GENDERED METAPHORS AND POWER DYNAMICS IN MEDIA DISCOURSE: A CORPUS-BASED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF BBC AND DAWN NEWS ARTICLES

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Abstract
This research explores how gendered metaphors in media discourse play a role in the ideological construction of femininity and masculinity in BBC and Dawn News articles. Utilising corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA), the study integrates quantitative methods with qualitative interpretation to detect metaphorical patterns that reproduce and constitute gender ideologies. A balanced corpus of approximately 25,000–30,000 words was compiled and processed using AntConc software to extract concordance, and collocation data. Analysis shows that BBC articles construct men in terms of protection, provision, and moral virtue metaphors, which reinforce classic patriarchal masculinity. Women, on the other hand, are built up as transitory individuals between domesticity and career aspiration, habitually framed as relational threats to masculine identity. Dawn News, however, represents women metaphorically as marginal agents seeking access, power, and visibility, employing metaphors of space, recognition, and empowerment. These metaphors, although sometimes progressive, remain reflective of systemic power disparities. The research emphasises the media's double function in reproducing and subverting gender hierarchies, providing new insight into how linguistic choices influence public understanding of gender and power.

Keywords: gendered metaphors; media discourse; masculinity and femininity; corpus-assisted discourse analysis; ideological construction.

1. Introduction

Language is not neutral. It mirrors, reaffirms, and at times resists the dominant ideologies of the societies in which it is in circulation. Of the many linguistic tools that organise social perception, metaphors are powerful. Metaphors not only provide ornamentation to language, but they also organize realities, form thought patterns, and create social hierarchies. When used in media communication, metaphors not only reflect society's values but also legitimise certain power configurations. Under gender, metaphorical expressions tend to encode and reproduce stereotypical gender roles and gendered stereotypes. For instance, women may be metaphorically framed as objects, nature, or emotions, while men may be associated with machinery, war, or reason. These metaphorical frameworks are embedded within broader power relations and tacitly reinforce male dominance and female subordination in the public imagination. Media, in its wide reach and influential role in constructing public opinion, becomes an important site for reproducing or challenging such gendered accounts.

Language acts as a quiet architect of our social reality. In this process, metaphors aren't just pretty embellishments; they serve as cognitive frameworks that help us make sense of abstract concepts by relating them to tangible experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). When these metaphors take on gendered meanings, aligning with culturally defined notions of masculinity and femininity, they can become powerful tools, either reinforcing existing hierarchies or

challenging them in public discussions. The media, as a key player in shaping cultural narratives, intentionally uses these metaphors to frame political conflicts, economic trends, and social issues, often carrying significant consequences for empathy, policy-making, and how we form our identities. This study employs corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to thoroughly investigate how gendered metaphors in media discourse either perpetuate, normalise, or challenge structural inequalities.

Discourse, as language used in social contexts and shaped by cognitive processes, is not just a tool of communication; it is centrally engaged in how individuals experience and construct reality. It is also a medium through which relationships between speakers, listeners, writers, and readers are formed and negotiated. This research centres on the convergence of metaphor, gender, and power within discourse in the media, highlighting the way in which metaphor not only reflects but also actively constructs social realities and power relations.

Metaphors are not only stylistic features; they shape people's concepts of the world and place themselves and others in it. When used in media discourse, metaphors can deeply support or subvert social hierarchies, especially those of gender. Gendered metaphors tend to construct women and men in particular, stereotypical terms embodying women with emotion, nature, or weakness and men with reason, machinery, or authority. These metaphorical conventions perpetuate wider power relations by affirming conventional gender roles.

Studies of language and gender have proceeded through various stages of theory. Initial work, also referred to as the deficit approach, described women's language as deficient or inferior. After the emergence of second-wave feminism during the 1970s, researchers began to study how language is a space for the oppression of women, with attention to inequalities of power in mixed-sex interactions. Research by scholars like Lakoff (1975), Zimmermann and West (1975), and Fishman (1983) uncovered how men tended to control talk via interruptions and topic management, whereas women's speech tended to be supportive and less dominant.

During the 1980s, the dominance approach was succeeded by the difference approach, which regarded male and female communication styles as outcomes of different socialisation patterns. According to this approach, gendered communication was akin to intercultural communication, tending to be misunderstood. Tannen's (1990) influential work promulgated the theme that differences in language between genders are embedded deeply, whether socially or biologically. However, critics argued that such arguments tended to overlook actual and persistent power disparities between genders.

This article takes a social constructivist approach and employs corpus-based analysis to investigate how gendered metaphors operate in media texts. By examining metaphor use patterns, the research seeks to reveal how language is involved in the construction of gendered power relations in the public domain. This research investigates how metaphors in media discourse are used to represent men and women differently, and how such representations reinforce or challenge existing power relations between genders. Through a detailed corpus analysis of selected media texts, the study examines the ways in which metaphors become tools for either sustaining traditional gender ideologies or enabling subtle forms of resistance and change.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To identify and compare the dominant gendered metaphors used to represent men and women in BBC and Dawn News articles.

    2. To examine how these metaphors ideologically construct and reinforce traditional or shifting notions of masculinity and femininity within media discourse.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the dominant metaphorical representations of men and women in BBC and Dawn News articles?

2. How do these metaphors contribute to the ideological construction of masculinity and femininity in media discourse?

1.3 Significance of the study

Academically and socially, the importance of the study stems from the intersection of discourse analysis, gender studies, and media linguistics, all connected through a corpus-driven approach. It contributes to the understanding of contemporary media discourse through the analysis of gendered metaphors by revealing the covert yet impactful ways language contributes to constructing gender relations and power hierarchies. Metaphors serve a far broader purpose than that of a linguistic embellishment; they play an important role in reinforcing, constructing, or subverting existing gender relations. In the context of media, where language is carefully crafted to inform the public, influence, and entertain, such metaphorical constructions play a crucial role in maintaining or rupturing conventional gender and socio-cultural attitudes. In using a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA) with authentic media texts, this research adds to the body of scholarship on media discourse by applying discourse analysis at the higher levels of strategy and employing both quantitative and qualitative techniques in a single analysis for metaphor identification. Doing so increases the validity of the findings, framing the research corpus linguistics as addressing socially relevant challenges. At the same time, the findings offer, perhaps for the first time, these constituents of the public a strategic, yet often ignored, understanding of the unmasking power of language in public discourses designed to disenfranchise the public.

2. Literature Review

The interaction between metaphor, gender, and discourse has become a central concern in recent years among scholars, especially in media language studies. Metaphors are not an embellishment of language; they are crucial in the constitution of human thought and social facts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In discourse analysis, particularly within media texts, metaphors are cognitive tools that structure and consolidate ideologies, including those of gender roles and power relations.

Discourse, according to Koller (2008), is both an influence on and influencer of cognition, a mechanism for the production of realities and the negotiation of relationships. Metaphors inherent in discourse not only mirror the gender norms which exist, but they also play an active role in the constitution of gender identities by positioning people with culturally recognisable patterns of masculinity and femininity. The metaphors that are employed to characterise men and women in the media tend to correspond with stereotypical dichotomies, portraying women as emotional or passive and men as rational or dominant. This is consistent with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, which posits that abstract ideas are cognised through metaphorical mappings from more tangible, bodily experiences.

Fatim, Hamid, and Mubasyiroh (2024) did a corpus-based cognitive study of gender metaphors in Indonesian media and reported that some lexis, such as korban (victim) and perempuan (woman), co-occurred highly, illustrating deep-seated metaphorical links. Their research unearthed structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors that constructed women in discourses of victimhood, need, and vulnerability, thus upholding patriarchal ideologies. These metaphors underpinned a conceptual approach that sustains conventional power structures and constrains representations of women's agency. Similarly, Ahmed (2018) examined how the Nigerian press represented women in metaphor, illustrating that even female writers tended to

replicate metaphors used by patriarchs that reinforce male superiority surreptitiously. Utilising feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2005), Ahmed disclosed that metaphor is a strong ideological tool that can reinforce or challenge prevailing gender norms. He concluded that internalisation of patriarchal ideology may affect the way women themselves employ language to define gendered experience.

Koller (2008) also identifies the multi-dimensionality of metaphor and gender relations by addressing both the ways that metaphors represent gender and the ways that gender affects the use of metaphors. She advocates a social constructivist account of gender, which resists essentialism and identifies the contribution of discourse to the reproduction or subversion of social norms. Her research stresses the necessity of examining both the form and purpose of metaphors in order to grasp their contribution to the construction of gendered meaning.

In addition, language and gender studies have developed over time through various theoretical perspectives. The deficit perspective (Lakoff, 1975) regarded women's language as less authoritative, while the dominance perspective (Zimmerman & West, 1975; Fishman, 1983) explored how power differentials are reinforced by language in co-gender communication. The difference approach (Tannen, 1990) later proposed that both genders have different communication patterns due to varying socialisation processes, which tend to result in miscommunication, though this perspective was also criticised for ignoring power differences. Metaphors are not just superficial devices used in language, but rather cognitive and ideological instruments that structurally constitute how we conceptualise abstract social realities like identity, power, and gender roles (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Conceptual Metaphor Theory posits that people understand abstract ideas by using metaphorical mappings from bodily or experiential realms and thus place social ideologies in mundane language. Koller (2008) contends that discourse both creates and is created by cognition, and therefore plays an essential part in the representation of realities and the creation of gendered identities. In media discourse, metaphors do not simply describe but actively construct societal expectations of masculinity and femininity. Women are commonly metaphorically equated with emotion, vulnerability, or passivity, and men with power, rationality, and control—dichotomies that sustain conventional power dynamics.

Fatim, Hamid, and Mubasyiroh (2024), in their corpus-based cognitive analysis of Indonesian media, categorised structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors that framed women largely as victims or dependent women. Frequent words like korban (victim) and Perempuan (woman) attested to how metaphorical formulations could naturalise patriarchal gender roles. These metaphors operate ideologically to reinforce prevailing perceptions of gender, frequently without the expression of evident bias.

In the same vein, Ahmed's (2018) discourse analysis of metaphors employed to characterise women in Nigerian newspapers confirmed the internalisation of patriarchal norms by female writers themselves. Based on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005), he demonstrated how metaphors representing women as inferior or weak assist in reproducing hegemonic masculinity even when the discourse itself is created by those who are marginalised by it.

Butt, Ahmad, and Jahan (2024) widened this understanding through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of empowerment slogans in Pakistan. It was found that even in empowerment-oriented discourse, some slogans inadvertently reinforced gender stereotypes. Although some slogans promoted equality and resistance, others promoted traditional gender norms and underscored the double role of language as both a social change agent and a mechanism of ideological domination. Their study brings to the fore the contradiction between progressive intention and regressive metaphorical framing.

A CDA corpus-based method was also utilised by Cerda (2023), who examined gendered discourse in The Guardian newspaper. Her research indicates that discourses on parenthood, feminism, and gender violence replicated both innovative and stereotypical representations. While polysemic discourse facilitated limited change in gender roles, discourses on mental illness and violence persisted in utilising hegemonic masculinity to frame men as aggressors and victims and failed to address deeper system-level causes.

Porro (2023) offered another perspective with a study of British male and female politicians' speech styles. Though she discovered there was minimal difference in the deployment of "empty" adjectives and hedging devices, her work countered long-held beliefs in gender-exclusive speech style assumptions. Her research highlighted the need to study context, text genre, and speaker roles to understand gendered language, promoting the transition from binary gender categorisation to richer, more flexible conceptualisations.

Early gender and language foundation theories e.g., the deficit model (Lakoff, 1975), the dominance model (Zimmerman & West, 1975; Fishman, 1983), and the difference model (Tannen, 1990) pre-empted modern social constructivist theories. These early models provided the basis for explaining how power differences are embodied and sustained within and by linguistic forms. Nevertheless, critical discourse and social constructivist approaches, such as those held by Lazar (2005), increasingly highlight how language is involved not only in mirroring but also in (re)producing gender ideologies in context-dependent terms. Newspaper remaining among the most powerful media for framing public opinion and identity, the scientific examination of gendered metaphors in media discourse has become progressively more significant. Corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) and corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA) are highly effective means of exposing underlying metaphorical patterns that might not be identified using qualitative analysis only (Baker, 2006). Both mean both the empirical scope and critical depth to question how gendered metaphors work within larger sociocultural power formations.

In the last few years, corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) and corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA) have played a crucial role in finding out the patterns of the use of metaphors in large corpora. Both methods involve quantitative data along with qualitative interpretation, so they are especially appropriate for studying the systematic use of gendered metaphors within media texts (Baker, 2006). While there is considerable research on metaphor, gender, and media discourse in isolation or in particular sociocultural contexts, there is limited research that merges corpus-assisted methodology with critical discourse approaches to analyse gendered metaphors across various media genres and platforms. Current research is either centred on elite discourse (e.g., political speeches or editorials) or particular cultural artefacts (e.g., empowerment slogans or opinion pieces), sometimes without a comparative approach or systematic corpus methodology.

Additionally, the majority of the studies focus either solely on female metaphors or on women as authors, without necessarily exploring how metaphorical patterns reflect masculinities and femininities alike and how they operate in larger power contexts within the media. Few empirical studies also exist that explore the distribution, co-occurrence, and variation of gendered metaphors on large corpora, particularly in a media environment that traverses formats (print, digital, broadcast). This research fills that gap by using corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to investigate the way gendered metaphors operate in the construction of traditional and non-traditional gender roles in modern media discourse. It offers comparative, data-based analysis of metaphoric representation and ideology, making a theoretical and methodological contribution to the crossroads of gender studies, media linguistics, and metaphoric representation.

3. Research Methodology

The research employs a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA) to examine the use of gendered metaphors in media discourse and the role of gendered metaphors in contributing to the construction, reification, or subversion of gendered power relations. The method combines quantitative corpus linguistic methods with qualitative critical discourse analysis to identify both the frequency and role of metaphorical language in the representation of gender.

3.1 Research Design

The research uses a qualitative approach, involving the use of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis. The quantitative component involves the purging of gendered metaphors from a chosen corpus according to concordance, and collocation analyses to identify patterns of gendered metaphor use. The quantitative aspect describes the patterns using conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2005), allowing for a deeper interrogation of the ideological and power relations.

3.2 Data Collection

Corpus Selection: The corpus consists of media texts in national newspapers and online news websites. Articles that engage with gender directly or indirectly are then collected through purposive sampling.

Time Frame: The articles are selected from 2022 to 2025 related to the contemporary issue.

Corpus Size: Around 25000-30000 words of text are gathered to provide a representative sample of discourse concerning gender issues.

Sources: Selected media sources for the research comprise mainstream English-language newspapers, like Dawn Newspaper and BBC Newspaper, for analysis.

3.3 Data Processing Tools

AntConc (Anthony, 2023): A concordance and text analysis tool is utilised to perform word frequency, keyword, and collocation analyses.

Metaphor Identification Procedure

The research uses the Metaphor Identification Procedure of the Pragglejaz Group (2007), following these steps:

1. Reading texts to grasp the general meaning.
2. Identifying the lexical units within each sentence.
3. Determining their contextual and more fundamental meanings.

If the contextual meaning is the opposite of the basic meaning and can be realised in terms of comparison, the unit is tagged as metaphorical. These metaphors are then classified as structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

3.4 Structural Framework

Analysis is done in two phases:

1. Collocation Analysis: To examine how these words occur with gendered words (e.g., woman, man, female, male) and determine metaphorical patterns.
2. Concordance Analysis: To explore the surrounding context for the usage of gendered metaphors.

Qualitative Interpretation:

The metaphors are interpreted about how they construct and reinforce gender roles, stereotypes, and power relations within media discourse using feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2005).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Because the information is taken from openly available media texts, there are no direct ethical issues involved with participants. All the sources, however, will be duly referenced, and there will be a practice not to misrepresent authors or media groups.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

The research only focuses on media in English and does not encompass multilingual viewpoints.

The definition applies only to metaphorical language and not to other stylistic or rhetorical tools, which can play their part in representing gender.

The examination is specific to traditional media forms and does not incorporate user-generated content (e.g., social media), which can provide alternative patterns.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Gender metaphor use in BBC News

Figure 4.1
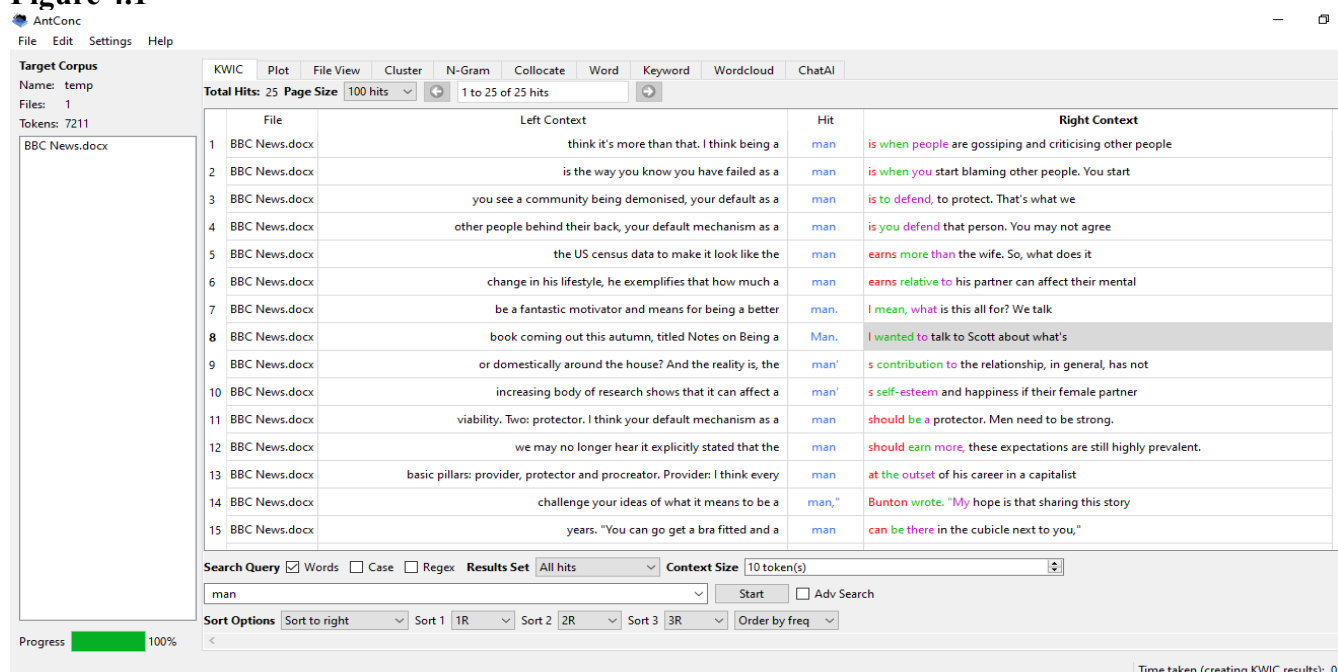
The analysis of the BBC News article reveals several dominant gendered metaphors that shape the discourse around masculinity. One of the most recurring metaphors is "*Man as Protector*," which frames masculinity in terms of strength, security, and guardianship. Phrases like "*your default as a man is to protect*" position men as inherently responsible for defending others, aligning closely with traditional social roles such as soldiers or law enforcers. This metaphor not only naturalises the expectation that men should be physically and morally strong but also limits the scope of acceptable male behaviour to roles associated with control and authority.

Another notable metaphor is "*Man as Breadwinner*," where masculinity is bound to economic worth. Phrases such as "*man earns more*," "*man earns relative to his partner*," and "*man should earn more*" suggest that a man's value is mainly indicated by his financial contribution. The metaphor supports the ideology that men should control the public-economic domain and that any challenge to this, such as earning less than a female partner, jeopardises his identity as a man and can lead to what some may interpret as metaphorical emasculation.

Similarly, the metaphor of "*Manhood as Virtue or Status*" positions masculinity as something to be earned and that can be lost based on social behaviour. The phrase "*you have failed as a man*" indicates that being a man is not innate to an individual but rather a social accomplishment based on meeting social behaviours. This framing of masculinity adds an element of social virtue to manhood, where failing to perform masculinity correctly elicits symbolic disqualification from manhood.

The article introduces with a Tripartite Metaphor of masculinity comprising the Provider, Protector, and Procreator. This ideological framework encompasses male identity defined by productivity, authority, and reproductive ability. Metaphorically, the Tripartite Metaphor draws upon Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory as an ontological metaphor - masculinity as a container of specifications required to fulfil the traditional roles - within each aspect of guarding masculine identity, the provider, protector, and procreator. Collectively, both metaphors represented within the Tripartite Metaphor of masculinity espouse deeply embedded storytelling that continues to associate masculinity with power, obligation, and societal belief, strictly aligned to patriarchal symbols disguised in the belief that it is about natural male roles.

Table 4.1

Thematic Categorisation of Gendered Metaphors Related to Masculinity in BBC News Articles

Theme	Metaphor	Example	Interpretation
Masculinity & Power	Man as Breadwinner	"A man earns more"	Economic authority defines masculine value.
Masculinity & Morality	Failure as a Man	"failed as a man"	Manhood is tied to self-discipline, stoicism, and moral responsibility.
Masculinity & Role	Protector Defender	"The default as a man is to protect"	Frames manhood through roles of defence and guardianship.

Note. Examples are extracted from concordance lines in BBC News articles analysed using AntConc. Interpretations are informed by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005).

Figure 4.2
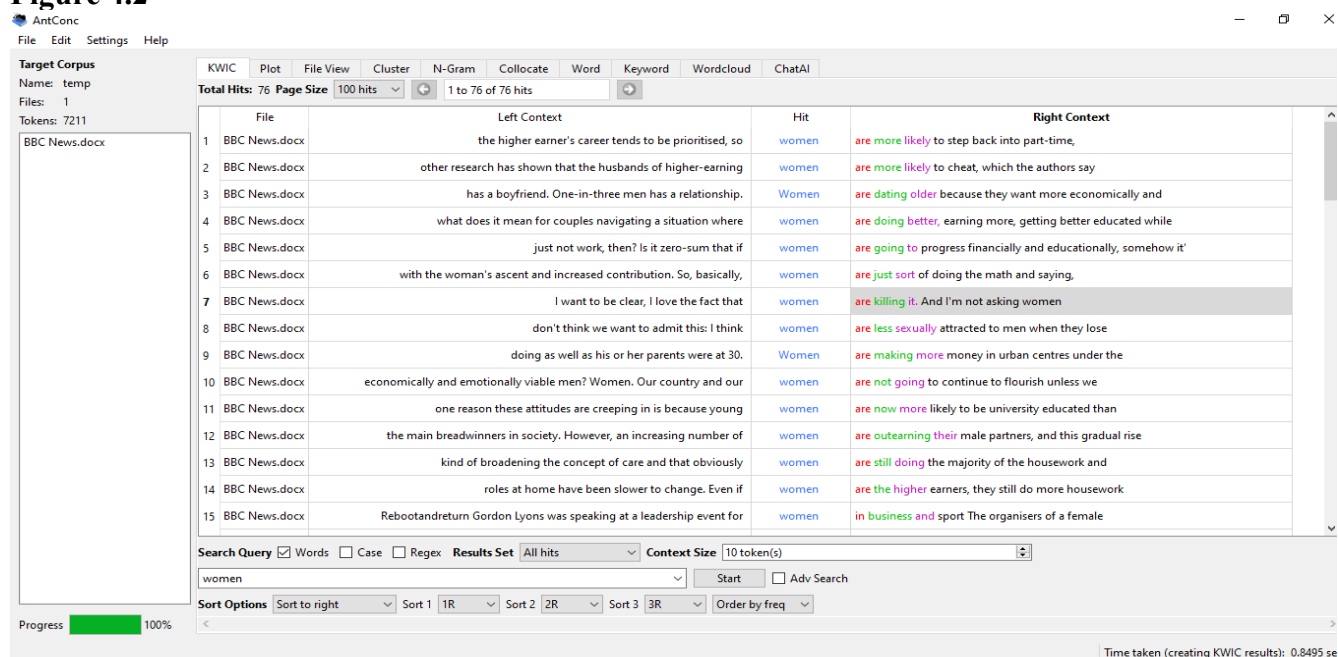
The discourse about women in this corpus shows some powerful metaphors that are structuring what people think about in society. Foremost, women are defined as "*Compromised Careerists*", marked by professional withdrawal and domestic anchorage. Evidence such as "*women are more likely to back off into part-time*" and repeated mentions of women taking "the lion's share of housework" even when principal breadwinners spatialize career constraints in the form of physical withdrawal. This builds work-life balance as a zero-sum issue whereby progress requires household relapse, affirming the ideology of the motherhood penalty. At the same time, women's success is symbolised as a "*Threat",* especially in heterosexual contexts. Phrases like husbands of higher-paid women being "more likely to cheat" and the ubiquitous "*zero-sum*" language place economic equality as undermining, weaponising women's advancement using war metaphors like "*killing it*" or making men "lose ground." This suggests that male identity is still tied to economic superiority, pathologising gender equality as relational damage.

One interesting metaphor that highlights the role of women in society is the "*Domestic Container*." Even as we see economic progress, women often find themselves linguistically boxed into private roles, with phrases like "*doing housework*" reinforcing the idea that unpaid work is just a natural part of life. Ironically, empowerment initiatives often adopt an "Elevated Project" model, using vertical metaphors like conferences to "raise women" and celebrate those "*pioneering the way*." This approach, rooted in neoliberal thinking, suggests that personal growth requires external validation rather than real institutional change, masking the structural barriers behind a facade of meritocracy.

Additionally, the "*Viability Calculus*" metaphor frames relationships in market terms, where women seek "economically viable men," turning dating into a kind of transactional optimisation. This reduces romantic choice to financial criteria, echoing the "breadwinner" expectations placed on men but with a different twist.

Together, these metaphors create a "*Transitional Woman*" archetype—someone who is economically advancing yet still tied to domestic roles, powerful yet precarious. In contrast to the rigid "*Provider-Protector-Procreator*" model that defines masculinity, women's metaphors navigate contradictions: juggling the demands of career and caregiving, success and societal stigma, empowerment and societal expectations. Ultimately, this discourse tends to pathologies gender progress as a disruption in relationships rather than recognising it as a challenge to the deep-rooted patriarchal structures, revealing a persistent fear of wielding power without addressing the underlying inequalities..

Table 4.2

**Thematic Categorisation of Gendered Metaphors Related to Femininity in BBC News Articles**

Theme	Metaphor	Example	Interpretation
Domestic Labour & Role	Woman as Domestic Container	*"Women are still doing the majority of the housework"*	Embeds women in private-sphere ontology through verbs of containment, naturalising unpaid labour as feminine biological inertia.
Economic Agency & Threat	Female Success as Relational Threat	*"Is it zero-sum that if women progress financially... somehow it's not going to work?"*	Weaponises economic advancement through warfare semantics ("lose ground"), positioning parity as destabilising male identity.

| Empowerment & Limitation | Woman as Elevated Project | *"conference... to elevate women in business and sport"* | Frames progress through verticality metaphors, positioning empowerment as external uplift rather than systemic change. |

Note. Examples extracted from concordance lines in BBC News.docx analysed using AntConc. Interpretations informed by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005).

4.2 Dominant Gendered Metaphors in Dawn News

Figure 4.3
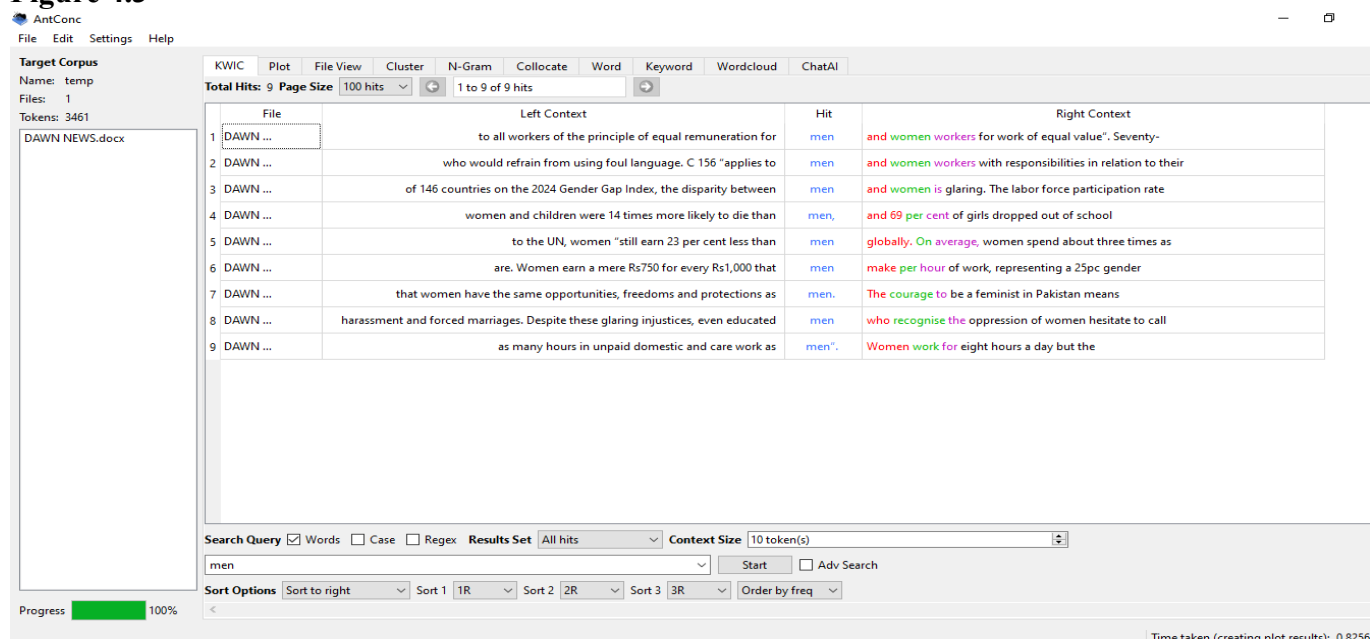
Analysis of the Dawn News corpus provides a number of salient gendered metaphors that create and reinforce specific conceptions of gender roles and inequalities. "*Economic inequality as a spatial or measurement metaphor*" is one such salient metaphor, in which expressions like "*disparity,*" "*gap,*" and "*make per hour*" metaphorically represent gender injustice as a measurable disequilibrium. These metaphors imply that sex-based gaps in earnings and opportunity are not merely social phenomena but quantifiable shortages that can and ought to be made right. Thus, for example, the reference to "*the disparity between men and women is glaring*" thinks of inequality as a gap that is palpable and in need of redress.

Another pervasive metaphor is "*time and labour as value metaphors*". Time here is metaphorically used as effort or money, particularly in referring to women's unpaid care and domestic work. Phrases like "*women spend about three times as much*" and "unpaid domestic and care work as men" show how women's work is quantified in terms of time but devalued. These metaphors support the overworked identity of women and call attention to the structural obscurity of their work within economic structures.

An additional metaphorical construction in the discourse is protection and rights as possessions. In this, rights like "*freedoms*" and "*protections*" are metaphorically conceived as concrete possessions that men have and women do not. This conception makes men the default holders of societal rights and women outsiders, excluded from access to these all-important tools for participation and security. The term "*same protections as men*" suggests that such rights are figuratively similar to shields, there for some, but denied to others.

Lastly, the theme of "*recognition and visibility*" emerges through metaphors that depict awareness of injustice as a moral awakening. When the article mentions "men who recognise the oppression of women," it suggests that oppression is something visible only when acknowledged. Recognition here becomes a metaphorical act of lifting a veil or removing a blindfold, stepping out of ignorance and into moral clarity. These metaphors function ideologically to underscore the often-unseen systemic nature of gender inequality and the responsibility of those in power to acknowledge it.

Table 4.3

Gendered Metaphors in Dawn News: A Thematic Categorisation

Theme	Metaphor	Example	Interpretation
Gender & Inequality	Gap / Disparity	"The disparity between men and women is glaring"	Spatial metaphor for structural gender inequality.
Labor & Value	Unequal Time/Work	"Women spend about three times as much"	Women's labour metaphorically devalued; time as a proxy for worth.
Rights & Access	Protections/Freedoms as Shields	"same protections as men"	Metaphorically frames rights as possessions denied to women.
Recognition & Morality	Recognition of Oppression	"men who recognise the oppression…"	Moral vision metaphor — injustice as something to be seen or ignored.

Note. Metaphors extracted from concordance results in Dawn News using AntConc (see Fig. 2) are interpreted through Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and feminist discourse frameworks.

Figure 4.4
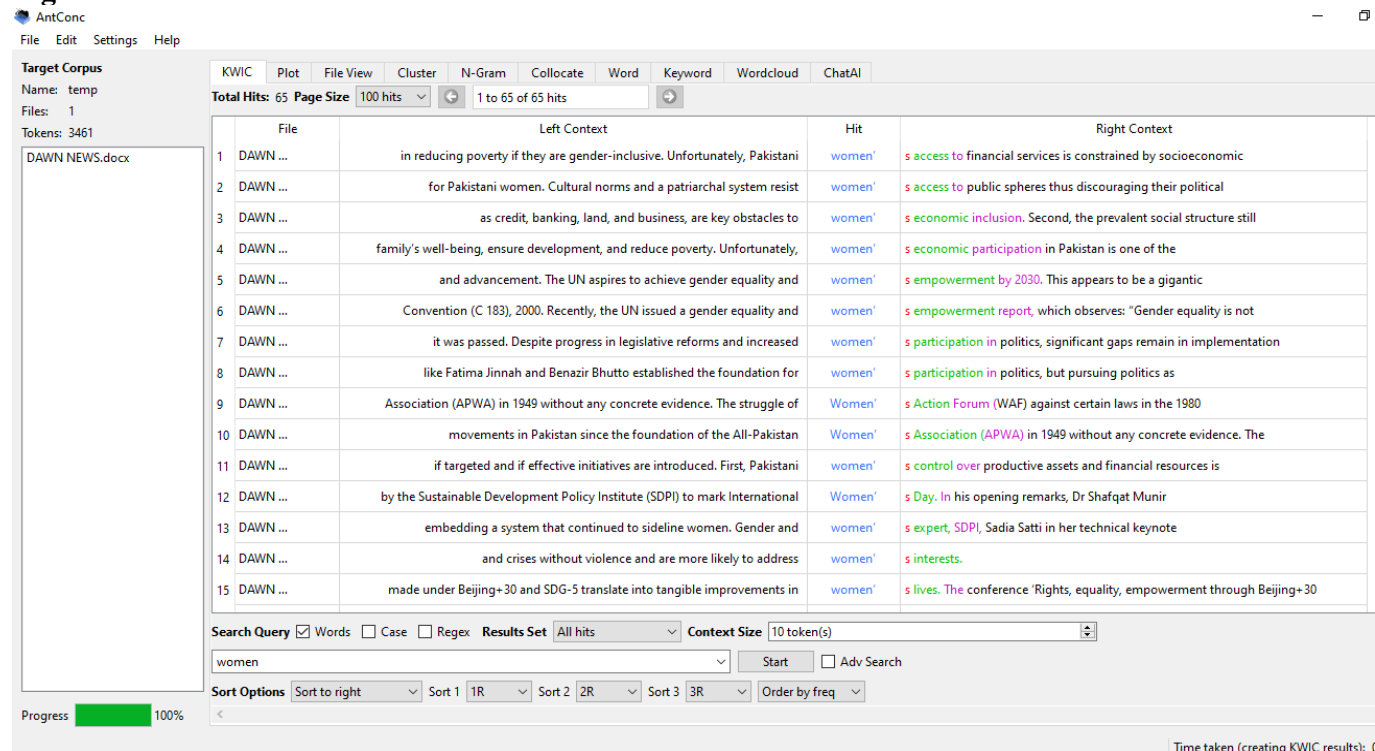
The concordance lines from the Dawn News corpus, using the search term "women", reveal a cluster of metaphorical constructions that position women within discourses of empowerment, access, and participation. A recurring pattern emerges in which women are metaphorically framed as excluded agents striving for inclusion in various domains—political, economic, and social. For instance, phrases like "women's access to financial services is constrained" or "women's access to public spheres" metaphorically frame equality as something gated or locked, reinforcing the idea that women are on the outside of systems they are struggling to enter. Access is treated as a doorway or barrier, suggesting women must cross into spaces that are not yet fully open to them.

Another common metaphor revolves around women's economic and political involvement. Terms like "*women's economic inclusion*," "*women's political participation*," and "*women's control of productive assets*" suggest that agency and power are things to be obtained or spaces to be claimed. These metaphors imply that participation isn't something that comes naturally; rather, it's something that must be fought for or granted, often through policy changes and advocacy. This reinforces the notion that empowerment is a journey, where women must carve out their own space within patriarchal systems. Closely tied to this is the empowerment metaphor, seen in phrases like "*women's empowerment by 2030*" and "*empowerment report*." Here, empowerment is envisioned as a goal or destination, something to be achieved in the future. This metaphor places women on a path toward power, casting them as agents of change, yet they still face significant structural obstacles along the way.

Moreover, the information cites instances of "*women's lives*," "*interests,*" and "*voices,*" translating women's lived lives into complex, structure-sensitive and heavily influenced by inequality. The constant linking of empowerment, inclusion, and control construes gender justice in terms of a process of centralisation over marginalisation, solidifying metaphors of visibility, voice, and territorial occupation.

In sum, these metaphors collectively construct a narrative in which women are viewed as persistently marginalised figures whose access to resources, spaces, and power remains restricted, yet who are gradually moving toward equality through policy, activism, and recognition. The underlying ideology emphasises that gender parity is not yet realised but is envisioned as a future state achievable through systemic change and sustained advocacy.

Table 4.4

Metaphorical Representations of Women in Dawn News Articles

Theme	Metaphor	Example	Interpretation
Access & Exclusion	Women as outsiders seeking entry	"Women's access to financial services is constrained"	Access metaphor positions women as excluded from core systems of power or benefit.
Participation & Power	Participation as a resource or right	"women's participation in politics"	Frames political/economic inclusion as a privilege to be claimed or earned.
Development & Progression	Empowerment as a destination	"Women's empowerment by 2030"	Empowerment is metaphorically framed as a journey toward autonomy or equality.
Control & Ownership	Power as property or territory	"women's control over productive assets"	Suggests agency is something to be gained or possessed like material property.

Lived Experience & Identity	Women's voices and lives as central	"women's interests" / "women's lives"	Framing women's needs and perspectives as essential but often marginalised.

Note. Examples are based on concordance results retrieved from Dawn News articles using AntConc. The metaphors reflect how gendered identities are constructed in the discourse, influenced by conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and feminist CDA (Lazar, 2005).

4.3 Ideological Construction of Masculinity

The ideological construction of masculinity in both media sources confirms classic power relations, but with varying focuses. In BBC News, masculinity is associated with economic superiority and moral duty, with metaphors such as "*Man as Breadwinner*" and "*Manhood as Virtue*" implying that male identity depends on economic achievement and public responsibility. Such framing supports patriarchal expectations by situating men as natural leaders and providers. Dawn News, though less concerned with male roles as individuals, implicitly defines masculinity as the standard against which gender inequality is judged, employing metaphors such as "*protections as possessions*" to underscore men's privileged access to rights. These metaphors combined perpetuate a discourse in which masculinity involves authority, control, and privilege within society.

4.4 Ideological Construction of Femininity

Femininity, constructed through metaphor, is described in both media outlets as negotiating tensions between empowerment and traditional roles. Women in BBC News are metaphorically described as "*Transitional Women,*" suspended between career ambitions and household expectations, whose economic development is presented as a "*Threat*" to male identity. This supports the perception that female empowerment is destabilising to gender norms. Dawn News, however, builds femininity around metaphors of striving and exclusion, representing women as agents attempting access and inclusion into male-dominated arenas. While both publications recognise women's agency, BBC News is more likely to pathologise it as disruptive, while Dawn News presents it as a necessary but not quite complete path towards equality.

4.5 Power Dynamics and Media Discourse

The study sheds light on how gendered metaphors in media discussions either reinforce or subtly challenge prevailing gender ideologies, shaping broader power dynamics. For instance, in BBC News, metaphors often normalise male dominance and female subservience by linking masculinity to strength and femininity to weakness or domestic roles. On the other hand, Dawn News leans towards systematic metaphors like "*empowerment as a destination,*" suggesting a more progressive stance that prioritises structural change over mere goals. Nevertheless, both outlets still perpetuate gendered power imbalances to some degree, with BBC News taking a more individualistic and relational approach, while Dawn News emphasises collective and systemic challenges. These findings illustrate the complex ways in which media language both constructs and mirrors societal power relations, sometimes even upholding patriarchal structures, even within discussions aimed at gender equity.

5. Findings

Metaphorical examination of BBC and Dawn News articles discloses distinct but ideologically related constructions of gender, reflecting how media discourse consolidates as well as challenges classical norms of masculinity and femininity. Men in the BBC corpus are mainly constructed through metaphors portraying them as protectors, providers, and status-bearers. Phrases like "*your default as a man is to protect*" and "*a man earns more*" metaphorically embed masculinity in the sense of strength, financial power, and moral achievement. This

encapsulation serves to reinforce a patriarchal ideology that reduces male identity to dominance, responsibility, and social value. In addition, the metaphor "*you have failed as a man*" frames manhood as an ethical accomplishment that may be lost, stressing that masculinity is performative and dependent on being able to fulfil culturally approved roles. These metaphors ideologically perpetuate the idea that men need to be powerful, stable, and stoic and are consonant with neoliberal and patriarchal ideologies of personal responsibility and masculine self-worth.

BBC women, on the other hand, are often represented through metaphors of emotional labour, marginality, and emerging empowerment. Terms such as "*house bitch*" are feminising and belittling of caregiving positions, showing how domestic labour is metaphorically linked to weakness or shame if pursued by men, thus upholding strict gender duality. Meanwhile, the "*female breadwinner*" metaphor suggests disruption and emasculation, representing the economic dominance of women as a challenge to the historical gender order. Yet metaphors like "*a moment to shine*" are a counter-discourse of empowerment and visibility, placing women as emergent forces of transformation. Ideologically, the metaphors mark out a tension between the persistence of patriarchal norms and the development of a more progressive narrative about gender equality.

By contrast, Dawn News builds gender through a more structural and institutional framework, especially in its presentation of women. The salient metaphors represent women as excluded agents in quest of access to power, recognition, and autonomy. Phrases like "*women's access to financial services is constrained*" and "*women's participation in politics*" metaphorically construct power and opportunity as fenced-off realms from which women have traditionally been excluded. These metaphors depend on economic and spatial frames like gaps, limits, and control of resources, which make gender disparity visible and quantifiable. Labour and time are metaphors that are also crucial, with descriptions such as "*women spend three times as much time on unpaid domestic work*" depicting women's efforts as unvalued and burdensome. Empowerment is symbolically built up as a developmental objective, as in "*women's empowerment by 2030,*" presenting equality as something achievable in the future and not yet existing in the present. This formulation upholds a liberal feminist worldview in which gender justice is envisioned as a linear, policy-oriented practice of inclusion and reform.

Men in the Dawn corpus, while less salient, are metaphorically located as normative possessors of power and rights, as can be seen in phrases such as "*same protections as men*". Such metaphors naturalise male privilege as the default standard to which women try to measure up. In addition, men who "*see the oppression of women*" are metaphorically placed as morally awakened allies, such that awareness of inequality between the sexes is in itself progressive. This is an ideological construction where masculinity is not challenged but refigured as a means through which feminist transformation might be brought about an assumption embedded within current liberal understandings of gender partnership.

Both BBC and Dawn News use metaphors that highlight gender hierarchies, but they do it in different ways. The BBC focuses on individual identity and the inner turmoil of masculinity, while Dawn addresses systemic exclusion and the collective disempowerment of women. Ideologically, both outlets reinforce the patriarchal notion that power is something men naturally possess and that women should strive for, even if some metaphors suggest a push for change. The BBC quietly critiques masculinity by exposing its emotional costs, while Dawn emphasises structural metaphors that advocate for women's inclusion, fostering a shift towards a feminist discourse centered on development. In both cases, gender is depicted as a site of struggle, shaped by the cultural, economic, and ideological forces that permeate media discourse.

6. Conclusion

This research dives into how gender is metaphorically portrayed in news articles from BBC and Dawn News, showing how media narratives shape and reinforce societal views on femininity and masculinity. The findings reveal that men are often depicted through metaphors of protection, provision, and moral authority, while women are portrayed as marginalized figures striving for empowerment and inclusion. These metaphorical themes support patriarchal power dynamics, though there are also emerging counter-narratives that advocate for change and resistance. The comparative analysis highlights that BBC tends to focus more on individual identity and the pressures on masculinity, whereas Dawn News emphasises structural exclusion and the collective disempowerment of women.

However, there are some delimitations of this research, one is the size of the text sample, which may not capture the full spectrum of gendered metaphors present in the media. Additionally, the study only examines English-language articles from these two outlets, leaving out vernacular media and other contexts. Future research should expand the sample to include a wider variety of news sources, local languages, and different forms of discourse, such as images or social media. Lastly, incorporating audience reception studies could provide deeper insights into how these metaphors are perceived and internalised by readers.

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