

Adjectival Evaluation of Women in Pakistani English Newspaper Coverage of the Aurat March: A Corpus-Assisted Appraisal Analysis

ABSTRACT:

Evaluative adjectives can never be purely descriptive. In media discourse, they carry the weight of evaluation, forming popular opinion by giving properties to people and events which are hardly neutral. This outcome may often lead to consequences when the topic of discussion is feminist political activism within a disputed public space. This study approaches such outcome from a corpus-based Appraisal of adjectival evaluation in the English language Pakistani newspaper reporting on the Aurat March, the most prominent modern feminist mobilization in the nation. A corpus of 390 articles that contain 278,206 tokens published between 2018 and 2026 was analysed. It employs Systemic Functional Linguistics Appraisal Theory, specifically the Attitude subsystem, to examine adjectives modifying two levels: the person level, focused on woman/women, and the event level, focused on Aurat March. SpaCy dependency parsing, Mutual Information collocation statistics, systematic enforced manual Appraisal coding with a principled exclusion taxonomy are all methodological tools. The analysis shows that there are three evaluative discourses which coexist. A discourse of celebration of resistance is anchored in positive Judgment adjectives of Tenacity and Capacity. Negative Affect adjectives are what propel a victimhood and vulnerability discourse. A two-level moral condemnation counter discourse operates through statistically marked Social Sanction adjectives at the person level and high frequency negative attitudinal adjectives at the event level. The study is informed by both the Lexical Priming theory and the scholarship of gender and language, which reveals that the surface neutrality of the corpus represents a stratified evaluative system with substantial consequences.

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Introduction

On the International Women's Day in March 2019, thousands of women gathered in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad to take part in the Aurat March, a synchronized feminist movement. Beginning as a small-scale action in 2018, it soon turned out to be the most visible act of feminist activism in modern-day Pakistan, what Zia (2009) refers to as a generational re-invention of the Pakistani feminist movement. Participants called for legal safeguards, control over their own bodies, and the elimination of gender-based violence. The responses of the masses and the government were rapid and sharply polarized. With this context, Pakistani English-language newspapers covered, discussed, and framed the news of the March to their readers, using words

that, in this paper, are anything but neutral.

Media discourse does not passively reflect social reality but actively constructs it through language (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1988). In Pakistani English language newspaper coverage, the Aurat March generated two distinct streams of adjectival evaluation: one directed at women as individuals and another directed at the march as a political phenomenon. Adjectives do not qualify as marginal stylistic tools, and, as Hunston and Thompson (2000, p. 1) determine, they are one of the most important grammatical tools that writers use to indicate evaluative position. Biber et al. (1999) reveal that both attributive and predicative adjectives are the main grammatical location of assessment in English prose. Moreover, Stubbs (2001) demonstrates that when a word is regularly adjectivally modified within a large corpus, the evaluative schema adopted by a discourse community about the referent of that word can be identified.

Caldas Coulthard and Moon (2010) directly cite empirical evidence of the gendered aspect of this phenomenon, displaying that terms used on women in media writings are disproportionately used to assess personal character, emotional disposition, and sexual behavior. The same asymmetry has been noticed by Lakoff (1973) four decades prior as a result of qualitative observation; corpus linguistics introduces an empirical scale and a statistical accuracy.

The analytical model involves both SFL Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005) and Mutual Information collocation statistics (Church & Hanks, 1990) to obtain statistically salient adjective noun associations with an ideological weight that is disproportional to the raw frequency. The Lexical Priming theory by Hoey (2005) is the cognitive linkage connecting the statistical patterns with the influence that they have on the mental schema of the readers. The elaboration of these evaluative asymmetries is anchored on gender and language scholarship (Baker, 2014; Cameron, 1995; Lakoff, 1973; Mills, 2008; Talbot, 2010) on the larger context of how language replicates gender inequality in the public.

This paper has four novel contributions. First, it implements corpus assisted Appraisal analysis over Pakistani English language coverage of Aurat March in the first time. Second, it uses a dual level design which makes a comparison of person level and event level assessment using the same corpus. Third, it presents principled exclusion taxonomy and makes methodological transparency (Biber et al., 1999; Hoey, 2005). Fourth, it finds a two-level system of moral condemnation where rare yet statistically tied Social Sanction adjectives that condemn the character of individual women co-exist with high frequency negative adjectives that at the same time discount their political activism. Four research questions guide the analysis: how are

attitudinal adjectives distributed across Attitude subsystems for both levels; what does the Judgment subcategory breakdown reveal about the media's evaluative stance; how do MI ranked collocates differ from raw frequency patterns; and how does dual level comparison reveal the two-level condemnation structure?

Literature Review

Adjectives as Grammatical Carriers of Evaluation and Ideology

The adjectival focus of evaluative meaning in the English language is strong throughout descriptive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and critical stylistics. Biber et al. (1999) make the distinction between attributive adjectives that precede the noun and directly classify or evaluate the object they refer to, and predicative adjectives that directly evaluate the object that the nominal subject represents in a complementary clause. According to Thompson (2014), both types operate at the crossroads of the experiential and interpersonal meta-functions in the SFL framework created by Halliday (1994), which concurrently constructs world properties and places the writer in a position of evaluation in relation to such properties. Since evaluation in writing serves three functions at once, Hunston and Thompson (2000) define it to express the position of the writer, to establish a solidarity or a distance between writers and readers, and to structure the rhetorical architecture of the text. Among these, one that can be highly directly relevant to the political meaning of media adjectives, is the idea of reader alignment, because the systematic alteration of women in response to adjectives of vulnerability sets the reader in a position to perceive the social situation of women as a passive disadvantage, but not political agency (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1998).

It is not only that lexical decisions, such as the use of adjectival modification, serve as tools of textual conceptualization, as argued by Jeffries (2010): systematic construction of social reality by a series of linguistic choices made by many texts. This is expanded on by Stubbs (1996, 2001) whose analysis of corpora shows that the regular adjectival collocates of a target word disclose the evaluative schema of a language community, which is often beyond the conscious awareness of that language community.

Lexical choice as a major site of ideological reproduction in media texts has been identified by Fairclough (1995, 2003). Similarly, positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation have been shown to be systematically encoded in news discourse through the use of adjectives

(van Dijk, 1988, 1998). Moreover, evaluative adjectives have been found to be unevenly distributed in newspaper discourse, particularly in the context of gender activism in Pakistan.

Women's Activism and Media Representation in Pakistan

The Aurat March emerged from a feminist tradition shaped by military governance, legislative Islamization, and grassroots organizing. Mumtaz and Shaheed (1987) documented how Pakistani women navigated state-sponsored Islamization under the Zia-ul-Haq regime; Shaheed (1998) showed how women's experiences of identity and activism in Pakistan are constructed through discourse as much as institutional structures; and Zia (2009) describes the movement's emergence as a reinvention of Pakistani feminism producing a more visible and institutionally controversial mobilization than any of its predecessors. The Pakistani English-language newspapers have a definite place of structure within this landscape, to an educated urban audience with a language bearing colonial and cosmopolitan pasts, in a media ecology that is vulnerable to state pressure and commercial demands. Rouse (2004) believes that the construction of women bodies and behaviors has historically been a location whereby national identity, religious legitimacy, and social order are constructed and policed simultaneously by Pakistani media institutions, which can only be seen through systematic analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Stubbs, 2001).

The study of gender representation in South Asian media has identified recurring patterns of stereotyping and selective framing. Lazar (2005) argues that media texts reproduce patriarchal common sense through the naturalization of particular ways of describing women, while Baker et al. (2008) demonstrate how corpus methods reveal these naturalized evaluative tendencies at scale. While research has examined framing and sentiment in Pakistani media coverage of women (Jad, 2004), systematic corpus-based study of evaluative lexis in Aurat March coverage has not previously been undertaken.

Corpus Linguistics, Collocation, and Gender

This shift toward corpus approaches to gender and language studies allows creating a systematic study of large-scale linguistic trends never available to selective quotation (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Sinclair, 1991). The principle of idiom developed by Sinclair (1991) that words do not occur freely, but co-occur with a set of partners, was extended to demonstrate that collocational behavior by Stubbs (2001) is a manifestation of evaluative prosody, the overall positive or negative attitude which a word develops as a consequence of repeated

contextual use (Hunston, 2007).

Baker (2014) showed that corpus methodologies are best adapted to gender analysis since they indicate collocational patterns which are too vague or too diffused to be perceived by naked eye but always indicate that woman and women collocate with vulnerability markers and social deviance more than their male counterparts across different corpora. This was refined in Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) with adjective analysis in British newspaper corpora on the validation of appearances, emotional disposition and sexual behavior as adjectives in a disproportionately smaller number of women than men, often in invoked rather than inscribed attitude (Martin & White, 2005): critical content of adjectives such as loose is activated through collocational history rather than explicit semantic content (Hoey, 2005). The same mechanism is found in feminist stylistics, according to Cameron (1995) and Mills (1995), and this is the wider sociolinguistic pattern in which such mechanism is realized, reported by Romaine (1999) and Coates (2004). The best methodological argument in favor of integrating corpus methodologies and qualitative discourse analysis, as presented by Baker et al. (2008), is that the two approaches in combination yield more rich claims than either of the methods can yield on its own.

Appraisal Theory: Evaluative Language in Systemic Functional Linguistics

Appraisal Theory was developed by Martin and White (2005) as a systemic functional account of evaluative resources in English, extending the interpersonal meta-function described by Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) into a framework for analyzing attitude, engagement, and graduation. The Attitude subsystem, applied exclusively in this study, encompasses three domains: Affect, concerned with emotional states across (in)security, (dis)satisfaction, (un)happiness, and (dis)inclination; Judgment, concerned with evaluations of human character across Social Esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) and Social Sanction (veracity, propriety); and Appreciation, concerned with aesthetic and social value across reaction, composition, and valuation (Martin & White, 2005).

Martin (2000) further explicates the linguistic difference between inscribed attitude which is semantically direct and independent of the context and invoked attitude which is implied by ideational meanings being processed in the backdrop of the social knowledge. Hood (2010) shows that this distinction is a continuum and not binary, whereas Eggins (2004) and Thompson (2014) give the wider SFL relating to the analytical vocabulary. Bednarek (2006 and Bednarek, 2008)

uses Appraisal-based frameworks to the case of British newspaper corpora and shows that evaluative language in news discourse is systematically dispersed over the publications in a manner that reflects ideological commitments and creates a mood of alignment with the subject of either sympathy, condemnation, or admiration to the reader.

Lexical Priming, Collocation, and Cognitive Effects

Theory of lexical priming developed by Hoey (2005) on the basis of the original statement of Firth (1957) that words are known by the company they keep states that all words a reader encounters are primed in the mind via repeated reading experience with classic collocates and semantic associations. They are cognitive formations internalized in the mind, and they determine expectations and certain combinations of words to be natural or marked.

Stubbs (2001) argues that collocational patterns in corpora function as a record of a language community's evaluative consensus, reproduced through every instance of conventional use. When Pakistani English newspapers consistently prime woman/women with adjectives of vulnerability or moral transgression, readers are having their cognitive associations gradually shaped even without processing explicit evaluative statements (Cameron, 1998; Mills, 1995; Spender, 1980). Church and Hanks (1990) demonstrated that Mutual Information captures precisely the strong, consistent priming associations most theoretically significant in Hoey's framework: word pairs whose co-occurrence is disproportionate to their individual frequencies, reflecting genuine non-random collocational relationships. Hunston (2007) extends this through the concept of semantic prosody, showing that words acquire persistently positive or negative orientations through accumulated collocational environments even when dictionary definitions appear neutral.

Research Methodology

The researcher built the corpus himself. The 390 articles were not pulled from a ready made dataset; instead, the researcher collected them manually from Pakistani online newspapers, covering the period from 2018 to 2026. Once the researcher had the articles, He converted them into plain text files and used Google Colab to process the data. To make the dataset easier to work with for statistical and quantitative analysis, including Mutual Information scores, Researcher uploaded it to Hugging Face under researcher's own account: [aakashMeghwar01/english-aurat-](#)

march-news. This dataset draws on coverage from major English language outlets in Pakistan, such as Dawn, The News International, and The Express Tribune. He also filtered out a handful of articles from sources based outside Pakistan to keep the linguistic variety and media context consistent. After cleaning, the final corpus contains 278,206 tokens. Table 1 gives an overview of the full corpus profile.

Table 1

Corpus Profile and Extraction Summary

Corpus Feature	Detail
Total articles	390
Total tokens	278,206
Date range	2018 to 2026
Language	English
Media type	Pakistani English-language online newspapers
Primary outlets	Dawn, The News International, The Express Tribune (among others)
Adj. collocations — woman/women (raw)	553
Adj. collocations — Aurat March (raw)	444
Cleaned hits — woman/women	396
Cleaned hits — Aurat March (attitudinal)	56
Unique lemmas — woman/women	164
Attitudinal lemmas — woman/women (Cat. A)	102
Attitudinal lemmas — Aurat March (Cat. A)	25
MI significance threshold	3.0

Note. MI = Mutual Information score (Church & Hanks, 1990). Cleaned hits exclude Category B, C, and D items as defined in the principled exclusion taxonomy (Table 2).

Dual-Level Extraction Design and Principled Exclusion Taxonomy

The paper uses a two-level extraction design (Baker, 2006; McEnery and Hardie, 2012) that focuses on two levels of collocational environment: woman/women as a person level and Aurat March as an event level. The `en_core_web_md` pipeline of the spaCy text processing system was used to process the text (Honnibal & Montani, 2017). On the person level, adjectives were picked up through three dependency relations: `amod` (attributive), `acomp` (adjectival complement), and `attr` (predicative attribute). In the event level, sentences that had `aurat march` were worked on and adjective dependents of the head noun `march` were recalled where `aurat` was a compound modifier. A known shortcoming is that spaCy sometimes treated `aurat` as a standalone adjective; these instances were found by reviewing the concordance and not included.

After extraction, all adjective lemmas were sorted into four categories and then Appraisal coding was implemented based on the difference between evaluative and classifying adjectives and grammatical adjectives as defined by Biber et al. (1999), and the argument by Hoey (2005), that evaluative priming is discharged by semantically charged and not grammatical collocations. The entire taxonomy is given in Table 2.

Table 2

Principled Exclusion Taxonomy for Adjective Classification

Category	Subcategory	Exclusion Basis	Example Adjectives
A — Attitudinal	All Appraisal subcategories	Retained: evaluative priming (Hoey, 2005)	brave, sinful, empowered, vulnerable, equal, vulgar
	Nationality, religion, age, geography	Biber et al. (1999): classifying adjective; evaluative loading is	Pakistani, Muslim, young, urban, legal

Category	Subcategory	Exclusion Basis	Example Adjectives
		co-textual	
		Biber et al. (1999):	
C—Grammatical/Quantifier	Ordinals, cardinals, comparatives	non-evaluative grammatical item; no attitudinal priming (Hoey, 2005)	many, other, first, several, same
D - Artifact/Noise	Parser errors, punctuation, emoji	spaCy misidentification; no semantic content	-, κ, haired, perceive

Note. Category A adjectives retained for full Appraisal coding; Categories B, C, and D retained in the full inventory for methodological transparency (Baker et al, 2008; McEnery & Hardie, 2012) but excluded from Appraisal frequency counts.

The Martin and White (2005) Attitude taxonomy was manually coded on all Category A lemmas, in accordance with Hood (2010) and Bednarek (2006). Each lemma got a primary Attitude category, subcategory, polarity and inscribed/invoked designation (Martin, 2000), based on the analysis of concordance lines following the suggestion of Partington (1998) that collocational analysis has to be tied to real cases of usage. MI scores were calculated based on the formula of church and hanks (1990): $MI = \log_2 \left[\frac{(f \text{ colloc})N}{(f \text{ node})f \text{ collocate}} \right]$, MI 3.0 and above is the conventional practice (Hunston, 2002; Sinclair, 1991).

Data Analysis and Discussion

Overview: The Dual-Level Corpus Profile

The extraction process produced 553 person level and 444 event level raw collocations. The person-level dataset included 396 hits on 126 unique lemmas after the exclusion taxonomy, 102 of which are attitudinal-coded; the event level included 56 attitudinally-coded hits on 25 unique lemmas. Table 3 and Figure 1 show the general Appraisal category representation of the person level.

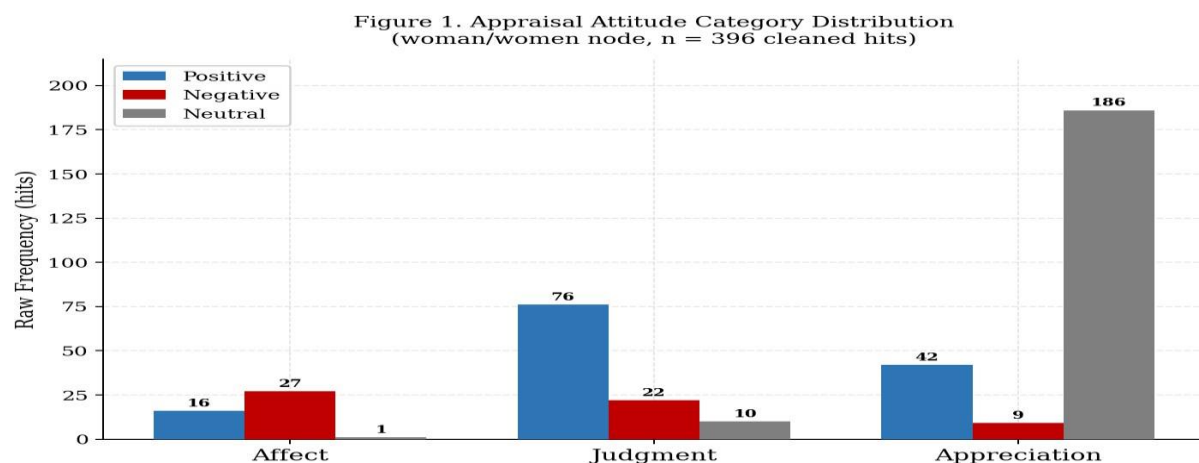
Table 3

Appraisal Attitude Category Distribution-Woman/Women: Person Level

Attitude Category	Raw Hits	% of Total	Unique Lemmas	Predominant Polarity
Affect	51	12.9%	25	Negative (Insecurity, Dissatisfaction)
Judgment	108	27.3%	52	Positive (Capacity, Tenacity)
Appreciation	237	59.8%	49	Neutral (Valuation: identity markers)
Total	396	100%	126	

Note. Percentages calculated from the cleaned total of 396 hits. Identity and demographic markers dominate Appreciation/Valuation; following Biber et al. (1999) and Hoey (2005), these are excluded from Appraisal frequency counts.

Figure 1. *Appraisal Attitude Category Distribution for the Person Level (Woman/Women)*



Appraisal attitude category distribution for the person level (woman/women) (n = 396 cleaned hits). Appreciation dominates due to identity-marker adjectives; genuinely evaluative adjectives

concentrate in Judgment and Affect (Martin & White, 2005).

Appreciation dominates at 237 hits (59.8%), but this is substantially produced by identity and demographic classifiers: Pakistani (f = 62, MI = 4.46), Muslim (f = 25), young (f = 23), and Afghan (f = 11) function as classifying rather than evaluative adjectives in Biber et al.'s (1999) typology. Their loading is invoked rather than inscribed (Martin, 2000) and depends entirely on co-text. Bracketing these items, the genuinely evaluative adjectives cluster within Judgment and Affect, producing the analytically complex picture examined below.

Discourse Cluster 1: Celebration of Resistance

The most prominent evaluative discourse is one of political legitimization and positive characterization of women activists, anchored in Judgment Social Esteem (Tenacity) and Social Esteem (Capacity) in Martin and White's (2005) framework. Frequency and subcategory distributions include tables 4 and 5, visualizing Judgment polarity breakdown in Fig. 2.

Table 4

Top 15 Adjectival Collocates of Woman/Women by Raw Frequency

Adjective	Freq.	Norm.*	Category	Subcategory	Polarity	MI Score
Safe	12	0.43	Affect	Security	Positive	3.19
progressive	9	0.32	Judgment	Social Esteem (Normality)	Positive	3.70
Brave	8	0.29	Judgment	Social Esteem (Tenacity)	Positive	4.29
Free	8	0.29	Appreciation	Valuation	Positive	2.39
Poor	7	0.25	Affect	Dissatisfaction	Negative	3.41
privileged	7	0.25	Judgment	Social Esteem (Normality)	Neutral	4.16
unarmed	5	0.18	Appreciation	Valuation	Positive	4.33

Adjective	Freq.	Norm.*	Category	Subcategory	Polarity	MI Score
outspoken	3	0.11	Judgment	Social Esteem (Capacity)	Positive	5.40
empowered	3	0.11	Judgment	Social Esteem (Capacity)	Positive	5.08
Hungry	3	0.11	Affect	Dissatisfaction	Negative	5.40
innocent	3	0.11	Judgment	Social Sanction (Propriety)	Positive	3.49
Unsafe	3	0.11	Affect	Insecurity	Negative	3.70
Sinful	2	0.07	Judgment	Social Sanction (Propriety)	Negative	5.81
westernised	2	0.07	Judgment	Social Esteem (Normality)	Negative	5.23
dedicated	2	0.07	Judgment	Social Esteem (Tenacity)	Positive	5.81

Note. Norm.* = normalized frequency per 10,000 corpus words (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). MI scores below 3.0 are below the significance threshold (Church & Hanks, 1990; Hunston, 2002). Polarity determined through concordance line analysis (Hood, 2010; Partington, 1998).

Table 5

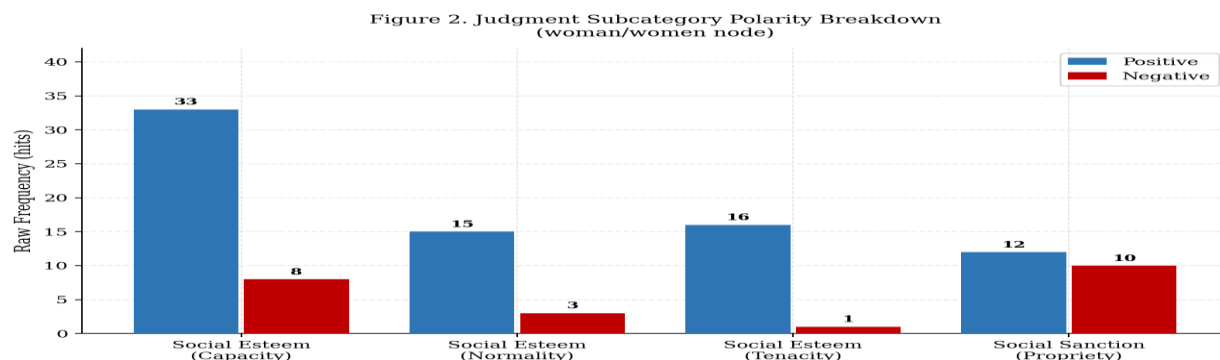
Judgment Subcategory Distribution -Woman/Women: Person Level

Subcategory	Total	Positive	Negative	Key Adjectives
Social Esteem (Capacity)	41	33	8	outspoken, empowered,

Subcategory	Total	Positive	Negative	Key Adjectives
				strong, talented, veteran, unable, weak, irrational
Social Esteem (Normality)	28	15	3	progressive, prominent, liberal, privileged, westernised, elitist
Social Esteem (Tenacity)	17	16	1	brave, undeterred, dedicated, courageous, tenacious, heroic, docile
Social Sanction (Propriety)	22	12	10	innocent, peaceful, sinful, loose, characterless, immoral, disrespectful
Total	108	76	22	

Note. Total Judgment hits = 108 (Martin & White, 2005). Neutral items within Social Esteem (Normality) categorize social position without strong directional evaluation (Biber et al., 1999).

Figure 2. Judgment Subcategory Polarity Breakdown for the Person Level (Woman/Women)



Judgment subcategory polarity breakdown (person level (woman/women)). Social Esteem

(Capacity) is the largest subcategory; Social Sanction (Propriety) is most evaluatively contested with nearly equal positive and negative hits (Martin & White, 2005)

Within Social Esteem (Tenacity), the corpus produces brave ($f = 8$, $MI = 4.29$), undeterred ($f = 2$, $MI = 4.23$), dedicated ($f = 2$, $MI = 5.81$), courageous ($f = 1$, $MI = 3.01$), tenacious ($f = 1$, $MI = 4.81$), and heroic ($f = 1$, $MI = 5.81$). The overwhelming positive polarity of this subcategory, at 16 of 17 hits, indicates that when Pakistani English newspapers evaluate the resolve of Aurat March participants they do so in unambiguously laudatory terms. High MI scores confirm this attribution of tenacity to women is statistically consistent and non-random (Church & Hanks, 1990; Sinclair, 1991). From the perspective of Hoey's (2005) Lexical Priming theory, readers regularly exposed to this coverage are having their cognitive associations between women and resilience consistently reinforced; Stubbs (2001) identifies this kind of consistent positive prosody as a mechanism through which media discourse normalizes an initially contested social identity.

Social Esteem (Capacity) is the largest single Judgment subcategory at 41 hits, with a positive-to-negative ratio of 33 to 8. Particularly significant are outspoken ($f = 3$, $MI = 5.40$) and empowered ($f = 3$, $MI = 5.08$), both of which appear almost exclusively in proximity to woman/women when they occur in the corpus, meaning they are effectively primed as woman-specific capacity attributes. Baker (2014) identifies a comparable but inverse pattern in British newspaper corpora; the Pakistani English corpus shows a consistent, statistically marked attribution of voice and political competence to women, suggesting that the sympathetic liberal register of Pakistani English-language newspapers frames activism as a form of validated feminine social capacity.

Discourse Cluster 2: Victimhood and Vulnerability

Running alongside the empowerment discourse, in the complex ideological relationship Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) identify as characteristic of sympathetic liberal media coverage of women's activism, is a persistent construction of women as vulnerable, endangered, and materially deprived. This cluster is anchored in the Affect category (Martin & White, 2005). Table 6 and Figure 6 present the breakdown.

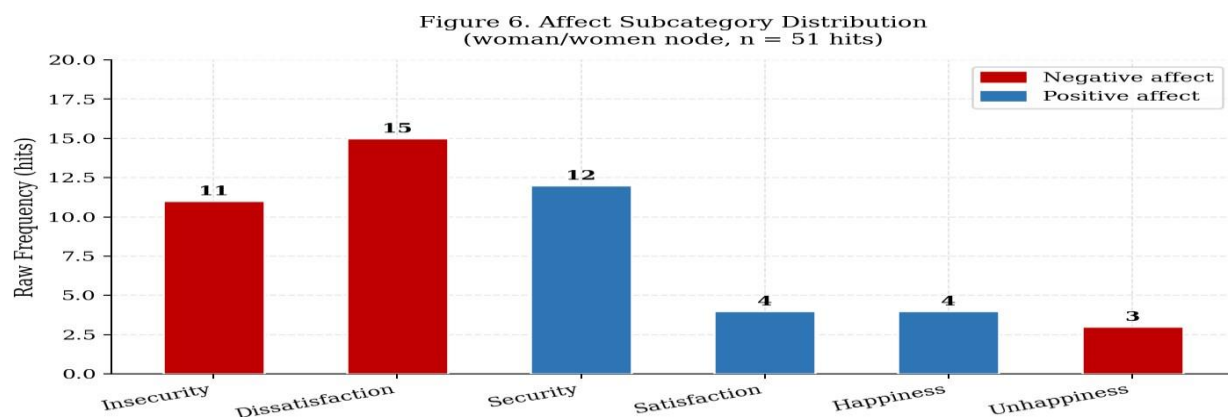
Table 6

Affect Subcategory Distribution — Woman/Women: Person Level

Subcategory	Hits	Adjectives
Dissatisfaction	15	poor, hungry, deprived, underpaid, unprivileged, angry
Insecurity	12	unsafe, alone, helpless, lone, subordinate, conflicted, vulnerable, subject
Security	12	Safe
Satisfaction	4	thankful, welcome, proud, encouraging
Happiness	4	Happy
Unhappiness	3	unhappy, downtrodden, oppressed
Inclination	1	fascinated
Total	51	

Note. Total Affect hits = 51 (Martin & White, 2005). The Security subcategory is represented almost entirely by safe, whose functional meaning differs from its dictionary polarity, illustrating the importance of concordance analysis (Hood, 2010; Partington, 1998).

Figure 3. *Affect Subcategory Distribution for the Person Level (Woman/Women)*



Affect subcategory distribution (person level (woman/women)). Negative Affect collectively exceeds positive Affect, constructing a pervasive discourse of structural endangerment alongside the empowerment narrative (Bednarek, 2008; Martin & White, 2005).

Safe ($f = 12$, $MI = 3.19$) is the most common Affect adjective. Analysis of concordance line (Hood, 2010; Partington, 1998) shows that safe is mostly used in the context of unsafe situations: a lot of women do not feel safe when walking to the streets or want women to be safe. The adjective inscribes insecurity paradoxically and nominally signifies a positive state describing how Hunston (2007) represents that semantic prosody has the ability to create polarity reversal between dictionary form and evaluative loading in context. Beyond safe, the Insecurity subcategory produces helpless ($f = 1$, $MI = 5.81$), vulnerable ($f = 2$), and subordinate ($f = 1$); Dissatisfaction produces poor ($f = 7$, $MI = 3.41$), deprived ($f = 2$, $MI = 4.81$), and underpaid ($f = 1$, $MI = 5.81$). Cognitive pattern primed by such a dual pattern empowerment-vulnerability (Hoey, 2005) is not merely that women are strong and strong or women are vulnerable and vulnerable but something of greater ideological depth: women who are admirable because the structural disadvantage in which they live is at once visible and naturalized (Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010).

Discourse Cluster 3: The Two-Level Moral Condemnation Counter-Discourse

The third discourse of evaluation is the most analytically original study finding and one which comes out only after combining the person-level analysis and event-level analysis. The moral condemnation of participants of Aurat March and the Aurat March itself works on two different linguistic levels, i.e., a person level, where negative Social Sanction adjectives are negative and possess high statistical specificity that is applied to particular women, and an event level, where negative attitudinal adjectives are high frequency and are applied to the march content rather than to particular march participants. The evidence of both levels is given in Tables 7 and 8, and Figures 3 and 5.

Table 7

Social Sanction (Propriety) Negative Adjectives — Person-Level Condemnation

Adjective	Freq.	MI Score	Attitude Type	Ideological Function
Sinful	2	5.81	Inscribed	Frames activism as religious

Adjective	Freq.	MI Score	Attitude Type	Ideological Function
				transgression; overt moral condemnation
Loose	1	5.81	Inscribed	Sexualized policing of women's conduct; gendered Social Sanction
characterless	1	5.81	Inscribed	Severe moral condemnation in sexualized attacks on activists
disrespectful	1	5.81	Inscribed	Condemns violation of norms of deference toward authority
objectifying	1	4.81	Inscribed	Condemns treatment of women as objects; directed at march opponents
Complicit	1	4.23	Inscribed	Accuses women of involvement in

Adjective	Freq.	MI Score	Attitude Type	Ideological Function
				wrongdoing
Irrational	1	5.81	Inscribed	Dismisses women's reasoning to delegitimize political arguments
Immoral	2	2.23	Inscribed	Explicit moral condemnation of activism
westernised	2	5.23	Invoked	Frames activists as culturally inauthentic; invoked negative norm

Note. All items carry inscribed or invoked negative polarity under Social Sanction (Propriety) or Social Esteem (Normality) in Martin and White's (2005) framework. Westernised is coded as Social Esteem (Normality) invoked negative following Martin (2000). MI scores per Church and Hanks (1990).

Figure 4. *Mutual Information Score Plotted Against Raw Frequency for the Person Level (Woman/Women)*

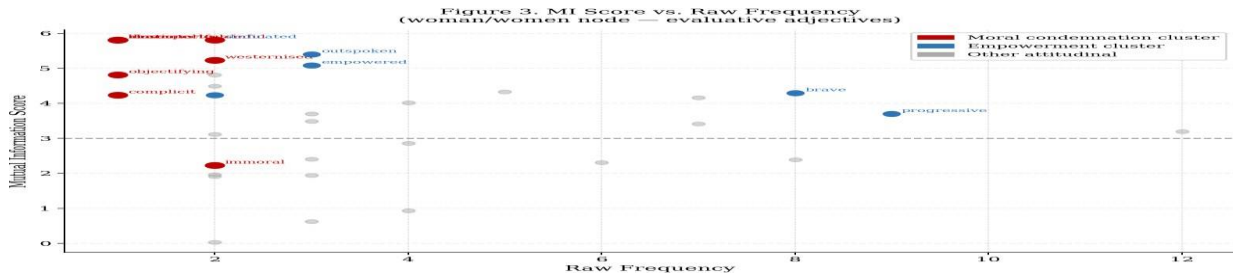


Figure 3. MI score plotted against raw frequency (person level (woman/women)). The moral condemnation cluster (red, upper left) occupies the high-MI, low-frequency quadrant, confirming Hoey's (2005) prediction that statistically bound rare adjectives carry the heaviest ideological priming weight.

Figure 4 visualizes the main statistical argument. Sinful, loose, characterless and so on are never used in absolute terms but are nearly always used in close relation to woman/women whenever they are used and this is represented in the MI scores of 5.81. High MI scores, as Church and Hanks (1990) show, indicate truly non-random collocational correlations; and those correlations, as Hoey (2005) suggests, do have the greatest cognitive priming load despite absolute frequency. A reader who frequently reads this corpus will have sinful and loose in a context of women almost exclusively, slowly instilling in the target word the morally transgressive values that operate, in the language of Stubbs (2001) as a part of the evaluative consensus of the discourse community.

Both loose and characterless carry long-established sexualized connotations in the evaluation of women. Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) document this in British media corpora; Lakoff (1973) identified its origins in the gendered double standard structuring evaluative language; Spender (1980) argued such terms function as instruments of social control policing women's behavior through moral stigmatization. Their statistical binding to women in this Pakistani English corpus documents this gendered moral policing function persisting across seven years of coverage. The adjective westernised ($f = 2$, $MI = 5.23$, invoked negative) activates, within Pakistani conservative discourse, a schema of cultural inauthenticity and political illegitimacy (Zia, 2009); Cameron (1998) and Mills (2008) identify analogous invoked evaluation mechanisms where adjectives function as markers of ideological deviance naturalized through collocational habituation.

Table 8

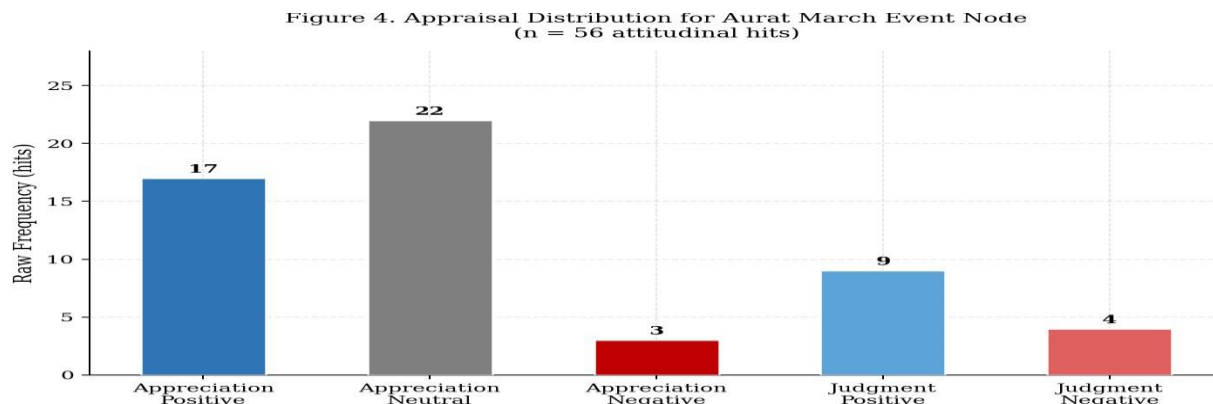
Attitudinal Adjectives Modifying Aurat March Event Level

Adjective	Freq.	MI Score	Polarity	Function in Event Framing
Upcoming	15	5.95	Neutral	Temporal marker; high MI confirms strong attraction to Aurat March level
Annual	11	4.08	Neutral	Marks institutional recurrence; normalizes march as established event
Nationwide	3	5.12	Positive	Affirms geographic reach; positive Appreciation of collective scale
Revolutionary	3	4.27	Positive	Celebrates transformative ambition; invoked positive Judgment
Lawful	2	4.53	Positive	Affirms legal legitimacy; deployed defensively against prohibition
Crucial	2	4.27	Positive	Inscribed positive

Adjective	Freq.	MI Score	Polarity	Function in Event Framing
				Appreciation of urgency and necessity
Vital	2	4.68	Positive	Affirms essential importance of the march's political function
Controversial	2	0.97	Negative	Frames event as socially disputed; inscribed negative Reaction
Devoid	1	4.85	Negative	Constructs absence of legitimacy; dismissive negative Reaction
Violent	1	1.21	Negative	Condemns march-linked conduct; negative Social Sanction

Note. Total event-level attitudinal hits = 56 after exclusion of ordinals, temporal markers, and parser artifacts (Table 2; Biber et al., 1999). MI scores per Church and Hanks (1990).

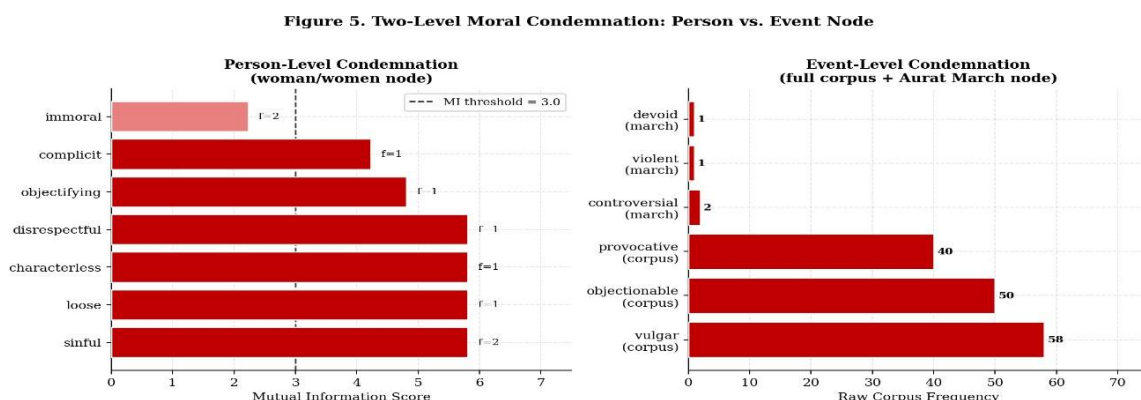
Figure 5. *Appraisal Distribution for the Aurat March Event Level*



Appraisal distribution for the Aurat March event level (n = 56 attitudinal hits). Positive Appreciation dominates; negative evaluation concentrates in Reaction adjectives rather than Social Sanction terms (Martin & White, 2005).

A comparatively very different evaluative profile is seen when compared to the person level through the level of Aurat March in terms of events. There is an overabundance of Positive Appreciation/Valuation adjectives (nationwide, crucial, vital, lawful, revolutionary), which frames the march as a legitimate, politically important mobilization, which is how van Gorp (2007) describes how media framing creates events as socially significant by using a series of lexical choices. Negative evaluation is concentrated in Appreciation/Reaction adjectives (controversial, devoid) rather than in the Social Sanction terms reserved for individual women. This distributional asymmetry is the structural foundation of the two-level moral condemnation finding.

Figure 6. Two-Level Moral Condemnation Structure



Two-level moral condemnation structure. Person-level condemnation (left) operates through high-MI, low-frequency Social Sanction adjectives (Church & Hanks, 1990; Hoey, 2005). Event-

level condemnation (right) operates through high-frequency negative attitudinal adjectives targeting march content (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988).

Figure 6 presents the two-level structure comparatively. At the person level, high-MI, low-frequency Social Sanction adjectives (MI = 5.81 for *sinful*, *loose*, *characterless*, *disrespectful*) are directed at individual women's character. At the event level, high-frequency lower-MI attitudinal adjectives from the full corpus (*vulgar*, *f* = 58; *objectionable*, *f* = 50; *provocative*, *f* = 40) target march content, slogans, and placards rather than individual women. Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (1998) describe this structural bifurcation in political media discourse: the individual and the collective are evaluated through different linguistic mechanisms to produce the appearance of balance while sustaining the substance of delegitimization. By directing the most explicit moral condemnation at individual women, conservative discourse personalizes the attack as individual female transgression; by directing high-frequency negative evaluation at march content, a second line of criticism dismisses women's political demands as culturally unacceptable without appearing to attack women personally (Lazar, 2005). The two levels working in concert construct what Wodak and Meyer (2009) recognize as a systematic discursive strategy of delegitimization rendered invisible by the apparent naturalness of everyday collocational patterns (Stubbs, 2001; Jeffries, 2010).

In all three discourse clusters and on both levels of analysis, the corpus displays a media climate that is more accommodating than aggressive to the Aurat March, but perpetuates discursive structures that both glorify and manage feminist activism. The press positions women as valiant, empowered, and politically legitimate and positions them as structurally unsafe and materially deprived and as having a statistically significant form of moral condemnation, which operates at the level that Baker (2014) and Hoey (2005) suggest is most cognitively relevant, not explicit negative evaluation that the reader can consciously acknowledge and oppose, but rather consistent non-random collocational.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the evaluation of the women and the Aurat March provided by the Pakistani English-language newspapers, based on the adjectives they use, and the results were based on 390 articles published in the year 2018-2026. The study using the dual-level extraction design, Appraisal Theory coding (Martin & White, 2005) and Mutual Information analysis

(Church & Hanks, 1990) identified three co-occurring clusters of evaluative discourse that showed that the surface neutrality of the corpus hiding the evaluative architecture is complex ideologically.

The discourse around resistance celebration supported by the high-MI Judgment adjectives of Tenacity and Capacity puts the participants of Aurat March as the bold, capable, and legitimate political actors (Baker, 2014; Martin and White, 2005). The discourse of victimhood and vulnerability, which is concentrated in the Affect, makes women seem endangered and material deprived and makes their activism be within a system of structural disadvantage that both justifies and restrains their claims (Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010; Hoey, 2005). The most original contribution of the study is the two-level moral condemnation counter-discourse, which shows that the process of delegitimization involves structurally distinct processes: rare but statistically bound Social Sanction adjectives (sinful, loose, characterless, MI = 5.81) are used to condemn the character of individual women, whereas high-frequency negative attitudinal adjectives (vulgar, f = This rhetoric pin-cering is a discursive form of legitimization, which would otherwise go undetected through traditional qualitative reading (Baker, 2006; Fairclough, 2003; Stubbs, 2001).

The combination of the Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005) with the Lexical Priming theory (Hoey, 2005) and the MI statistics (Church & Hanks, 1990) turned out to be analytically fruitful: each of them had a particular work to do, which could not be done by the others. The principled exclusion taxonomy (Baker et al., 2008; Biber et al., 1999; McEnery & Hardie, 2012) ensured methodological transparency and reproducibility.

There are a number of constraints which indicate fruitful future directions. The coverage of the English language is limited; in the Urdu language, the media has a much greater readership and can expose other evaluative trends (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Rouse, 2004; Zia, 2009). A single researcher did the coding and this could be enhanced by inter-rater reliability procedures (Hood, 2010). Future research that focuses on social media, Urdu-language reporting, or similar feminist movements in South Asia would be useful to deepen the research (Baker et al., 2008; Lazar, 2005). The identified two-level moral condemnation framework can provide an analysis category that can be replicated by other corpus-based studies of how media texts recognize and delegitimize social movements in the future to add to the body of analytical critique of ideological work as executed by ordinary media language (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

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