

A Corpus-Based Study of Gender Construction in Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy*

Sadia Rauf¹ Saqlain Hassan² Saiqa Noor³

ABSTRACT

This study examines the depiction of gender construction in Tehmina Durrani's novel Blasphemy by implementing a corpus-based technique and employing Gloria Jean Watkins's (Bell's Hook) feminist theory and Kimberly Crenshaw's intersectionality framework. The study uncovers patterns of male dominance and feminine submission through a qualitative investigation of barred words and adjectives linked with male and female characters. The instances of selected categories and concordances were derived from a specialized corpus built on one-novel text through Sketch Engine software. While female characters are depicted as oppressed and inferior, male characters are depicted as powerful landlords. This study sheds light on linguistic abuse by demonstrating that most verbal taboos aimed at shaming women are employed by male characters. Men demonstrate dominance over women while using verbs, whereas women demonstrate passivity when using adjectives. In combination with corpus linguistics and gender studies, this work invites future research into gender roles of male and female characters in Pakistani literature.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Male Dominance, Female Devaluation, Corpus-Based Study, Sketch Engine.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, gender roles, the social norms and expectations which determine duties, responsibilities, and behaviors according to an individual's perceived gender identity, have been the central theme of literature. Literature both mirrors and contributes to ideas that evolve in regard to gender, giving much insight into gender

¹ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Islamabad.

² Assistant Professor, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Islamabad.

³ Principal, Government College of Commerce and Management Sciences for Women, Mardan. Corresponding Author's Email: saiqanoor.abdu@gmail.com

identity, power dynamics, and social change, all through every modern play and novel and ancient myth and folktales (Bison, 2024).

Blasphemy is a powerful indictment of the patriarchal religious and social cultures that dominate women's living conditions. The story unfolds that gender, power, and cultural standards clash in a grossly stratified social circumstance through the horrible experiences by the protagonist Heer in the book. Language for both supporting and opposing systems is crucial in the novel. It can be noted that the marginalization of women's voices and the deeper societal construction of power relations are reflected in the use of forbidden terms and gendered descriptors. The important work *Blasphemy* addresses the complexity of sex in the context of Pakistan's political, religious, and social aspects. It gives males the opportunity to reconsider how gender is portrayed as well as how society views challenging and delicate issues. To depict gender roles, identities, and connections in the text, this paper looks at how the author uses language and storytelling techniques. This paper attempts to broaden the understanding of the complex web that gender weaves by offering insights into the inner workings of such a story and how it navigates subtleties.

Stylistics examines language choices by using spoken and written sources as lenses. It's a field that's intimately linked to the interpretation of texts, revealing the complex web of linguistic choices made by people and different social classes. Stylistics serves as a bridge between the fields of literary criticism and linguistics, as Widdowson (1975) succinctly states, being essentially the study of literary discourse with a strong linguistic focus. The 'istics' that explore the subtleties of language use are highlighted by this bridge in addition to the 'style' as it pertains to form and structure. In essence, stylistics aids in the reader's deeper comprehension and appreciation of literature, all while recognizing that each person's interpretation of style remains uniquely their own.

The current research tries to depict the gendered language with the support of a corpus-based analytical approach that includes the framework of intersectionality developed by Kimberly Crenshaw and feminist theory as given by Gloria Jean Watkins, commonly known as Bell Hooks. Systematic analysis of linguistic patterns mainly of taboo words, adjectives, and their collocations through a corpus-based approach that uses computer tools such as Sketch Engine might disclose the power dynamics within the text.

The novel *Blasphemy*, written by Pakistani female novelist Tehmina Durrani, is based on a real-life incident. This tragic and heartbreaking tale reveals how some people use religion as a tool to gain power. South Pakistan is the setting of the book. It shows male dominance and patriarchy at their height, the plight of women and the disadvantaged, and extreme religious fundamentalism. It highlights the simple misrepresentation of Islam by deceitful and rapacious so-called religious leaders. The descriptions are horribly "repulsive," and it gives the chills to consider that hundreds of women still live in such conditions today.

This research explores how male and female characters are portrayed stylistically in the novel *Blasphemy* paying particular attention to it linguistically portrayed. It looks at

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the frequency of the forbidden words that are used by both genders, male and female characters, considering the adjectives that are chosen to go with nouns (such as "man" and "woman"), that go with the subjects in sentences. Tehmina Durrani's "*Blasphemy*" serves as the main case study, which helps comprehend how male and female characters are nuancedly represented in the framework of this book. The study aligns its methodology with Bell Hooks' theoretical principles by using the Sketch Engine tool. This relationship to Hook's theory is essential because it allows us to investigate the complex interactions between gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and class in literary works, leading to a more thorough comprehension of the varied aspects of gender representation in literature.

This paper employs corpus to reinforce qualitative interpretations to emphasize concerns about male dominance and female captivity, particularly as they are portrayed in the Pakistani context. This study looked at how Tehmina Durrani, a Pakistani-born English novelist, depicted the status of women in South Asian society. She used her weak, submissive female characters to reflect the emotional, psychological, financial, and societal issues that Pakistani women face today. Furthermore, it stressed the explicit use of corpus-based techniques for stylistic analysis of literary works in the Pakistani context, which is underrepresented in gender studies.

The study of gender representation in modern literature is a dynamic and ever-evolving field that is influenced by shifting cultural standards and socioeconomic changes. The novel "*Blasphemy*" by Tehmina Durrani is still little known in the context of feminist theory and language analysis, even though research has been done on it.

Hence, two research questions have been posed for this study

1. How are the taboo words employed in the novel *Blasphemy*?
2. What are the adjectives used by both males and females in the novel?

This study holds significant importance as it investigates unexplored territory, discovering the intricate portrayal of gender in "*Blasphemy*" through a unique blend of feminist theory and corpus-based stylistic analysis. By clarifying the language delicacies and gender dynamics evident in this novel, it serves to both bridge the gap between Western and Eastern perspectives on gender representation and add to the ongoing conversation about feminism and contemporary literature. In the end, this research enhances the researcher's understanding of gender in literature by providing insights into the intricate interactions between gender and sociopolitical, religious, and cultural factors in a pluralistic society. It also lays a basis for future studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

At the start of the 20th century, women around the world entered a new period that sparked conversations about the challenges they faced in societies where men predominated. This transition has had an essential effect on Pakistani authors who were the

torchbearers of women's rights to equality and power. Women's perspectives and opinions should be accepted in the society. Shahnawaz book, *'The Heart Divided'* (1957) in his literary work played a pivotal role in promoting emancipation and the high-handedness of women. Furthermore, corpus analysis has been done on women's literature. Al-Nakeeb (2018) used *W Matrix* analysis to study the feminine representation in *'Final Flight from Sanaa'* (2011). Linguistic choices were studied with male and female narrative perspectives.

Expanding the horizon of the research, Yousuf and Habib (2022) analyzed the blogging habits of male and female bloggers. Both word choice and tone differentiated between the discourse of male and female bloggers. It has become evident in this research that male and female characters portray themselves differently in the digital space. In addition to it, another research by Ali et al. (2020) was conducted on the use of adjectives in *'The Pakistani Bride'* by Bapsi Sidhwa. The use of adjectives highlights a patriarchal society and discriminatory treatment of both genders.

Another study by Arslan et al. (2022) increased the number of novels from one to four and the number of novelists from one to two. They applied the same strategy of using adjectives with male and female characters to reveal gender disparities.

Interestingly, the masculine gender was primarily depicted with adjectives that emphasized authority and featured linguistic elements that differentiate between masculine and feminine compositions, whereas the majority of adjectives used to describe the feminine gender leaned toward delicate and compassionate traits. In adult Malaysian online personal advertisements, Bakar (2013) used a corpus technique to explore various language representations of gender identities. He conducted a qualitative study on the characteristics of identity categorization and gender attitudes. In Malaysian personal advertising, guys are portrayed as being healthy, athletic, strong, and caring new-age men. This was shown through his examination of language resources. The aforementioned studies highlight the variety of gender-based corpus stylistics research initiatives being undertaken. The study by Kathon, (2023) examined gender-based judgments by analyzing modern American English. Despite shifting gender roles, the findings showed a pattern where men were judged mostly on their talents while women were primarily evaluated on their beauty.

This was very significant when Tehmina Durrani illustrated blasphemy by portraying gendered dynamics in a highly stratified culture of Pakistan, thereby becoming a powerful critique of the existing patriarchal norms. Relying heavily on qualitative and corpus-based methodologies as described above in Durrani's novel, this literature study synthesizes previous studies on gender representation in literature, feminist criticisms of power, and the linguistic pattern that creates gender identities in particular.

Such an approach to the study of narrative and linguistic strategies as reflecting, supporting, or disrupting cultural standards is essential to gender studies in literature. Blackstone (2003) emphasizes how patriarchal institutions create norms that marginalize women and points out the still-prevailing gaps in gender responsibilities within society.

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Blasphemy describes expected roles and behaviors of male and female characters in line with Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, which states that the very idea of gender identity is a social construct created by repetition. The performative qualities of masculinity and femininity supporting hierarchies of control and submission are thus discovered in Durrani's work by applying Butler's methodology.

Adjectives and taboo words are important linguistic tools which are used to create gender hierarchies by Blasphemy. The work of studies by Rani (2015) and Abbasi et al (2023) reveals the use of language for reminding people about gender roles. The masculine characters make frequent use of word taboos so as to gain power while, on the other hand, adjectives describing female characters focus on their victimization and passivity. This pattern is in conformity with research output through the corpus-based analysis, as noted in studies investigating gendered language through the use of the Sketch Engine software (Silva et al., 2023). Adjectives "powerful" and "ruthless" are associated with male protagonists, while adjectives "weak" and "downtrodden" define female protagonists as developed through the specialized corpus for Blasphemy (Ali & Asim, 2024). Durrani's analysis of oppression by patriarchy is in line with more general feminist critiques.

As a reiterative theme in Blasphemy, Rahmani (2024) and Rani (2015) argue that patriarchal societies often misuse religious literature to justify the subjugation of women. Heer is the protagonist who suffers from systemic oppression and exploitation in the form of posing as a religious figure; both religious and societal establishments play an important role in justifying the inequality of females. Ahmed (2012) discusses post-colonial literature often depicts women as custodians of cultural identity but, by the same token, disempowers them within patriarchy. This is in line with this problem.

The linguistic style of blasphemy reveals more on dynamics of resistance and power play. Abbasi et al (2023) posit that gender roles are often constructed through certain language techniques in Pakistani fiction of the modern day. Some of these blasphemy tactics involve reinforcement of hierarchical relations using gendered adjectives and censored phrases. For example, female characters show broken and subservient speech while the males use language as a weapon for power play. Such outcomes support feminist linguistics which maintain that the use of language embodies and recreates power relations within the social sphere (Ladzekpo et al., 2024).

The dearth of intersectional studies of gender roles in Pakistani fiction is a significant gap in the literature. Studies which look into patriarchal dynamics, such as Rani (2015) and Ali and Asim (2024), often fail to pay attention to how gender interplays with class, religion, and regional variations. Through looking at how these crossing identities impact the experiences of its characters; Durrani's Blasphemy offers an opportunity to fill this gap. For instance, Rahmani (2024) indicates that Heer's plight is compounded by her being a product of a feudal set-up and her socio-economic status.

Further, instead of adequately exploring the possibility of resistance and agency, feminist criticisms of Blasphemy often focus on how it depicts absolute patriarchal tyranny.

There is hardly any study on how Heer's actions challenge the prevalent gender roles, even though Ali and Asim (2024) mentioned how her narrative subverts the patriarchal norms. The concept of performativity by Butler (1990) can be applied in order to have a more nuanced understanding of how Heer navigates and resists the constraints that are set upon her. More research is also needed to understand fully how language and power interplay in *Blasphemy*. The study by Silva et al (2023) emphasizes the fact that language shapes and subverts power relations in literary works. Further layers of meaning may come into view when such approaches are used on *Blasphemy*, especially regarding how linguistic patterns both reflect and subvert gender norms.

To sum up, *Blasphemy* by Tehmina Durrani is an excellent work through which it is possible to study the ways in which language and narrative are made to construct gender. Different studies have, so far, revealed the novel's criticism against patriarchal forms and the strategies of language as both consolidating and questioning gender hierarchies. Thus, additional intersectional and performative analyses are required to fully understand the complexity of gender representation within the book. Future studies can contribute further to larger conversations on gender and power by combining corpus-based approaches with feminist theories to offer a more panoramic understanding of how *Blasphemy* challenges and subverts social norms.

Research that explores the intersectionality of gender with other aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, and sexuality, has come a long way, but there is still a glaring gap in our understanding of the complex relationship between language and gender in contemporary literature. A growing body of research has examined how gender is expressed in communication, but less has been written on how these representations interact with other aspects of social identity. Since these analyses are meant to explain how writers employ language about the numerous identities that are contained by the altered contexts of modern literature, they must be conducted at detailed levels. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of how different components of contemporary society are portrayed in literature, researchers might examine the relationships between gender and other social factors.

The novel under consideration has thus far remained untouched by the lens of feminist theory, and the utilization of a corpus as a tool for stylistic analysis is a novel approach in this context. To bridge this gap, the current study employs a corpus-based methodology to conduct a deep dive into the stylistic elements of the narrative, all while embracing Bell Hook's feminist theory as a guiding framework. This combination provides a fresh perspective on the text's gender dynamics and sociocultural nuances.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher's technique in this study is heavily reliant on the feminist theory of Bell Hooks (2000) and Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework. These two concepts are very beneficial since they enable the discussion of two significant research issues and an analysis of the new "*Blasphemy*." The study is provided within a comprehensive

intersectionality framework that allows the researcher to investigate the complex web of injustice and prejudice that arises from a person's several social positions. Feminism's primary goal is to dismantle the current systems that are unfair, discriminatory, and oppressive.

Hooks presents the idea of "intersectionality," highlighting the complex interactions that exist between gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and class. By examining how these elements interact and impact one another, this viewpoint helps the researcher comprehend the issues and people in the novel on a deeper level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study utilized a distinct corpus for this qualitative research investigation. The use of corpora in empirical language analysis for concrete results is a novel method. The novel was downloaded from an online website.⁴ The corpus used for this study includes *Blasphemy*, an English novel published in India by a Pakistani writer. The corpus consisted of (73,240) words, (85,464) tokens, and (6,107) sentences. Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2015) was used to calculate the frequency and distribution of linguistic components such as words, phrases, and sentence structures. The software facilitates the extraction and analysis of data. The Sketch Engine was used to analyze the data, and the only features that were used were Concordance lines, Word Sketch, Word Sketch difference, and Thesaurus. These features were chosen because they aided researchers in discovering solutions to certain research aims. Concordance lines, which indicate the context of a phrase with words preceding and following it, provide keywords in Context (KWIC) discoveries. The Word Sketch feature comprised a selection of collocations and word combinations (taboos and adjectives) that could be coupled with nouns or pronouns to indicate the nature or portrayal of male or female characters, as well as a Word Sketch difference compare collocation of two words indicating how frequently such terms were used and Thesaurus was for synonym and similar words.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Language, as the most visible component of human life, serves a range of functions, whether social, psychological, or more physically oriented. It can be polite and proper, or it might be impolite and undesirable. The two parts share a neutral language concept. Language reflects its culture and civilization. Racist, sexist, and other banned language are instances of foul language. People use language to carry out duties for them, make statements, and carry out deeds (Austin, 1975). Gao (2013), on the other hand, claims that language has unique qualities to alleviate illness, ward off evil, bring about one's good, and harm one's enemies.

Use of Taboo Words

⁴ <https://libgen.is/fiction/?q=tehmina+durrani>

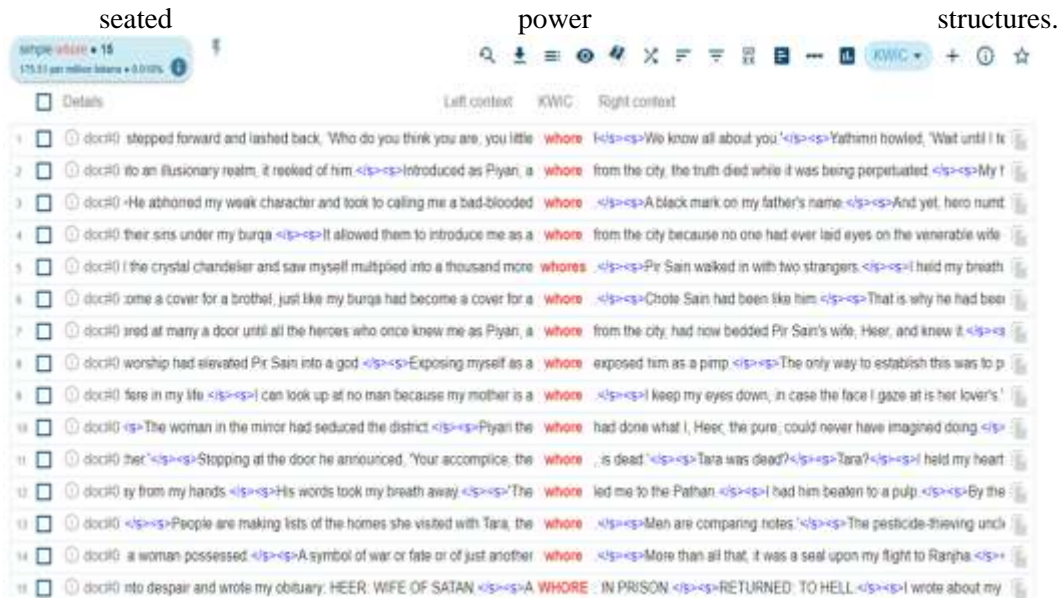
According to Gao (2008), certain expressions are regarded as unsuitable, disagreeable, and taboo. The first research question explains how banned words and adjectives are used to describe both male and female characters in the novel. The frequency indicates that there is significant gender differentiation in a language connected to taboos. The bulk of forbidden words, aside from "bitch" and "whore," were said by men and women alike in various settings.

Figure 1: Concordances of the word 'bitch' depicting KWIC with left and right context



Note. The word bitch is used five times in *Blasphemy*, most of which are in the context that shows dehumanization, objectification, and moral judgment, as well as patriarchal control mechanisms.

In *Blasphemy*, the word bitch is used five times, and it plays an extremely significant role as a device of patriarchal and intersectional oppression, reflecting efforts by society to dehumanize and control women. According to Bell Hooks, feminist theory finds it problematic that patriarchal societies use language like bitch for women's silencing, make them immoral, and rationalize their subjugation. For instance, words like "kaali kuttee, black bitch" combine racial and gendered insults to demonstrate how Crenshaw's intersectionality model can explain the multiple oppression of women in race, gender, and class. Such language makes women into stereotypes that are either animalistic or dangerous, as in "Pir Sain's bitch," and also supports social norms where women's behavior and value are linked with shame and moral regulation. These linguistic patterns indicate how patriarchal systems enforce power and maintain structural inequalities through humiliating language, and in that regard, *Blasphemy* is a powerful critique of such deep

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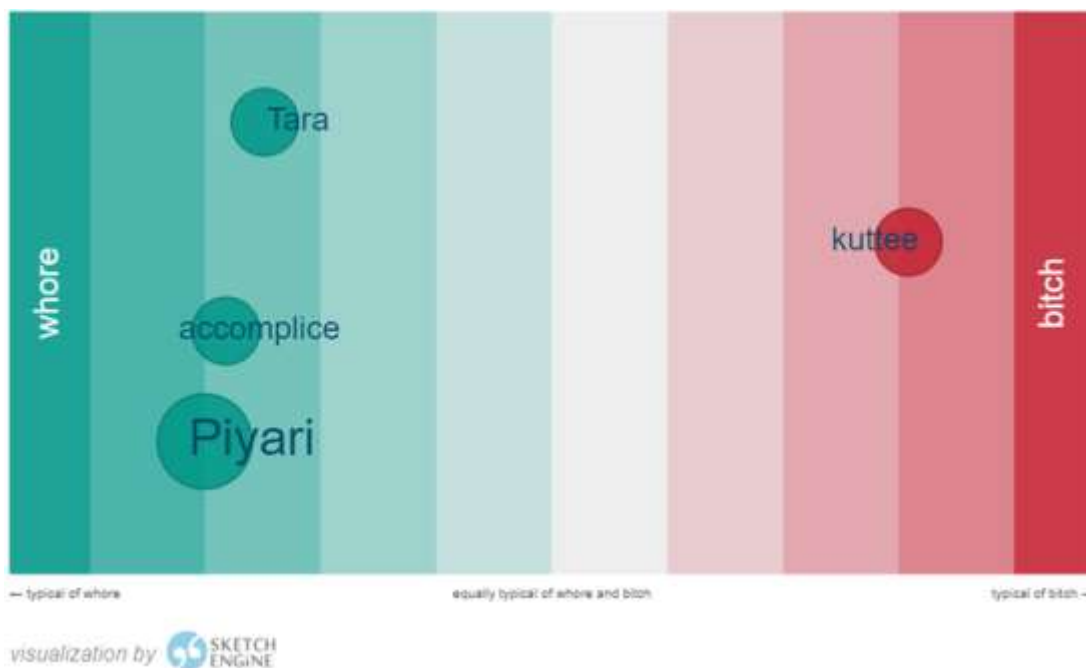
The gender difference in language associated with taboos is evident when taboo words are analyzed. Several taboo phrases are identified by the study, most of which are meant to minimize feminine traits. Words like "bitch" and "whore" are frequently used negatively to refer to women. The frequent usage of these expressions highlights the verbal mistreatment intended to belittle and shame women, which is primarily done by male characters. The story's depiction of female characters as inferior and objectified is aided by the use of these forbidden terms.

Figure 3: Word Sketch difference between the first lemma 'whore' and the second lemma 'bitch'



The above *figure 3* displays the difference in the relation of the taboo words with the first lemma 'whore' and second lemma 'bitch' both being nouns and linking in aspects of modifiers, verbs, possessors, etc., that identify their standing within the narrative. Additionally, the word 'whore' has been used frequently rather than the word 'bitch.' The frequency of the word 'whore' has been marked at 15 counts while the word 'bitch' gives a lesser count of 5 within the story, highlighting its impact through the use of these highly forbidden words. The Word Sketch by Blasphemy of terms "whore" and "bitch" represents how the labels are used as linguistic weapons which support intersectional and patriarchal oppression. Modifiers such as *black and kuttee* degrade women further while combining racial and gender discrimination, while verbs such as *expose and bear* place women objects of blame. Such connotations of the possessors, as in *Sain*, mark male dominance and control while confining women's identities to only humiliation and subordination. Spatial settings such as "*whore/bitch from city*" and "*on prow*" reinforce stereotypes that defend the marginalization of women, marking them as dangers to social order. Critiques of this linguistic pattern also come from feminist theory with Bell Hooks and intersectionality framework with Kimberly Crenshaw, which reveals that language increases women's susceptibility in many class and cultural contexts and objectifies as well as dehumanizes them.

Figure 4: Visualization of Word Sketch Difference of 'whore' and 'bitch'



The use of visualization of these two nouns in the fiction illustrates variation as ‘whore’ has been depicted to words such as Tara, accomplice, and Piyari. However, ‘bitch’ is related to a single word within the visualization which is ‘kuttee.’ The visualization underlines the linguistic distribution of whore and bitch in *Blasphemy*, with a consideration of their collocates, which gives way to the ways these two words are used in terms of gendered and intersectional contexts. Whore significantly collates with characters such as *Piyari*, *accomplice*, and *Tara* and was largely used to stigmatize women based on some notion of moral or social position that they occupy. In contrast, bitch is mainly associated with *kuttee*, which further aggravates the insult by adding a culturally specific dimension of degradation. This distribution highlights how whore is often tied to societal and relational roles, while bitch is more direct and dehumanizing, in keeping with patriarchal norms that try to control women through language. Bell Hooks’ feminism theory condemned this linguistic rule as silencing and making women lower than others, but Crenshaw’s intersection framework showed terms like *kuttee* do amplify this oppression by considering gender plus cultural and racial contexts involved. From this perspective, the novel then reveals deep ways the language in such a piece of literature establishes systemic imbalances, revealing a critically reflective view of this intersection on gender, power, and normative culture.

Figure 5: Word Sketch Difference of first lemma ‘mistress’ and second lemma ‘whore’

mistress¹²⁺ 6.0 4.0 2.0 0 -2.0 -4.0 -6.0 whore¹⁴⁺

"mistress/whore" and/or ...

Heer	1	0	12.4	—
Yahimi	1	0	11.3	—
Tara	0	1	—	11.0
accomplice	0	1	—	12.7
Piyari	0	2	—	13.0

verbs with "mistress/whore" as object

corrupt	1	0	12.0	—
become	4	0	10.8	—
be	2	1	7.0	6.0

verbs with "mistress/whore" as subject

have	0	1	—	6.6
do	0	1	—	9.3
lead	0	1	—	11.3
expose	0	1	—	12.0

... is a "mistress/whore"

mother	0	1	—	13.0
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modifiers of "mistress/whore"

Heer	1	0	13.4	—
second	1	0	11.8	—
more	0	1	—	10.1
bad-blooded	0	1	—	13.4

nouns modified by "mistress/whore"

Eid	1	0	12.7	—
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Word Sketch Differences

Yahimi	1	0	12.4	—
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pronominal possessors of "mistress/whore"

their	1	0	7.3	—
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"mistress/whore" of ...

Haveli	5	0	12.9	—
home	2	0	12.2	—
house	1	0	11.4	—

... of "mistress/whore"

like	1	0	14.0	—
------	---	---	------	---

"mistress/whore" from ...

city	0	3	—	13.4
------	---	---	---	------

... with "mistress/whore"

compete	1	0	13.0	—
---------	---	---	------	---

... for "mistress/whore"

cover	0	1	—	13.4
-------	---	---	---	------

... into "mistress/whore"

multiply	0	1	—	13.4
----------	---	---	---	------

... like "mistress/whore"

unkempt	1	0	14.0	—
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The Word Sketch for mistress and whore highlights the language usage, collocations, and modifiers, which show deep insight into how the two terms function within the narration of Blasphemy. Both terms appear within contexts that reflect control, societal and patriarchal, over women, emphasizing their moral and social stigmatization.

The study on the mistress and whore by Word Sketch in *Blasphemy* reflects how the society controls women's morals and roles. Their employment is unveiled as instruments of intersectional and patriarchal oppression. These characters, such as Heer and Piyari, are usually associated with the words, which connects the identity of women with their moral status and interaction. The modifiers "bad-blooded" and "second" further stigmatize them, while verbs like "corrupt," "become," and "expose" bring out the stories of degradation. Geographical and possessive contexts like "their mistress" or "mistress from the city" further bring out how women are confined within relational and societal spheres and lack agency. Although Crenshaw's intersectionality framework indicates how cultural, religious, and class-based variables compound this oppression, the feminist theory by Bell Hooks criticizes this linguistic control as an apparatus of imposition of subjection. In this regard, these trends signify how the book challenges age-old gendered and cultural power structures.

Table 1: *Taboo Terms used in Text with their Total no. of Tokens*

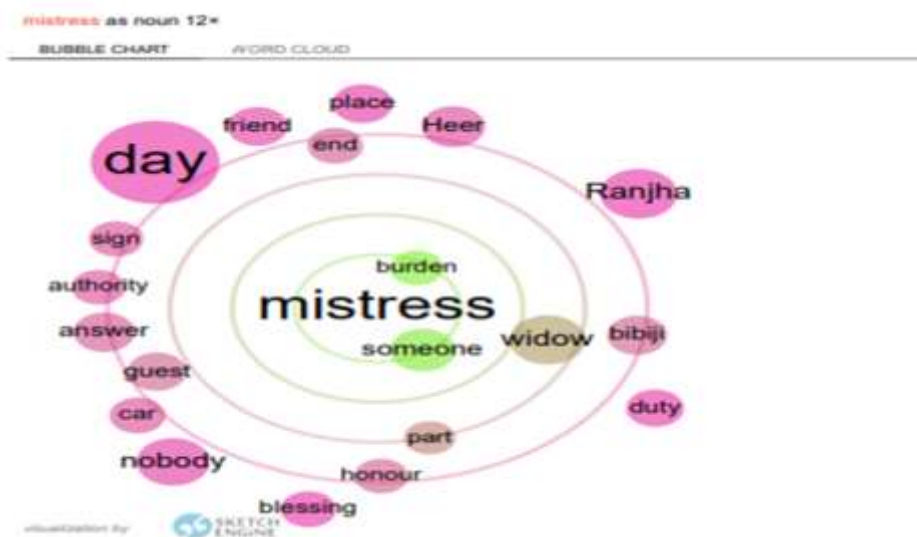
Taboo terms	No of tokens	Taboo terms	No of tokens
Bastards	1	Impotent	3
Kuttee	1	Prostitute	4
Bitch	5	Pimp	5
Idiot	3	Pig	4
Seductress	1	Stupid	3
Whore	15	Mistress	12
Total			57

The taboo terms and their exact token counts are listed in *Table 1* for each situation in which they are used.

The above *Table 1* depicts the frequency of taboo terms in *Blasphemy*, as they play a critical role in portraying societal attitudes toward gender, morality, and power. There are 57 tokens in total; among them, whore appears 15 times, mistress 12 times, and bitch 5 times, indicating that these terms are used pervasively to objectify and debase women. Words such as kuttee (1 token) and seductress (1 token) bring cultural and gender-specific connotations along with them, so these are aspects of oppressive intersectionality. Conversely, words like pimp (5 tokens) and impotent (3 tokens) sometimes denounce masculine actions, although not at all often enough. Bell Hooks' feminist theory deconstructs the linguistic weaponization involved in these terms as a tool of patriarchal domination, while Crenshaw's intersectionality framework reveals how these terms compound oppression by intertwining gender, class, and cultural contexts. Collectively, the data underlines the novel's critique of systemic inequalities embedded in societal and linguistic structures. The authoritarian system of local aristocracy works with the patriarchal system. Both powers belong to the Pir Saein, who takes on the role of a local deity. In addition to being a strong and wealthy man, he is a part of society. As such, his authority cannot be questioned. He is independent and acts as he pleases. All women in the household, whether they are servants or family members, are lower-ranking and subject to

oppression. One time, Yathimri and Heer received a beating together. This illustrates how a woman's gender prevents her from achieving freedom, even if she is successful in escaping the social class that is one of the sources of her defeat. This further demonstrates the idea that women, by the nature of the novel, are always marginalized, irrespective of their social standing. The male members of the household, including Pir Saein's mother, Amma Saein, are incapable of controlling her son. The only women she can demonstrate her dominance and power over are the domestic help and other women. When it comes to her son and other men, she is defenseless. Hence, a woman's voice is silenced and she is unable to speak since she is an inferior, regardless of the social standing she may have in such a culture. *Table 1* illustrates the higher count of the word 'whore' as seen earlier in Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 6: Bubble chart showing the word 'mistress' occurrences



The word cloud visualization of mistress in *Blasphemy* with 12 instances gives out its thematic associations and societal implications. Central to the term are concepts such as burden, widow, and duty, emphasizing how women in such roles are portrayed as bearers of societal expectations and responsibilities. For instance, it is words such as blessing, honor and authority through which the cultures and relating contexts in which women identities are framed take place through their relationships to male figures or family commitments. For instance, in the aspect of day and end imply time or circumstance limits as though further weakening their capacities. The presence of Ranjha and Heer further situates the term within a South Asian cultural narrative, reflecting romanticized yet restrictive roles for women.

Figure 7: Word cloud showing 'mistress' relating to other words

mistress as noun 12*



The word cloud of mistress shows how this term is related with other words such as burden, widow, honor, and authority. These also include societal and cultural construction dimensions where women's identity comes in Blasphemy. Central terms here, such as burden, show the weight that one can expect from society: she has become someone according to the relationship and commitment of others rather than on the basis of her identity. In these contexts, words like widow, bibiji, and guest further drive home how women were treated as dependents or ancillaries in patriarchal systems. The association with honor and authority reveals the moral policing and control that these roles embodied, which often served as a justification for their subordination.

Frequency shows that the majority of taboo words are used for the devaluation of female characters in different contexts by different male characters. Like in the novel, Heer's son is talking to his mother,

You liar. You did dare. You sneaked out like a bitch on heat through the back door exclusive to my father's use. You shamed me in front of the jagirdar. You went to every door, announcing yourself as Heer, mistress of the Haveli, the honor of the Shrine.'

(p. 194).

Adjectives Used with Male and Female Characters

Adjectives with negative connotations are further divided into three categories:

Treatment of Female Characters as Sexual Objects

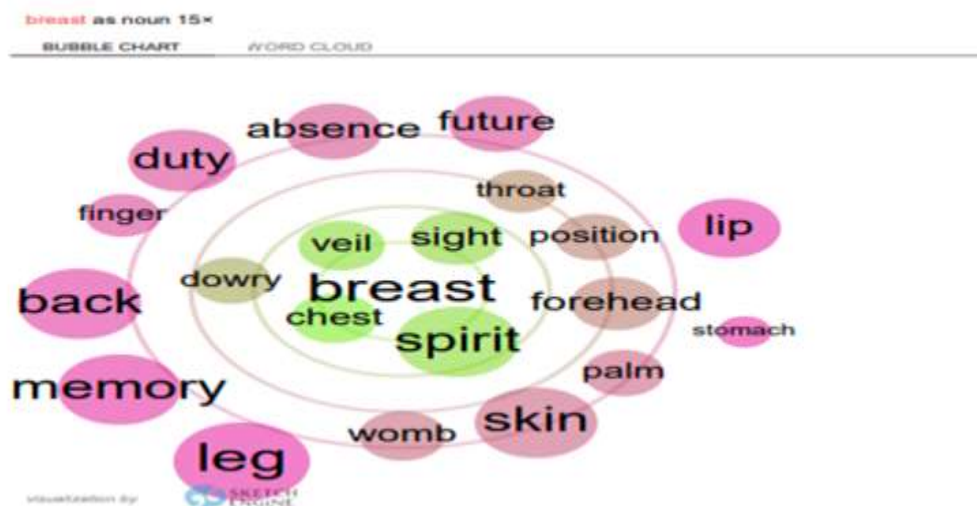
Table 2 Adjectives showing women as sexual objects with their total no. of tokens and frequency percentage

Adjectives	Virginity	Naked	Breast
No of Tokens	2	11	15
Total			28

Table 2 shows the most common adjectives that treat women as sexual objects aligned with their total no. of tokens and frequency percentage.

The patriarchal and societal structures that limit women's identities to their sexual and physical characteristics are reflected in the words used by Blasphemy, such as virginity (2 tokens), nude (11 tokens), and breast (15 tokens). Using feminist theory by Bell Hooks, the term "virginity" brings into view society's obsession with the regulation of women's sexuality and the linking of morality and value to purity. As a part of Crenshaw's intersectionality paradigm, *Naked* often portrays objectification and fragility, signifying the systematic deprivation of agency from female characters, especially those in vulnerable socioeconomic or religious contexts. As a result, the importance of the breast, the most culturally and religiously loaded objectification of women, symbolizes the prominent objectification of women through association with cultural and religious ideas of shame, honor, or parental roles. These phrases, taken together, strengthen the novel's criticism of patriarchal systems that exploit and dehumanize women by revealing the connection of gender, cultural, and class-based oppression.

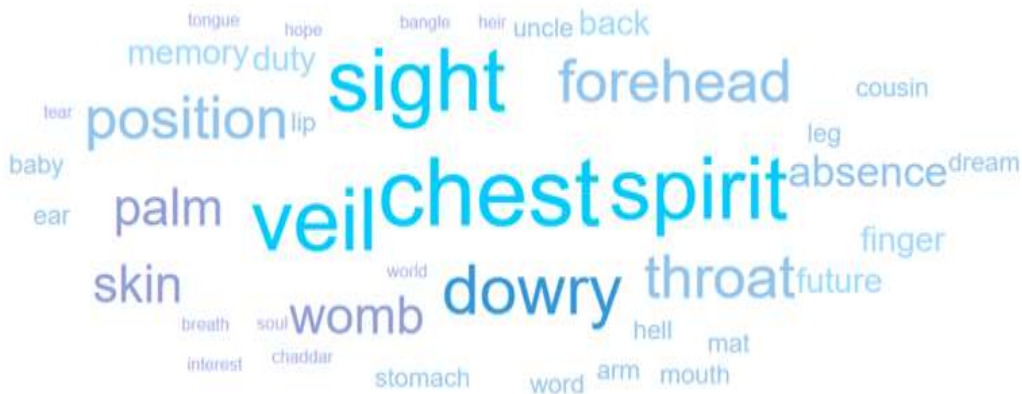
Figure 8: Bubble chart showing the word 'breast' and its relation



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In illustration of how the women's bodies are constructed as objects of cultural, religious, and societal values, the bubble chart visualization of the breast (15 tokens) in *Blasphemy* illustrates the connections to spirit, veil, dowry, skin, and memory. Central linking issues such as dowries and veils are linked with the cultural standards that limit the physicality of women and connect their bodies with honor and marital traditions. The words spirit and memory denote emotional and psychological burdens assigned to women further to reflect the ways in which the identity of women is fashioned and confined within the patriarchal expectations.

Figure 9: Word cloud showing 'breast' relating to other words



In *Blasphemy*, the word cloud for breast underlines all the connections to concepts such as veil, dowry, spirit, and womb, thus casting light on how women's bodies are tied up with emotional, cultural, and religious conceptions. While dowry and womb reflect social control related to marriage and motherhood, the associations with chest and sight work to further objectify. Such tendencies indicate how the same scales transgress into class and cultural rules, after criticism from Bell Hooks on the commodification of the body of women by patriarchal institutions and that of the intersectionality paradigm initiated by Crenshaw. Linguistic patterns therefore critically address cultural expectations toward women, which perpetrate dehumanization while exposing systemic injustice.

Depiction of Women as Irrational, Forged and Over-emotional

Table 3: Adjectives representing Women Irrational, Forged, and Over-emotional with total no of Tokens and Frequency Percentage.

Adjectives	Selfish	Guilty	Foolish	Nervous	Oppressed
No of Tokens	5	2	3	4	3
Total					17

The above *Table 3* depicts the total number of tokens and frequency percentage of adjectives that represent women as irrational, forged, and over-emotional.

Emotionally and psychologically, characters of Blasphemy undergo elements that are characterized in the adjectives selfish (5 tokens), guilty (2 tokens), foolish (3 tokens), uneasy (4 tokens), and oppressed (3 tokens). Those adjectives are examples of the patriarchal regimes using their tool language to frame women's identity. While guilty and anxious emphasizes how the internalized shame and anxiety arise due to systematic oppression, selfish and dumb underlines the concept that society judges' women if they don't fit the criterion. When the term is used as "oppressed," it directly points towards systematic injustices that women are compelled to face. These adjectives are also informed by the feminist theory of Bell Hooks because they show how patriarchal language imposes subordination and compliance, while Crenshaw's intersectionality framework demonstrates how overlapping identities worsen these experiences for oppressed women. When taken as a whole, the patterns highlight the fact that the novel criticizes how culture and societal norms inflict psychological damage on women.

Another tactic to degrade women in society is to constantly call them names, make them seem less intelligent, and make them act in ways that make them feel inferior and prevent them from engaging in any aspect of life. They grow so timid and self-conscious that they become too afraid of making mistakes to speak in social situations. Whenever they attempt to demand their rights, they are branded as imposters and self-centered.

Labeling Women as Difficult, Corrupt, and Fraudulent

Table 4: Nouns and Adjectives depicting Women as Difficult, Corrupt and Fraudulent

<i>Nouns/Adjectives</i>	<i>No of Tokens</i>
Whore	15
Vulgar	3
Wicked	1
Prostitute	4
Monster	5
Shameless	4
Demeanor	5
Corrupt	4
Vile	2
Possessed	6

Total	64
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The above *Table 4* shows the most common adjectives that depict women as *Difficult, Corrupt, and Fraudulent* in text with their total no. of tokens and frequency percentage. The negative connotations of the adjectives employed in the novel to characterize female characters are examined and grouped. The results show a troubling tendency in the portrayal of women as fabricated, illogical, overly emotional, problematic, immoral, and dishonest in addition to being sexual objects. Words like "breast," "naked," and "virgin" objectify women by highlighting their physical characteristics. Furthermore, adjectives like "selfish," "guilty," and "foolish" help to paint a picture of women as emotionally unstable and illogical. Adjectives like "vulgar," "whore," and "shameless" further reinforces the narrative that portrays women as immoral and dishonorable.

The choice of adjectives in the novel supports the notion that women are wicked and reflects the actions of the characters. This highlights how the language used in this work perpetuates gender inequality regarding matters between boys and girls. This report suggests conducting research in these areas and initiating discussions about gender issues, within Pakistani literature. The linguistic mechanisms of stigmatizing and dehumanizing women are reflected in the nouns and adjectives whore (15 tokens), vulgar (3 tokens), wicked (1 token), prostitute (4 tokens), monster (5 tokens), shameless (4 tokens), demeanor (5 tokens), corrupt (4 tokens), vile (2 tokens), and possessed (6 tokens). Together, these terms demonstrate a system of objectification and moral policing in which women's characters are characterized with negative attributes associated with patriarchal and social norms. While monster, nasty, and possessed dehumanize women by linking their behaviors to evil or otherworldly qualities, whore, prostitute, and shameless moralize women's sexuality.

Linguistic patterns in *Blasphemy* show several key findings that reveal systemic gendered oppression. Derogatory terms like whore appear 15 times, bitch 5 times, and prostitute 4 times, which is an example of moral policing and objectification of women. Adjectives such as naked appear 11 times, oppressed 3 times, and shameless 4 times, which again shows control over women's bodies and identities. Terms like kuttee and bad-blooded carry cultural and race dimensions, indicating intersectional oppression. Descriptors that come with emotional and psychological results, like selfish (5 tokens) and nervous (4 tokens), indicate internal effects of systemic inequality. Secondly, association with words burden, veil, and dowry show that language links women's role to cultural and religious expectation, reinforcing their subordination. These findings, therefore, guided by Bell Hooks' feminist theory and Crenshaw's intersectionality framework, exposes how language in *Blasphemy* perpetuates patriarchal norms and amplifies marginalization, while criticizing the societal structures.

The key findings of the *Blasphemy* analysis show a systemic use of taboo words like whore (15 tokens), bitch (5 tokens), and prostitute (4 tokens) that male characters use

to debase women. Word clouds and bubble charts show how terms, such as mistress are used with burden and honor; breast is used with veil and dowry, so the word cloud and bubble chart underscore the cultural and patriarchal objectification of women's bodies and roles. Modifiers such as bad-blooded link taboo words to religious and cultural contexts, thus making the Sketch Difference analysis enhance intersectional oppression. When female characters use bitch as a term of frustration, it is only an exception to the resistance, making it an isolated act against the male-dominated verbal aggression. The overall visualizations and concordances strengthen the idea that the novel strongly opposes gendered oppression through the instrumentality of language as the primary tool of patriarchal and intersectional control

CONCLUSION

This study explored the linguistic representation of gendered oppression in Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy* through a corpus-based analysis, guided by Bell Hooks' feminist theory and Kimberly Crenshaw's intersectionality framework. The research questions— (1) How are taboo words employed in the novel? and (2) What are the adjectives used by both males and females? —revealed how language perpetuates patriarchal norms and amplifies intersectional inequalities. The analysis revealed the most frequently used insulting words and terms, which included whore (15 tokens), bitch (5 tokens), and prostitute (4 tokens), used most often by male characters for the purposes of moral policing and control of women.

For instance, adjectives such as naked (11 tokens), shameless (4 tokens), and oppressed (3 tokens), further emphasized the objectification and subjugation of women, tying their identity into cultural and religious expectations which phrases like dowry and burden signify. Applying the feminist theory of Bell Hooks, it was able to prove the way language is a medium of patriarchal power with silencing, objectifying, and dehumanizing women. The intersectionality framework provided by Crenshaw offered insight into women's compounded oppression in that the overlapping identities reflected upon and created the interplay between gender, class, and race in the stigmatization of language. Through using Sketch Engine as a corpus tool, the analysis conducted would systematically go through the linguistics and offer empirical proof for the theoretical claims presented.

This is in agreement with the statement of Spender (1980) who argues that language perpetuates male chauvinism and with Mills (1995), who argues that literary texts reflect the norms but critique their inequities. The research findings support the research already conducted on the role of language in gendered power dynamics. For example, Hooks' criticism of patriarchal control through language is clearly seen in the moral policing reflected in *Blasphemy*. The intersectionality framework put forward by Crenshaw finds expression through the portrayal of the oppression that these marginalized women faced in a compounded way.

The study further enhances the prior analyses, like Lakoff's (1975) research on gendered language, by revealing the reflection of real-world inequities in literary linguistic

patterns. This study underlines the critical significance of literature as a site for exposing systemic inequalities and confronting oppressive power structures. With the integration of corpus-based methods with feminist and intersectional theories, this study presents a multidimensional approach to language in *Blasphemy*, showing its role in constructing and deconstructing gendered oppression. Future research could expand this study to other texts, seeking to explore differences in representations of language in various different cultural, historical, or socio-economic contexts that would lead to a better understanding of what language can be, both instrument of oppression and site of resistance.

The language used in *Blasphemy*, in the essence, reveals that it is a reflection of the social systems it is supposed to criticize, rather than just a narrative technique. Women are marginalized on the basis of gender, class, and religion by intersectional hierarchies and patriarchal standards, which are reinforced by taboo words and gendered descriptors. The Crenshaw framework explains how these intersectional identities enhance the oppression, while the feminist theory of Bell Hooks reveals how choices in language mirror the institutional silence and moral policing. Instances of linguistic opposition are, in any case, only enough to raise the possibility of subversion, which does not upset the existing power structure. In conclusion, *Blasphemy* offers a useful perspective on the potentiality and limits of resistance to repression and is a striking image of how language enforces injustice. An understanding of this analysis informs and develops the knowledge of relationships of language, gender, and power in literature; this could then be reflected and highlighted through social justice issues.

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