but also a violent perception in the culture. By framing honor killings as crimes, Akram creates an opportunity for the audience to reconsider the cultural and social norms that have long perpetuated such violence. In this context, Akram’s role as a digital media personality becomes crucial in creating a space for critical discourse on gender-based violence (GBV) in Pakistan.

The podcast, at the sociocultural level, critiques patriarchal structures that normalize violence against women. Kazmi’s question, “So what’s wrong with the men?” is a direct challenge to the patriarchy that holds women low, forcing them to remain quiet under the yoke. This is the same broader cultural norm, excusing male dominance as it silences women’s autonomy. The rejection of such acts as apparent cultural justifications, while Akram and Kazmi frame them as universal human rights violations, goes above and beyond the typical cultural relativism used to defend them. The approach makes the audience rethink their beliefs over and over again, and this actually changes the way people perceive things in society. Akram challenges institutional complicity in this regard, such as through honor killing familial forgiveness provisions, and calls for systemic reform. He frames the crimes for what they are — offenses against the state — and the need for structural changes in both the law and policing are urgent.

The effect of that podcast is to make the possibility for critical debate, to question what we presume, and to call for cultural change. Akram’s argument that honor killings are not only acts of violence but outcomes stemming from a violent cultural thought aligns with Fairclough’s notion that discourse both reproduces and constructs social practices. Personal narratives, legal critique, and cultural deconstructions lead Akram and Kazmi into the creation of a powerful critique of the systems that produce gender-based violence. This, however, is one of the features of their podcast, which means that they can use digital media to challenge oppressive norms, amplify marginalized voices, and advocate for justice and equality.

## Relationships and Culture

Junaid Akram's podcast can be deconstructed and critiqued using Fairclough's (CDA) critical discourse analysis model regarding how it presents a sociocultural understanding of beliefs relating to honor-based violence by examining Pakistan's patriarchal societal construct. The podcast represents this principle; it shows honor killings not as culturally inevitable but ethically indefensible crimes. Akram builds a narrative through his discourse that directly counters the dominant cultural ideologies sustaining honor-based violence. For Fairclough, texts are key in shaping and contesting societal ideologies, and so Akram's text is his intervention in resistant acts against entrenched norms (Fairclough, 1995).

By, for instance, involving the audience in dialogue and appealing to answers to open questions, Akram's Podcast enacts Fairclough's claim that communication practices mediate texts between production and reception. Akram provides quite an advantage while framing his discussions inclusively because it not only critiques the societal structures that push gender-based violence but also encourages the audience's critical thinking. Fairclough (1992) observes discourse embedded in societal power structures and yet provides the opportunity to transform these power structures, which resonates quite well with this reality.

Akram realizes that a polarizing issue is the fact of digital media, and Fairclough asserts that discourse is contextualized; it is socially constructed and tied to power struggles. According to Fairclough, discourse is subject to societal constraints; however, yet it resists them. This double nature of Akram's engagement with honor killings can be shown by his critical engagement on sites such as YouTube. Digital media, he stresses, gives marginalized voices unprecedented power of propagation, but it also atomizes its audiences into quarreling camps. It echoes Fairclough's (1989) position that discourse both reproduces and resists the taken for granted and that power and resistance are best viewed in this continuum.

In addition, Akram's Podcast is also intertextual and inhabits multiple discourses, echoing Fairclough's

stress on multi-voiced discourse. Instead, Akram's analysis brings audience perspectives into the discussion and shows how drawing on cases such as that of Qandeel Baloch, honor killings are destabilized dialogic space, rich with life, that undoes dominant ideologies. Fairclough (1995) states that these intertextual practices enrich discourse by countering the hegemonic narrative and giving the audience critical awareness.

Finally, Fairclough argues that discourse is a site of social transformation in Akram's critique of cultural justification for 'honor' killings. Akram reframes honor killings as human rights violations, not cultural practices, thereby undermining long-held narratives and enabling folks to reevaluate the norms of societies, thereby enabling people to incorporate honor killings into the context of human rights violations. Fairclough (2003) states that discourse can turn around dominant ideologies and participate in societal transformation. This can be further illustrated by Akram, who strategically utilizes digital media to raise dialogue and awareness on gender-based violence (GBV).

## Effects of Outcome on Social Media

According to Fairclough's work on textual analysis ideological practice, texts are never neutral in that they enable ideologies to take their form and can, therefore, be used to reinforce or challenge the dominant social norms. Akram's podcast practices this principle by not treating honor killings as culturally more a matter of practice but an ethically indefensible crime. Akram undermines the very basis for honor-based violence by constructing a narrative through his discourse that confronts the dominant cultural ideologies. Texts are supremely generative spaces in which ideologies are both shaped and contested and, as such, Akram's intervention can be understood as resistance to deep-seated norms, as Fairclough too argues (Fairclough, 1995).

Akram's statement, "Digital media has equalized the dissemination of information and made it possible for us to discuss what we could earlier not discuss," highlights the transformative power of digital platforms. YouTube especially enables people to

discuss what is forbidden in normal social interaction and politics. For Akram's audience, many of whom may not have been exposed to such discussions before, the podcast becomes a critical tool for raising awareness about gender-based violence and questioning cultural practices that contribute to the perpetuation of violence against women.

At the same time, Akram does not overlook the shortcomings of digital media. Although digital platforms offer a chance to discuss or share information, they tend to keep society segmented. Through social media, there will be little room for in-between positions, and audiences will receive grants largely with passionately extreme sentiments. Akram openly acknowledges the risks involved: "Indeed, every time we dare step into taboo territory, we expose ourselves to the crowd and their disappointment as well." Taken in this sense, this admission raises the question of the feasibility of carrying out an effective communication campaign on contentious issues such as sex-related ones since people are socialized and enculturated to resist such information.

Akram's podcast follows Fairclough's perspective on discursive practices in which the production and reception of texts are mediated by communication practices, as Akram opens questions for audiences to participate in dialogue with the listener. In framing his discussions inclusively, Akram deemphasizes faculty blame but criticizes the structures underpinning gendered violence and provokes critical thinking in his audience. In line with Fairclough's observation that discourse works within the parameters set by society's power relations but also opens up possibilities for change in those very same relations (Fairclough, 1992), this presentation includes a discussion on the potential 'change' effects of discourse analysis.

This recognition of the polarizing tendencies of digital media is in concord with Fairclough's view that discourse is shaped by sociocultural context and the power struggle. According to Fairclough, discourse both functions within and contests societal constraints. This demonstrates the dual nature of Akram's critical engagement with honor killings on YouTube. He says that Digital media empowers

marginalized voices and spreads audiences into polarised camps. Fairclough's ideological perspective on discourse underlining its transformative quality as it plays a dual role, reproducing as well as challenging societal norms, is exemplified by his argument (Fairclough, 1989).

Also, Fairclough's ideas about multi-voiced discourse concerning intertextuality and the incorporation of varied narratives into Akram's Podcast make sense. This rich, dialogic space created by Akram that destabilizes dominant ideologies of honor killings integrates audience perspectives and considers the cases of Qandeel Baloch to exemplify this. Fairclough (1995) argues that intertextual practices such as these enrich discourse by fighting hegemonic narratives and making audiences aware of how they construct meanings.

Last, Akram's critique of cultural justifications for honor killings shows that, according to Fairclough, discourse is the terrain for social change. The positioning of honor killings as human rights violations thus ensures that honor killings are treated as human rights violations rather than what people theorize about as cultural practices. In the same vein, Akram's approach to using digital media to advocate against gender-based violence shows that discourse can challenge dominant ideologies, and effect social change (Fairclough, 2003).

### Issues in Combating Honor-Based Violence Using Technology and Social Networking

Discourse incorporates a sociocultural matrix that includes the inequalities in access to communicative resources (Fairclough 1995). This disparity is highlighted by the fact that Akram's predominantly urban and educated audience is least likely to be affected by honor killing, and the rural and conservative communities who are most at risk of honor killing are least likely to engage with digital platforms. This indicates that a hybrid approach is needed to bridge the access gaps in online discourse and to target offline interventions.

Fairclough's (1989) notion of discourse as a site of struggle is the challenge of ideological resistance within digital discourse. On online forums where



Akram has posted, he has acknowledged it is far from a black-and-white issue, and there is plenty of contest over what is going on with honor killings. He may be rejected outright by listeners with conservative views; according to Fairclough, dominant ideologies are not easily dislodged but instead contested in ongoing power struggles within discourse. Fairclough's complaint that discourse is shaped by the social structures and power dynamics in which it is formed is exacerbated by the fact that extreme positions have even more influence in digital spaces and tend to reinforce what is already believed rather than contribute to thoughtful debates.

One limitation of digital discourse that another developed by Fairclough (1992) points out is the lack of outcomes. I argue that Akram's Podcast lacks any disposition to action and, thus, does not fulfill the function of Facebook discourse as 'real work, with alpha, reception, and feedback' as pointed out by Boyd (2004). Akram succeeds in raising awareness about honor killings. However, his podcast doesn't directly offer resources or steps for listeners to take to put an end to the killing of innocent women and girls due to. Fairclough's framework also reminds us that discourse has to translate into actual actions or policy reform. Fairclough's argument about the need to integrate discourse in eliminating entrenched social practices chimes with Akram's admission that discourse alone cannot dismantle deeply rooted social practices—other institutional efforts, including education and legal reforms, are needed to achieve a change.

Akram's efforts are further contextualized by Fairclough's work on the multi-layered nature of discourse. Analyses of Akram's role as a digital media figure mediator of individual agency and structural constraints show when and how technology can facilitate much-needed social interventions while facing constraints of access to information and persistent cultural conservatism. Discourse can challenge dominant ideologies. However, Fairclough (2003) argues that doing so frequently takes sustained efforts that cross more than one level of involvement, individual, institutional, and societal, to change is made permanent.

These insights, drawn from Fairclough's key works—*Language and Power* (1989), *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), and *Critical Discourse Analysis: By reading The Critical Study of Language* (1995), we may help illuminate the challenges Akram faced. Though his podcast helps to increase awareness and prompt critical discourse, the structural and ideological limitations of the digital medium inescapably point to the need to combine these strategies with other approaches to engage broad audiences and initiate practical, on-the-ground interventions.

## Findings

This section seeks to draw connections between the results of the podcast analysis and the relevant literature on GBV, honor killings, media discourse, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to show how the podcast's narrative problematizes entrenched cultural ideologies and, further, how it becomes part of the ongoing discussions on GBV and honor killings in Pakistan.

Patriarchal norms in Pakistan have deep roots in honor killings, where women's actions, especially their sexuality, are at their base (Gill, 2009; Wikan, 2008; Zvinkliene, 2020). This study takes the podcast analyzed for a critique of norms that establish violent justification for women based on honor. Akram and Kazmi's dissection of language, the way they deconstruct the concept of 'honor,' falls into line with the basic feminist view explicated in the literature, which regards honor killings as violence intended by patriarchal systems to retain women's autonomy. Despite this primal claim, 'no matter how much so-called 'honor' justifies the taking of a life, it does not' (Akram), the 'feminist critique of honor killings as a method of patriarchal control of women's bodies' (Gill 2009) can be heard in Akram's assertion. This supports the literature's broader discussion that honor killings are not only cultural practices but are rather ethically indefensible crimes (Amnesty International, 2019).

Alkowitz (2020) reviews the literature, highlighting how media, including social media and podcasts, has raised awareness while debating the public on the issue of honor killings. Akram's podcast

embodies this function by utilizing digital platforms to expose the epidemic situation of honor killings in Pakistan. The podcast does this by referencing high-profile cases of violence against women (for instance, Qandeel Baloch's murder) and weaving that into personal narratives while critically examining societal norms. The evidence in the literature supports this point that media platforms like podcasts can be useful for conducting such informed conversations on issues of GBV and honor killings and providing other narrative options to contest the hegemonic discourse that dictates cultural meanings (Alkowitz, 2020).

The medium's utilization of intertextuality and capability of joining lawful, feminist, and human rights points of view likewise regular far-reaching writing on Media discourse and its capacity to break down hegemonic depictions of honor killings (cited in Fairclough, 2013). The podcast provides a multi-voiced critique of cultural practices by offering a critique of the normalization of GBV and pushing for a view of honor killings as human rights violations rather than cultural practices (Habiba, 2018; Khan, 2020). According to the podcast analysis, language in digital media can challenge the cultural norms regarding honor and encourage the rethink of cultural norms.

At the same time, the findings of the analysis are directly relevant to Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), concentrating on the contribution of language to establishing and disputing power relations (2001, 2013). Akram's intervention on honor killings stands following the literature on how honor killings are an institutional and cultural power that is gendered, patriarchal, and embedded in social relations of power, which determine the daily social ties (Aderi, 2006; Razack, 1998). For Fairclough (1995), through CDA, discourse doesn't just reflect power but can also resist and change power relations. Akram's podcast does exactly the opposite, confronting the patriarchal norms upon which honor killings are predicated and calling for legal reforms and structural change. He criticizes the Qandeel Baloch case, where, with legal loopholes, the perpetrator was able to get away with it, pointing to the failure of state institutions to protect women and

human rights. The findings are also consistent with evidence from the literature, which points out that honor killings take place in situations where the legal system destroys or is complicit in permitting offenders to evade captivity (Habiba, 2018; Khan, 2020).

Podcast analysis also demonstrates the ability of digital media to effect social change, as the literature review discussed. Akram's use of YouTube as a digital platform extends the scope of people engaging in the discourse on honor killings and gender-based violence. This concurs with Fairclough's (2001) assertion that discourse by digital media is embedded in power relations within society and opens space for resistance. The podcast's findings imply that although digital media may be a force that elevates and empowers marginalized voices, it also can't fully tap into conservative or rural audiences, who are often most shaken by honor killings. However, this gap in access reflects the issues that the literature has identified concerning the digital divide and how difficult it is to reach those who need awareness and education about gender-based violence (Khan, 2020).

The analysis shows that while the podcast has opened up the discourse and provoked critical debate, digital discourse in its own form may not be enough to create change in the system. Stressing the translation of discourse into action in the real world, Fairclough's framework (1992) falls short of this, as Akram's Podcast does. The podcast brings out the issue of honor killings and demands legal and societal reform, but it does not really point out what steps should be taken by the listeners. In the literature, this is acknowledged as a limitation — while media discourse is vital to raising consciousness, institutional attempts such as legal reforms and education are needed to produce lasting change (Habiba, 2018; Khan, 2020). While digital media can provoke cultural norms and stimulate dialogue, it will take sustained intervention at multiple levels—individual, institutional, and societal—to take down deeply ingrained practices such as honor killings, the findings suggest.

Finally, the results thus obtained from the podcast analysis show that the Junaid Akram podcast is a very effective tool for challenging the cultural and

institutional norms that allow honor killings to be sustained in Pakistan. The language and discourse of the podcast follow the feminist critique of honor killings and require systemic reform of the literature. The rise of digital media platforms like podcasts promises a rebirth of informed debate and a chance to empower marginalized voices; however, digital discourse suffers from a lack of reach to conservative communities — a shortcoming that must be compensated for through a multi-pronged approach to reducing honor killings. It means not just media engagement but also legal, educational, and cultural interventions that will ensure a lasting change in society.

### **Conclusion**

Junaid Akram's Podcast serves as an important tool for raising awareness about honor killings in Pakistan. By

using digital media to challenge traditional cultural narratives, Akram creates a space for open dialogue about gender-based violence. While the podcast has positively impacted urban audiences, its ability to influence rural communities and conservative cultural values remains limited. However, Akram's intention to reveal the social taboos and educate people is quite good for opening the way to change.

Future efforts to combat honor-based violence in Pakistan should involve targeted educational campaigns, inclusive language, and collaboration with local advocacy groups. By leveraging digital media alongside traditional educational and policy initiatives, there is potential for meaningful progress in addressing honor killings and improving the status of women in Pakistani society.

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## Appendix: Transcription

Junaid Akram: So, obviously, thanks to the nature of my work, the way I know you, I've also interacted with people from all walks of life, whether they're from the lower class, lower-middle class, or the extremely upper class.

I've observed issues where opinions are suppressed, unions are crushed, and individuals are silenced. From the outside, you might see a lavish house, 12 cars, three drivers, and a fleet of servants, but the torment women endure inside those walls is unimaginable.

Tahira Kazmi: Thousands of working women earn their wages fairly well but take the amount straight to their husbands and get a slice of it as pocket money. And she can't do a thing about it because if she does, she will be abused—mentally, physically, and emotionally. That is the weapon of men against women.

Junaid Akram: Why does this happen?

Tahira Kazmi: The moment a woman starts questioning, the husband uses his tools of abuse—verbal, mental, emotional, financial, and even physical abuse. Emotional abuse might mean giving her the cold shoulder, coming home late, or cutting her off from communication. Physical abuse, like slapping, is trivialized.

Junaid Akram: People often justify such behavior by saying, "She must have done something to provoke it; maybe she talked back."

Tahira Kazmi: Exactly. And for many men in patriarchal societies, what's wrong with the men?

Why does he desire a woman sitting in front of him to have no opinion, thought, or liberty? Even basic behavior is policed with comments like, "You are not supposed to stand like that."

Junaid Akram: It's even more alarming in cases like Qandeel Baloch's. Her family forgave the killer, allowing him to avoid punishment due to loopholes in Pakistani law. In fact, the state should have intervened as one citizen was killed and the law was invoked.

We have to understand that no amount of so-called honor can justify taking a life. It's a clear misuse of culture conflated with religion, which Islam doesn't permit. I feel that religious leaders need to stop using faith as an excuse for violence.

Tahira Kazmi: Honor killings are more prevalent in rural areas, where traditional values dominate, and education levels are lower. Women there have almost no autonomy and even their basic human rights are denied.

Junaid Akram: Digital media has equalized the dissemination of information and made it possible for us to discuss what we could earlier not discuss. Platforms like YouTube create spaces for discussing forbidden topics, breaking the barriers upheld by traditional media.

Tahira Kazmi: True, but it's not without its challenges. Every time we dare step into taboo territory, we expose ourselves to the crowd and their disappointment. The backlash can be overwhelming.