



RESEARCH PAPER

**Media Representation of the Justice System: A Critical Discourse
Analysis of Political Talk Shows**

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to examine how media representation of Pakistan's justice system in political talk shows potentially shapes audience perception of justice system, employing a Socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis. Five political talk shows were selected based on viewership, audience reach, and content diversity. The sample included six episodes from each political talk show (N= 30 episodes) broadcasted every alternate Monday for three months. Findings revealed that political talk shows consistently offered a negative frame to its audience to make sense of the justice system. Discursive strategies such as presupposition, tag question, polarization, and presupposition were used in discourses to implicitly affect the audience's perception of the judiciary. Results revealed media confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance play a pivotal role in molding public trust and confidence in the justice system. Future studies should consider the receptive as well as production side to indicate the extent to which audiences mirror media portrayals.

KEYWORDS Critical Discourse Analysis, Electronic Media, Justice System, Political Talk Shows, Socio-Cognitive Approach

Introduction

Media can hinder and enhance the public trust on judiciary depending upon its portrayal. It influences the public opinion regarding the justice of the judiciary (Muzaffar, Chohdhry, & Afzal, 2019; Hao & Ma, 2013; Muzaffar, Yaseen, Safdar, 2020). Active communication between the media and the courts have acquired immense attention in the past few decades where media discourses have found to play a significant role in building public confidence and restoring their trust on judiciary (Dimovski et al., 2019). A study has revealed that visual imagery of the judiciary in media significantly effects the audience opinions and understandings of judiciary. The way justice system is depicted in news effect audience trust and reliance on judiciary for seeking justice (Moran, 2012). Considering the significance of the media portrayal of justice system, Moriearty, (2009) indicated that media and justice is interdependent to safeguard human rights by ensuring professional ethics and authentic and objective reportage. Keeping in view the effect of media portrayal of justice system of country on the public understanding and perception of the judiciary, a study has revealed that media supervision is eminent to ensure its reasonable practice (Yang, 2023). Therefore, current study would examine the media portrayal of justice system in indigenous context.

Past studies have identified Critical Discourse analysis (CDA) as an efficient method to reveal the effect of media discourses on public opinion and perception in different contexts (McHoul & Grace, 2015). In this vein, the Socio-cognitive approach (SCA) to CDA offered firm grounds to indicate social implications of discourses constructed in media (Van Dijk, 2009; Van Dijk, 2014). Therefore, current study adopts SCA to CDA to examine how

media portrayals of justice system in discourses may potentially influence audience perceptions of the justice system.

Literature Review

Media has a profound effect on creating judiciary's image and ethics among its audience. Povorova, (2023) has revealed that the legitimacy of the judiciary in society is impacted by the media portrayal of the judiciary system. A study has revealed that representation of the courts and judiciary in the news have significantly affected the public understanding and confidence in the justice system of the England and Wales (Moran, 2014). A study conducted in Kenya and Brazil has also revealed that the media mapping of justice system effects the audience perception about access to justice (Albuquerque, 2017; Gichuki, 2019). Likewise, Yang, (2023) examining the relationship between the media portrayals of justice system and audience perception of the judiciary in China also revealed that the media has the power to build or break public perception about the judicial fairness. Literature indicates that media must maintain objectivity in disseminating information about the judges and courts to sustain social cohesion (Volianska & Pidkurkova, 2020).

Studies have revealed that people rely on media to make sense of their world. In Pakistan, *electronic media* is considered the most credible source of information. It is the most widely consumed source of information (Naqvi, 2011; Tariq & Qadri, 2011). Electronic media in Pakistan influences the mindset of the public for the good and the worse (Munawar & Choudhry, 2021; Tariq & Qadri, 2011). This effect is more pronounced for the *political talk shows* that are devotedly followed by people in Pakistan.

Empirical studies conducted in Pakistan indicated that discourses constructed in *political talk shows* play a significant role in shaping public perceptions and opinions pertaining to various facets of life including judiciary system (Gallup & Gilani, 2018; Hayat et al., 2015). Research indicated that majority of the millennials in Pakistan are satisfied with the content and the information provided in the political talk shows and they seem to be quite popular among them (Bilal et al., 2012; Hayat et al., 2015). In this vein, political talk shows broadcasted by the privately-owned television channels have greater reach to rural and urban areas and potential to shape public opinion in the country (Hussain et al., 2021; Mou, 2023; Yousaf, 2012). Reflecting upon the influence of the political talk shows, Ahmed (2010) revealed that majority of the respondents in his study agreed that they rely on political talk shows to achieve knowledge and awareness regarding country affairs and their surroundings. People have been markedly affected by the opinions disseminated in political talk shows regarding their surroundings (Naz et al., 2014; Yaseen et al., 2018). Keeping in view these facts, current study aims to explore how media discourses represent Pakistan's judiciary system and how it may shape the audience perception regarding their justice system and their standing within it. Media discourses in political talk shows and their potential impacts would be analyzed through the Critical discourse analysis.

Studies employing CDA have implied that media discourses have the potential to shape the society perception and social understanding through different discursive strategies (Kamenova, 2014; Nielsen & Ganter, 2022; Quail & Larabie, 2010). CDA revealed that positive media portrayal led to positive consequences and negative portrayal has resulted in huge destructions (Beyene, 2012; Sarkin & Fowler, 2010). In this vein, Altheide, (2018) indicated that media discourses have the power to manipulate the audience especially in contexts where there is limited access to first-hand information. From this perspective, CDA has been found to be the most relevant to achieve the objectives of the study because it focuses primarily on social problems rather than the mere study of discourse structures outside their social and political contexts (Van Dijk, 2009; Van Dijk, 2014). Furthermore, the CDA illustrates how particular discourses systematically construct versions of the social world (McHoul & Grace, 2015).

Within the broader framework of critical discourse studies, the *socio-cognitive approach* (SCA) to discourse is employed characterized by the Discourse–Cognition–Society triangle (Van Dijk 2014, 2015, 2018). This approach assists to map the web of knowledge, beliefs, biases, and attitudes that individuals employ, either directly or indirectly, when generating and understanding communication (Roberts & Steinkopf, 2022; Wu et al., 2022). It seeks to elucidate how cognitive framework actively shapes discourse structures and their interpretations within specific communicative contexts (Gyollai, 2020). These distinctive characteristics of SCA make it more appropriate for achieving the study's objectives, where the researcher's interest extends beyond the linguistic aspects of discourses to encompass the broader implications they hold for the general masses.

Material and Methods

The study is qualitative in nature emphasizing how language and discourses in political talk shows challenge, shape, or reinforce existing ideologies, representations, and power dynamics in society.

Sample

The sample of the study was comprised of 30 episodes carefully selected from five different political talk shows. The political talk shows were selected based on pre-determined inclusion criteria

Table 1
Criteria for Sample Selection (Political talk shows)

Criteria- Emphasis	Aspects/Factors	Effect
• Relevance to research Objectives	• Timings, themes, topics, and issues addressed.	• Reliability and Validity of the research findings
• Diversity of Programs	• Programs from different genre, channels, and formats	• Range of perspectives and discourses • Provide a comprehensive analysis of the discourses present
• Representativeness	• Programs that are commonly consumed or influential within the target audience	• Findings are applicable to the broader discourse.
• Variation In discourse	• Programs with contrasting viewpoints, different political affiliations, or varying social or cultural perspectives.	• Variation - allow for a more comprehensive analysis of the discursive landscape.
• Accessibility and Availability	• Availability of transcripts, video recordings, or online streaming platforms (Youtube).	• Allow to access and analyze the content effectively.
• Ethical considerations	• Avoid programs - discriminatory, harmful, or violates ethical guidelines	• Assuring ethical research

Based on the above inclusion criteria five political talk shows among which 4 were privately own and one from National television has been selected

Table 2
List of selected Political Talk shows

Name of the Political Talk show	Channel	Timings	Ownership
Capital Talk	Geo News	Monday To Friday 8:05 Pm PST	Private
Off The Record	ARY News	Monday To Thursday 8:00 Pm PST	Private
Dunya Kamran Khan K Sath	Dunya News	Monday To Friday 9:00 Pm PST	Private
Zara Hat K	Dawn News	Monday To Thursday 8:00 Pm PST	Private

Such Tu Yeh Hai

Pakistan Television

Monday To Thursday
8:05 Pm PST

National TV Channel

Centered on channel ratings and viewership metrics, talk shows mentioned in Table 2 emerged as the most popular programs. The selection process was further validated through a survey conducted by Gallop in 2018 and an indigenous study on media content, which identified Geo News, ARY News, PTV News, Express News, and Dunya News as the top National News TV channels, and their talk shows were recognized accordingly (Qaisar et al., 2014; Gallup & Gilani, 2018). It has been found that there were certain commonalities among the selected programs in the way they have been broadcasted as reflected in the Table 3.

Table 3
Features of selected political talk shows

Aspect	Details
Participants	Political figures from various parties with seats in ministries, along with educational and health experts.
Format	Moderated discussions involving multiple participants.
Central Topics	Politics, economics, education, health, judiciary and international standing of the country.
Duration	Varied, ranging between 35 minutes to an hour.
Moderation	Skilled moderator (host) for effective guidance, time management, and ensuring participation.
Topic Coverage	Current events and emerging issues across politics, economics, education, health, and international affairs.
Time Management	Well-defined agenda to cover planned topics thoroughly within the allocated time frame.

Intriguingly, a noteworthy observation was made concerning the diversity and variation in topics during Monday broadcasts. Consequently, two programs were meticulously chosen for analysis over three consecutive months, with each program airing on alternate Mondays. This rigorous selection process yielded a total of 30 programs, encompassing 6 episodes from each political talk show.

Transcriptions and Coding

The selected political shows were transcribed verbatim to acquire all the spoken content including pauses, emphasis, and interruptions for a more comprehensive CDA. Following transcription, a systematic method was used to identify segments where the justice system was unequivocally or subtly discussed, encompassing mentions of court cases, laws, judicial decisions, judges, or broader discussions on the effectiveness of the judiciary. The identified segments were then assigned preliminary codes using NVivo and manual coding, guided by the research questions and emergent themes from the data. These initial codes revealed elements such as judicial corruption, criticism of judicial actions, inadequate laws, and court inefficiency based on how the judiciary was portrayed.

Critical Discourse Analysis

The selected discourse segments underwent Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to reveal the hidden power dynamics, ideologies, and intentions behind the representations of the judiciary. In particular, the CDA framework examined the utilization of discourse strategies such as presupposition, framing, perspectivation, tag question, and polarization to influence the audience narrative regarding justice system.

CDA also taken into account the broader socio-political factors that may influenced the interpretation of political talk shows discourses. The SCA examined how media representations of the judiciary influence audience perceptions and mental models. These representations can impact public trust in the judiciary, with negative depictions potentially undermining trust through portrayals of corruption or inefficiency, while positive ones can strengthen it by emphasizing independence. The analysis also considered cognitive

dissonance and confirmation bias, as mental models challenging or confirming existing beliefs about judicial fairness held by the audience. Moreover, these portrayals have implications for national identity and justice perceptions, potentially causing disillusionment or enhancing national pride, depending on how the judiciary is presented.

Results and Discussion

Among the five selected political talk shows that were analyzed, three of them (Capital Talk, Zara Hat Kay, and Off the Record) presented a critical view of the justice system. These particular programs criticized the efficacy of the judiciary, which contributed to a perception of inherent flaws in the system. In contrast, the Such Tu Yeh Hai broadcasted on national channel chose not to delve into the topic of the judiciary at all, opting instead to focus on broader issues within the political and social spheres. The show "Duniya Kamran Khan Kay Sath" stood out by highlighting political and governmental inadequacies without specifically addressing the justice system. Following section describes the major themes emerged from the CDA. Each theme represents a different facet of the justice system, supplemented by a discourse extract which is further followed by description of discursive strategies, and cognitive and social representation of the discourse

Theme 1: Unjust and Biased Justice System

One of the most important aspects that has been discussed in the selected political talk shows were *judiciary system of Pakistan*, considering the defective law and order situation of Pakistan at that time. The host of the show -who has the main access in the show- having power to control the discourses used *perspectivation* (the process of presenting or representing information from a particular perspective or viewpoint) to frame the topic from a specific angle. For that matter, he incorporates a clip from the Prime Minister Imran Khan's (influential social actor) speech where he reflects upon the judicial system of the country highlighting existing prejudice, discrimination, inequality, and injustice in the system as evident from the following discourse.

Discourse Extract 1: [Free our country and uphold justice to dismantle the pervasive notion that Pakistan's legal system operates with a separate set of rules for the powerful and the vulnerable] (5:27- timestamp; Imran Khan- speaker, Capital Talk- Political talk show, 18 November 2019)

[This has been our history: the powerful dictate verdicts over the telephone, force a Chief Justice to resign by bribing judges with briefcases] (5:30 (time); Imran Khan (speaker), Capital Talk (talk show), 18 November, 2019)

[Our law cannot touch the one who is in power. I humbly implore both the esteemed judges -the one who is holding the office and the one who will be holding it- today on the behalf of my nation to rectify this perception] (5:56; Imran Khan, Capital Talk, 18 November, 2019).

Discursive Strategies. The goal of *perspectivation* is to shape the audience's perception of a topic by highlighting certain aspects while potentially downplaying or omitting others. Examining the discourse, it has been found that it is *prejudiced* as it shows that law is not equal for all. It favors the dominant and powerful social group against the weak. Additionally, to convince the listeners of the validity of what he is saying a *persuasive strategy* has been applied where the speaker has quoted an event that supports his claim. The discourse emphasizes how bourgeoisie (the powerful class) had become established in wider society as it says that there is a *prevailing perception* -indicating that people are legitimizing the hegemonic power- that law serves the dominant and weak social groups of the society differently. Lastly, the speaker speech acts perform social functions of advising and requesting by implying *collectivization* (collectively representing people without using

statistics) by using terms “our country”, name of a country “Pakistan”, and “my nation” to represent a collective identity. This aspect makes the discourse more appealing and convincing. Additionally, speaker’s public-colloquial style -maintaining a balance between formality and informality to connect with a wide audience while maintaining professionalism- made the discourse more pronounced. The emotional tone that has been set by the speaker could influence the emotional state of the audience which impacts the cognitive processing of the information.

Cognitive Implications. The discourse implies a perception that the legal system is ineffective or biased when it comes to those in positions of power. The use of “cannot – touch the powerful class” and “rectify- this long held perception pertaining to judiciary system” implies a level of uncertainty. “Cannot” suggests a limitation, and “rectify” indicates a need for correction, both contributing to a sense of uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the legal system. Additionally, referring to an event of corruption within the framework of country’s legal system indicates that system is corrupt and so are those in authority (judges). All these discourses come from a powerful social actor and an influencer who has a huge following in the targeted audience. Consequently, his words could have a profound effect on the perceptions of the audience. In this vein, the audience have been given a negative frame and mental representation to conceptualize their judicial and legal system.

Social Meaning. It constructs a cognitive representation suggesting that judiciary may not serve the poor or weak in the society and to seek justice one must be resourceful financially and politically. It also constructs a social understanding that decisions are made in the court under the influence of those in the power rather than the evidence, truth, or proofs. Highlighting that there is a long history of unchallenged influence of hegemonic power of the dominant social group over the legal system gives an understanding that rectification of the legal system requires social change which takes decades.

Triangulating the discourse, its cognition representation, and societal implications in the light of the socio-cognitive mechanisms, it has been deduced that the speaker has expressed fear and anxiety about the legality of the justice served in the courts of the country. Similar emotions could be induced in the audience, potentially leading them to internalize uncertainty associated with the discussed topic. The audience may encounter a cognitive dissonance that could trigger an internalization of uncertainty as the viewer grapples with reconciling their existing beliefs with the new information.

Discourse Extract 2: [Ranjha Sahab (Representative of Pakistan Muslim League -N), isn’t it fair to demand the rectification of this perception? As you know, there have been instances in our history where verdicts were allegedly dictated over the phone. Given such incidents, don't you think Prime Minister Imran Khan is making a justified demand?"]. (Hamid Meer (Host), Capital Talk, 18 November, 2019).

Discursive Strategies. In continuity to the Excerpt 1, the host who has the main access in the political talk shows incorporates a *tag question* - turning an utterance into a question by ‘tagging’ an interrogative fragment at the end- to the utterance of the speaker Imran Khan “Isn’t this a very right demand/request” and “Don’t you think so” where he requested that judiciary must take actions to change the perception that law and order serves the powerful, only. By doing this, the host has not only intend to seek the confirmation and agreement but also to indicate emphasis on the matter. Furthermore, the spoken text has been repeated by the host to make the utterance perceptually more prominent and significant. The host has incorporated catchphrases from the speech of Imran Khan “rectify this perception” and “verdicts were dictated over the phone” to encapsulate a particular message. Such discursive strategies make the discourse more prominent and perceptive to audience.

Cognitive representation. In the above discourse, the host has reaffirmed the Excerpt 1 by using tag question and gave the audience a specific interpretation of the context (judiciary is biased). Additionally, tag question regarding the judiciary and law and order has offered grounds to the audience for being more skeptical by conveying doubt regarding its fairness. This discourse presents a particular ideology to the viewer consistently giving audiences a selective exposure about the legal system that is “justice is for the powerful” and weak may not seek justice. They may internalize the biased portrayal of the justice system while dismissing alternative viewpoints. Also, as a matter of *confirmation bias*, viewers tend to favor information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs. So, a viewer who supports the notion that the legal system is biased might selectively process information and reinforce his/her confidence in the uncertainty framed by these narratives

Social Meaning. Referring to the social impact of the discourse, it conveys that the rule “No one is above the law” does not imply in the country. To seek justice, one must be powerful as the law governs under the hegemonic power of the dominant social group. Such discourses potentially question the effectiveness of law and order and judiciary, especially when it comes from the influential social actors of the society (Prime Minister) or the source (political talk shows) which is heavily consumed by the people for the sake of knowledge and information.

Audience might develop a negative attitude towards the judiciary system as the discourse gives them a negative mental representation of the system and the claim made in the discourses are further strengthened by backing them with events occurred in the recent past. Overall, such discourses and their cognitive interpretation could hamper people trust on justice system and conveying doubt regarding its effectiveness.

Theme 2: Perceived Ethnic Discrimination in the Justice System

Discourse Extract 3: [One who is Sindhi –Asif Ali Zardari- his case should be filed in Karachi (capital city of Sindh) but it was taken to Islamabad- It has been brought to Punjab. So, this is very suspicious] (11:52; Itzaz Ahsan, Capital Talk, 18 November 2019).

[If we completely ignore the fact that Punjabis are privileged in the country than this will be unfair, I think so.] (13:22; Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, Capital Talk, 18 November 2019).

Discursive Strategies. By means of discursive strategy of polarization it has been highlighted that Justice System is discriminatory even among the ethnicities. The use of “Sindhi” as an ethnic identifier emphasizes Asif Ali Zardari’s (Chairman of Pakistan Political Party) regional and ethnic background. This choice may serve to highlight the speaker’s perception that the individual’s ethnic identity is relevant to the legal case and does affect the authenticity of the legal proceedings. Lexical choices such as “case,” “filed,” “taken to,” and “brought to,” indicates a precise and formal language associated with legal procedures. These terms frame the situation within the context of established legal processes. Additionally, the choice of words like “filed in,” “taken to,” and “brought to” explicitly references the geographical locations associated with different jurisdictions. This vocabulary used emphasizes the perceived deviation from the expected jurisdiction for Asif Ali Zardari’s case. Furthermore, the term “suspicious” is a strong expression of doubt and implies that there is a reason to question the deviation from the expected legal procedure. It suggests a level of uncertainty, skepticism, or concern about the fairness of the legal process.

Furthermore, use of the phrase “completely ignore” suggests a deliberate act of overlooking the fact that Punjabi’s (an influential ethnicity) are privileged in the country. Also, the use of the word “unfair” indicates that it is the matter of justice. Ending the discourse with the use of “I think so” adds a degree of uncertainty and tentativeness to the

claim. On the whole, the discourse gives a critical stance to the social disparities prevailing in the society based on ethnic discord.

Cognitive implications. Cognitive representation offered in the Excerpt 3 may involve an awareness of ethnic or regional considerations within the legal context, suggesting a nuanced understanding of the potential influence of identity on legal proceedings. The discourse has offered a frame to conceptualize the influence and dominance of Punjab on the judicial system and marginalization of Sindhis'. This gives an ideological stance that judiciary is biased and lacks fairness. Furthermore, audience are given an understanding of legal jurisdiction and an expectation that legal cases should be processed in their appropriate geographical locations, contributing to the expressed suspicion. Discourse raises serious doubts about the integrity of the legal proceedings.

Social Meaning. The Excerpt 3 is an awareness of the potential influence of regional and ethnic factors on legal outcomes. It may reinstate the audience perception regarding the power dynamics by highlighting that ethnicity and regional identity lies at the core of power disparities in the society. It also implies that the possibility of seeking justice is high for people of Punjab as compared to any other regional or ethnic group as they have power to manipulate the legal processes. Contrarily, if you are from any other region or ethnicity, no matter how affluent you are, you may witness deviation from expected legal jurisdiction. Such depiction could negatively affect the people trust in the legal and judiciary processes. Most importantly, this discourse has potential to fuel up the ethnic discord in the country as people are sensitive to their ethnic identity and tend to strongly identify with it.

Triangulating the discourse, cognition, and society in the given context, it has been inferred that the discourse may give this understanding to the audience that law and order is unjust and discriminating within their own country. Such depiction could further undefined the legal and judiciary system that could potentially enhance their feelings of distrust about their system and surroundings when it comes to seeking justice. The impact of such discourses may not end on exacerbating feeling of uncertainty rather it could have intensified ethnic and regional hatred and polarize the society, potentially making the society more intolerant.

Theme 3: Inadequacy of the Legal Outcomes

Discourse Extract 4: [Was there any pursuit of justice in Kasur regarding the incident involving the rape of a 4-year-old girl, given that the perpetrators were released after a period of 4 years?] (4:19; Faisal Warda, Off the Record, 18 November 2019).

Discursive Strategies. It questions the pursuits of justice while emphasizing the severity of the crime which is rape of children and its legal handling. In the discourse, the question "Was there any pursuit of justice" suggests doubt about the effectiveness of the legal process in addressing the incident. The use of "pursuit of justice" implies an active questioning of whether justice was genuinely sought. Also, the phrase "rape of a 4-year-old girl" emphasizes the gravity and victimization of the crime and in relevance to this reflecting upon the legal outcome of the case, the phrase "perpetrators were released" implies a critical event in the legal process, raising questions about the decision made by the judiciary. The discourse also introduces a conditional element by using the phrase "given that", linking the release of the perpetrators "after a period of 4 years" -specifying the duration of the time passed since the heinous incident- with the question of justice. It draws an evaluative connection between the crime and justice.

Cognitive Implications. In the given discourse, concerns have been raised about the inadequacy of the legal outcomes for the perpetrators. It reinstates and questions if the decision made by the judiciary in the case is adequate or justified or could it be even called justice? The stance offered in the discourse may create doubts about the effectiveness of the

legal and judiciary system of the country as an effect of cognitive dissonance. A person may get more skeptical about the laws operating in the country that not only fail to assure safety to the citizens but also justice.

Social Meaning. It is conveying a narrative that questions the effectiveness of the legal system in delivering justice for the mentioned incident. It reflects that justice is not well-served even for such a heinous crime. It may raise existential crises in a way that people might feel more insecure about themselves and their children in the environment where such perpetrators are set free after an inadequate trial.

The socio-cognitive approach implies that judiciary and legal system of the country is not effective enough to protect its people, especially when it comes to the rights of the poor. The girl was from Kasur (as highlighted in the discourse) which is an underdeveloped area occupied by the unprivileged social groups of the society. Evaluating the judicial system through the lens of the given discourse, one might get more insecure when it comes to seeking justice and they may develop a perception that there is no justice for them.

Discourse Extract 5.[There are severe laws for the rape cases of girls but not for the boys] (25:49; Wussutullah Khan, Zara Hat K, 18 November, 2019)

Discursive Strategies. The statement creates a distinction in the way the justice system deals with cases concerning girls and boys, establishing a divide between the two groups through *gender-based polarization*. It presents boys as the overlooked or disadvantaged group, implying unequal treatment in law. The discourse *presupposes* that there must be uniform strict laws for both boys and girls, covertly implying that the existing legal structure is insufficient or unfair. Also, it *frames* the justice system as incomplete and inadequate for dealing with rape cases involving boys. Excerpt 5 delves into the nuanced layers of the discourse surrounding the legal treatment of sexual assault based on gender, revealing a complex interplay of ideologies, power structures, and societal representations.

Cognitive Implications. Unraveling cognitive meaning of the above Extract, the statement hints at the existence of underlying gender stereotypes or biases that subtly influence the shaping of legal policies. The notion that legal consequences differ based on the gender of the victim implies a tacit acceptance or reinforcement of certain societal beliefs about vulnerability and victimhood. It becomes a mirror reflecting deeply ingrained societal norms and values related to gender. The suggestion that stricter laws apply to crimes against girls as opposed to boys implies an accepted societal norm, potentially rooted in traditional gender roles and expectations. This raises critical questions about the broader implications of such norms and the impact on the formation and implementation of legal frameworks. The use of the term "severe" not only introduces a qualitative judgment but also strategically directs attention to a perceived discrepancy in the legal consequences depending on the gender of the victim.

Social Meaning. The discourse extract 5 reflects an implicit societal acceptance of a hierarchical structure that may prioritize the protection of one gender over the other, reinforcing existing power imbalances. The biasness depicted in the discourse may influence societal perceptions, and contribute to the construction of societal attitudes, potentially perpetuating unequal treatment based on gender in legal contexts. Furthermore, socio-cognitively it reflects that there are severe legal consequences for rape of a girls (as per the expectations of the societal norms) but at the same time there are no laws for the rape of a boys. It implies that boys are as unsafe in this society as girls, but the legal system is only concern about the safety of the girls. This could have raised questions about the inefficacy of the laws pertaining to the protection of the children.

The excerpt not only informs about the lack of legal consequences pertaining to the sexual abuse of a boy but also raises a question why there is a need of gender based legal

consequences for such a heinous act? Why there couldn't be one law or legal framework that considers every rape case of children irrespective of what gender the victim has? Such questions raise ambiguity about the efficacy of the legal framework and concerns about the protection of humanity and their children.

On the whole, the results of the study revealed that the most of the political talk shows offered a negative frame of reference while discussing the justice system of the country. The judiciary system has already been criticized for failing to provide justice and being influenced by those in power (Imran et al., 2024). People have little or no trust on the judiciary system when it comes to seeking justice and this is more pronounced for those who lack social power (Khan & Mumtaz, 2020). These aspects have been repeatedly highlighted in the media discourses that might impact audience perception through confirmation bias (Shabir & Iqbal, 2010). Supporting the findings of the study, Durrani and Alam, (2020) revealed that consistently framing the judiciary system negatively and anchoring on the statistics that depict the failure to acquire justice because of social inequalities have the potential to create doubts and distrust among the public regarding justice system. Furthermore, audience who have positive perception about the justice system of the country may account cognitive dissonance after repeatedly being exposed to the shortcomings of the justice system. The discursive strategies discussed above along with the cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias operate to frame the justice system as corrupt, biased, unjust and discriminatory.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the critical discourse analysis of the political talk shows implies that the primary focus of the popular talk shows is on the shortcomings of the legal and judiciary system. There isn't any one discourse that would reflect or highlight the strength of the legal system of the country. Political talk shows framed justice system of the country as corrupt, incompetent, biased, and inadequate in providing justice by employing varied discursive strategies. This could hamper the public trust and confidence on the judiciary as an effect of confirmation bias and cognitive bias.

Recommendations

Future research is suggested to conduct a triangulation study where production and receptive side both could be examined to indicate the actual effect that the audience would have as a result of media discourses. It is suggested to explore the extent to which audience mirror media portrayals to make sense of their world.

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