

## SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALIZATION: A FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper contributes to a better understanding of how neoliberal globalization exacerbated the subjectivity process. While this process is complicated and intertwined, it serves several contradictory roles in a range of social considerations. We explore the increasingly popular discourse of self-development as a neoliberal subjectification tool. We evaluate data from primary sources (In-depth interviews of adults women) which are highly impacted by neoliberalism, using Foucauldian understandings. We outline two interconnected discourses—rationality and autonomy based on our study, illustrating how these discourses shape the neoliberal subject in ways that are consistent with neoliberal governmentality. Within these discourses, there is no discernible opposition to the subject viewpoints given. Self-development discourse strengthens individuality in society while confining group identity. It is providing social control and contributing to the preservation of neoliberal practices in the society.*

**Keywords:** Neo-liberalism, Subjectivity, Self-development, Foucault, Governmentality

### Introduction

Neoliberalism has pervaded worldwide political and economic processes since its inception. It has evolved into a hegemonic power that has merged into a shared understanding of the world around us. Many critics see globalization as a kind of neoliberalism that is harmful to poor state of North. Neoliberalism has identified the dogmas that its policies will produce the greatest benefit to the global individual. Neoliberalism has produced a competition for individuals on both a national and worldwide level. This conflict narrative also spawned new kinds of subjectivity, or communal subjectivity, which might be built across the world (Meng, 2017). By constructing subjectivity and giving multiple identities, neoliberal globalization discourses generate a free, independent, self-regulating individual for the modern world. These subjects can participate to the global economy to make themselves portfolio subject. Furthermore, this subjectivity changed a person into an entrepreneur. They also become the human capital in the global economy. This subjectivity encourages individuals to work on themselves throughout time through the discourse of self-development since they will not be able to function in an advanced society where both men and women contribute to the economy. Neoliberal globalization has replaced the previous coercive disciplinary power system with individual self-discipline as a means of social control. Women's lack of autonomy in Pakistan was absorbed through self-development discourse. It just built self-confidence to get empowerment and autonomy. The media has played a significant role in encouraging women to take charge of their own lives. Most urban Pakistani women have been successful in gaining possibilities to enter the market because they are connected to the outside world as a global subject (French & Shockley, 2020). The purpose of this study is to find out how dominant power perceives working women. From the perspective of women, the discourse of self-development based on Foucauldian notions of power, discourse, language, and subjectivity. In this study, we examine current prevailing discourse of rationality-discourse (self-reliance) that may serve to perpetuate neoliberalism in Pakistan. At the same time, this discourse encouraged the fusion of the ideas of an individualized society and shared collective responsibility.

### Literature Review

Previous research on neo-liberalism revealed that new modern economy is the most striking feature in entire human history (Zinkina, et al., 2019; Blooms, Van, John, & Heidi, 2019). Globalization has created enormous interconnectedness between states to strengthen global markets (Anrãsa, Gortaria, & Itskhokib, 2017). However, because it exclusively serves developed countries, this quick progressive globe has resulted in greater economic inequality throughout the world.

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It also offers their customers the fantasy of a fairyland at the cost of their subjectivity. It's a complicated framework that's bolstered by several elements. Individuals' ability to communicate at multiple levels is one of the most significant characteristics. It gave people in the first world who profited the most one-size-fits-all high-standard living standards. When people couldn't fit into it, they acquired inferiority complexes. But, more crucially, it prompts the issue of whether or not these technological breakthroughs have proven to be critical for world peace and stability (Boriçi, 2017). Neoliberalism, on the other hand, has changed society's social values by promoting free market fundamentalism (Harvey, A Bbrief History of Neoliberalism, 2005). Socioeconomic policies have changed because of these societal shifts. We may say that neoliberalism is a project aimed at extinguishing the collectivist spirit in society. Neoliberal policies across the world have replaced social solidarity ethics with a stronger individualism that lead to fragile society (Layton, 2010). Globalization is examined by Foucault in terms of subjectivity. He unveils how the actuality of global economic system would increase their obligation and forced its participants to absorb it all once. Several researchers have been focusing on it as historical nominalism (Balibar, 1992; Flynn, 1997; Lemke T. , "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique, 2002; Veyne, 1997). Foucault believed that many abstract notions like individual, society, state, and subject are universal in its characteristics which are used to normalized global control over individuals. He raised concerns on the production of these abstract notions and how they rationalized itself within the social structure. He believes that these practices are universal in its nature. Individuals has influenced by institutions and practices due to living in different context. They actively participate in many forms of practices as members of these institutions to normalize the power structure.

Work on madness, crime, and sexuality were all favourites of Foucault's. He declared the objective of knowledge to be the dominating power's usual practices. He noticed that these new methods were widely accepted and practiced by the public, despite the fact that the system had undergone significant changes. The obsolete customs of society were immobilized by this power structure. (Foucault, 2008, p. 115; Foucault, 2018). Foucault's analysis is not to elucidate the historical underpinnings of practices. However, it is more important to consider how they are brought into the system to control the society. This study is to better understand the numerous ways in which power is regulated in society to normalize their practices. This analytical lens, too, represents the evolution of knowledge and the related truth, which has been reorganized into new domains. Neoliberalism tries to redefine what it means to be human by proposing a new kind of subjectivity. Neoliberalism not only replicates, but also refashions, the individualistic subject of Early Modernism and the Enlightenment. The neoliberal subject is increasingly envisioned as a free, independent, individualistic, self-regulatory agent who may be viewed as a source of capital (Gershon, 2011; Foucault, 2008; Weidner, 2009). Consequently, this neoliberal subject becomes an entrepreneur rather than just following self-interest for themselves. The neoliberal subject is rationally expected to perform in order to improve themselves within this framework. Neoliberalism operates inside a defined framework to optimise performance and become self-reliant. These subjects who are self-reliant are more productive to society and dominating power (Walkerdine, 2001). Neoliberalism, as a dominant force, produces people who appear to be sovereign and autonomous in their daily lives, but who are in fact subject to constant self-monitoring and self-discipline (Foucault, 2008; Dean, 2010). As a result, neoliberalism's disciplinary practises of autonomization and responsabilization maintain the established order while offering societal control. On the other hand, neo-liberal advances have harmed practices of welfare regimes based on social solidarity. It also effected many contemporary neoliberal discourses and "conduct of conduct" maintain the status quo to fulfil the requirements of capitalism's current stage. Thus, haves and haves not disparities in favour of developed nations (Rose, 1999; Binkley, 2011; Lemke L. , 2001).

### **Theoretical Background**

Foucault began work on two independent postulates after delivering 'Discipline and Punish (1977). The first is the 'genealogy of the state,' while the second is the 'genealogy of the subject.' The formal addresses political rationalities, while the latter addresses ethical concerns. He also identified a link between these two postulates which he named it 'technologies of self' and 'technologies of the domination (Lemke T. , 2001). Foucault introduced 'governmentality' as a specification for historical reconstructs who wanted to work on history of world (Ancient Greece to Modern Neo-liberalism) (Foucault M. , Security, Territory, and Population, 1997). In this specification, 'government' retains a political assent but also come up with philosophical, religious, ethics, and medical texts. The state or administrative management, "government" also referred to issues of self-control, family and child guidance, home management, spiritual direction, and so on. He defined government as 'conduct of conduct' to ascertained how governmentality gamut between 'governing the self' to 'governing others'. It

specified a relationship between modern sovereign state and autonomous individual (Foucault M. , 1982; Senellart, 1995).

The term 'governmentality' is a way of twisting his work on the power domain. It views power in a completely different light, one that is good, peaceful, and nonaggressive. It established a relationship between 'technologies of self' and 'technologies of dominance' on the one hand, and "constitution of the subject" and "formation of the state" on the other (Keenan, 1982).

He denotes that the term 'governmentality' elucidates the way how dominating power controlling and normalizing human actions in a more realistic demeanour. The 'conduct of conduct' is used to influence people according to the desires of those in positions of dominance (Foucault, 2008). It is a well-planned strategy using self-technologies to regulate individuals in a way that makes them feel more autonomous and self-reliant. The 'technologies of normalization' discursively edify the person to behave and not behave in precise and purposeful ways (Chambon, 1999).

The 'normalization technologies' seek their things to conform to current sovereign authority. They must see themselves as a 'normal' subject with autonomy in order to conduct their life (Foote & Frank, 1999). The 'technologies of self' are the primary instrument for disciplining people's lives and making them more productive. Disciplinary techniques of the dominating power solicit the individual's willing participation in the process of producing new multiple identities. To put it another way, the self contributes to the power system, which makes it more helpful. This everything transpired in an ordinary fashion, as the individual had no idea that he or she was under the control of a strong entity.

Even though global phenomena such as global political and commercial interests can usurp power technologies. However, he focuses on the primacy of power technologies at local levels. He believes that the state simply usurps power processes. These processes must be identified and investigated at the local, regional, and diffused panopticism levels (Foucault M. , 1980). It is worth to consider political, economic, and legal forces as global unit of analysis. It is a kind of collegial between theses distinct forces. According to Foucault, the rise of capitalism heightened the disperse the modern disciplinary power. This kind of power operates in most diverse atmosphere. To understand the Foucault's concept of post-structuralism it is needed to grasp the whole concept of 'governmentality'. According to him, dominating structure to manipulated social control which is achieved through dispersed and diverse discourses (Burchell, 1991).

Foucault coined the term 'governmentality' to analyze the 'autonomous' individual's ability for self-control. It deals the question how it relates to political domination and economic exploitation. In this aspect, Foucault's interest in subjectivation processes does not imply that he has abandoned power issues. According to him, possibility of division inside the power problematics exists. Power is not deserted notion rather it is the subject of a fundamental "theoretical transformation" (Foucault M. , 1985).

Bauman has used the term 'neoliberalism in more circuitous way. According to him the face of individualization, modern institutional structures have been lured by neoliberalism's individualizing logic. It has contributing to their own disempowerment. Collectively all human institutions enter to the realms of neoliberalism to become the part of 'free trade' (Bauman, 2010). It is a laissez-faire political and economic system in which government and the state are restricted in their ability to meddle in the market or private entrepreneurial activity. However, neoliberalism is not just a normative discourse that decentralized power from the state downwards. It deemed the appropriate powers of the state and what it plays role in ensuring the free trade (Harvey, 2010).

The cornerstone of neoliberalism is the connection between the state and the market. It defines the government's role in the market economy (Peck, 2010). As a result, neoliberalism, or what Bauman may term individualization or Deleuze flexible capitalism, is more than just the devolution of governmental or institutional authorities; it also involves the formation of certain forms of governance.

Neoliberalism is about 'roll-back' and 'roll-out'. It is about market freedoms and forms of governmentality that operate through such freedoms, as well as forms of surveillance and regulation that are designed to inject market principles of competition into all spheres of social and cultural life. Foucault's lectures on biopolitics are most valuable since they confront neoliberalism in terms of these underlying governmentalities (Deleuze, 1995).

According to Foucault, the state is only active in modern society when it is required. It only intervened in the matter of sovereignty. The Panopticon model imitates this kind of administration in which controlling is the main concern of the authority. In modern society, the state, according to Foucault, is only active when it is necessary. It merely stepped in to help with sovereignty issues. The Panopticon model is based on this type of

administration, in which the authority's primary priority is control. The finest illustration would be post-war Germany when the market prevailed while the state lost its legitimacy.

Foucault provide a longer and more detailed history of neoliberalism. It is conventional unit of analysis in sociological literature as individualization. Because it takes individualization more than deregulation, privatization, or governing through freedom (Hall, 2011). Foucault's ideal-types of liberal and neoliberal governmentality might serve as conceptual jumping-off points for sociological examination of governmental arrangements between the market and the state.

### Research Methodology

This research examines how self-development discourse is produced in society and how working women propagate these discourses in Pakistan. This research approach contributed into the production of knowledge in a most effective way. Foucault notions helps to understands the complexity of dominant power and its applications. The post-structuralist paradigm highlighted the psychological behaviour of the individuals to carried out social interaction. Individual self-development practise is not an easy or straightforward process. It resulted in a double responsibility and turned a person into an asset. Language, according to this study, is the power that allows individuals to contribute to the formation of knowledge. This self-created knowledge generates societal 'truths'. By providing women with options and open-ended questions to conduct FDA. This method encouraged them to speak up against their subjectivity. This allowed for the observation of discursive practises that are the result of social interaction of the subjects. This research examines structuralist methods that limit participants' personal views, conversations, and experiences Willig's six steps for discourse analysis were references organised talk data. These configurations revealed several implicit and explicit subject positions. It gives researchers a better understanding about the consequences of these positions for subjectivity and social activities. The data from talk has been utilised to create discursive objects that are well-versed in the study's research issue. There are following stages to conduct FDA:

#### i. Discursive Construction

This step recognized many discursive objects in conversation. We are familiar with neoliberal globalization, autonomy, self-reliance, and subjectivity at this time. With the help of this stage, we will be able to develop a framework to address the issue of discursive subjectivities' societal implications. This research helps to a better understanding of object formation in data. This stage required all references to be cited in the analysis. This stage circumvents the etymological explanation of the references during the analysis.

#### ii. Discourses

In larger discourses, this stage caused variations in the production of distinct things. This stage determines the similarities and differences between distinct discourses. In Pakistani society, for example, women are seen as autonomous, sharing all obligations on their own, and at other times, as major contributors to the national economy.

#### iii. Action Orientation

This stage incorporates the analysis of object what they gained from their subjectivity within wider discourses (Willig, 2001). This stage deals the questions about the relationship between various constructions in the distant talk. For example, by constructing discourse of self-development we identified what women gained in the society being self-reliant and autonomous.

#### iv. Positioning

At this stage, we get to know different subject positions given to the object in wider discourses. These kinds of subject positions identified the demarcation of responsibilities within wider discourses (Davies & Harré, 1990). These discourses bestow 'truth' and 'meaning' which are grabbed by the respondent during conversation. For example, being self-reliant respondent attach itself an identity of 'global subject'.

#### v. Practice

This stage determined the relationship between discourse and practice within wider discursive construction. These subject positions open up and close down opportunities for action. Discourses restrict what may be said and done by establishing specific interpretations of the world and placing persons inside them in specific ways. For example, Pakistani women constructing as 'othering' if they would not be self-reliant and autonomous. The options for women to take action by talking and doing more about their subjectivity are mapped out in this stage.

#### vi. Subjectivity

The link between discourse and subjectivity is investigated in the last step of the analysis. Discourses make particular ways of seeing the world and being in the world possible (Willig, 2001). This step of the analysis investigates the effects of various subject positions on the participants' subjective experiences. We are now interested in what can be felt, thought, and experienced from distinct subject positions, having raised questions about what can be stated and done from different discourses. Pakistani working women, for example, are portrayed as rational being. This might have an impact on their sense of agency, especially if they assert it through deliberate surrender to a hegemonic power system. This study conducted in-depth interviews with working women from higher education institution (Islamia University Bahawalpur, Punjab) about their experiences on self-development. Only small sample of 10 participants only were chosen for FDA due to preference scrupulous nature of discourse analysis. This study is ensured the measure of multiplicity of sample along with local identification.

#### Data Analysis

The data analysis of the talk intended to look at the relationship between the neo-liberal discourses and subjectivity of the working women. However, the main purpose of this study was to identify different ways to understand how working women respond to their own subjectivity in discourses. According to Willing (1999) discourses represented real picture of the society that expedite the process of having knowledge about different subject positions constructed by these discourses (Willig, 2001). For the purpose of data analysis all the interviews transcript files converted into rich text format (.rtf extension) to make it transfer into the NVivo document files. The transcripts were read closely to identified major themes for the interpretation of subjectivity in 'talk' text. Initial themes for coding were done while process of transcription undergoes. Then, this study generates free nodes by using of NVivo to put together similar ideas of the participants.

#### Discussion and Main Findings

This research is centred on working women's perceptions of their own subjectivity, which are shaped by neoliberalism's self-development discourse. Parker emphasised that discourse analysis negates 'essentialist universal truths' about human nature (Parker, 2005). The social and psychological effects are subjective in their attributes (Willig, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method*, 2001). The FDA defines the effects of discourse on the psychology of the subjects. The findings are discovered about working women subjectivity through discourse of self-development. The discussion on the main findings is derives with the help of relevant theory which provided a distinct theoretical framework to this study.

#### i. Discourse of Self-Reliance

The stage two of FDA identified the discourse of self-reliance. The recurrence of this theme in data analysis revealed the working women's subjectivity in a way that they do not identify it as subjectivity. Working women positioned themselves as subjects in this discursive sphere, however as self-reliant individuals capable of handling all life's duties. A self-sufficient individual must be able to accept herself as she is. This issue focuses on Foucault's theoretical conceptions of 'technology of self' and 'psy-complex' in the context of conservative Pakistani culture, where women typically do domestic duties. It has the capability of acting as a rational being who comprehends everything and accepts responsibility. The stage three of FDA focusing on action orientation are considered theoretically through the lens of discursive psychology. It focused on language as an alternative to social psychology. Working women earn credibility by positioning themselves to their action toward well-being at stage three of the analysis. Working women talk about how working on well-being provides them autonomy and independence in private and public sphere. Working women's presentations in discourses reflect their position as self-sufficient and rational, according to the research findings. Working women's positioning at stage four of analysis corresponds to Foucault's concepts of subjectification and normalisation of dominant power. Working women who are subjected to and influenced by dominant power and knowledge and considered themselves empowered. This study discovered that well-being and empowerment are the signs of rationality at stage five. At this point, the formation of working women's subjectivity as self-development within the context of rationality discourse is being identified. It demonstrates how working women open up to the discursive practise of being rational and articulate about their subjectivity in this global system through action orientation and positioning in discursive domain. Working women's ways of being and seeing, as well as psychoanalysis and Foucault's power concepts' social views, reveal an individual's ontology and epistemology. The psychoanalytic lens gives individual identities at stage six. In a global world, women perceive themselves handling the changing social environment. The way women view society has an impact on global knowledge show. The ramifications are significant for both

women and society. Self-hood is constantly constructed and reproduced in neoliberal societies through self-development discourse. Foucault's theory of governmentality is the foundation for discourse rationality (Kiersey, 2009). It defined as the 'conduct of conduct' that forms the subjectivity of 'autonomous, rational, and self-directing' beings. This neoliberal subject must think of himself or herself in terms of human capital. Because their only purpose is to serve the global economy (Rose, 1999). Working women are encouraged to become "self-centred". Being rational and self-reliant requires "awareness" and "decision-making skill" to solve all life difficulties. It has pushed working women to seek solutions to their social, economic, professional, and domestic life's problems. Previously, these challenges were shared concerns and the obligation of governments to address them. Although now that we are global subjects, it will be our own personal responsibility to resolve all of our difficulties.

## ii. Discourse of Individualization

The individualistic discourse promotes entrepreneurial individuals who are neoliberal society representatives. The individual saw themselves as a self-portfolio that was continuously seeking to improve their well-being. As a result of neoliberal globalisation, the person makes himself marketable. Then you must know how to gradually transform your living style while staying on track being as rational. You must keep yourself ready to learn new practical skills and analytical tools. It necessary to gradually eliminate the negative aspects that have kept you down from your lifestyle and replace them with new habits and rituals that will eventually release the power inside you. It will lead you to your desired destination. Individualism is considered as the opposite of collectivism in its characteristics. 'Individualism' refers to the 'selfishness' and 'egoism' of a person who only thinks about themselves and ignore the importance of collectivism. As an entrepreneur of herself, the individualistic subject of global society produces and reproduces. Individualistic discourse restricts the individual's sense of community and collective identity as a member of society (O'Flynn & Petersen, 2007). Working women were introduced to the society, who was created as a 'robust' in the language. All women who are a part of this dominating global civilization are required to meet these norms. The neoliberal governmentality is a tool to produce entrepreneurs (Walkerdine, 2001). This is a rejection of an individual's commonality and communal identity in society. In neo-liberal world financial issues are now becoming very personal individual problems and individuals have to resolve all its own (Kelan, 2008). Individuals were identified as transformable beings who reproduced themselves according to the needs of dominant discourse in the entrepreneurship discourse. The media emphasised that self-development is the key to solving all of a woman's problems. They concluded that in a male-dominated society, self-development would be the primary option for constructing autonomous individuals.

They individuals has become solely responsible for society's looseness and frailty on collectivism ground (Rose, 1999). This leads to the individual's responsibility on their personal and private domain. Pakistan's social and economic framework focuses only on blaming males for gender inequality, while placing all responsibility on women for being flawed and not carrying on all their obligations. Individualistic discourse rebuilt women's identities as entrepreneurs who referred to themselves as "human capital" and presented themselves as a portfolio self. This new identity increases their business and societal value. The economic discourse that compared and contrasted within its boundaries was identified at stage two. Individuals are implicated in individualization building in society's assignment of what working women can perform, according to theory. Women's financial independence affected market and home decision-making processes. The narrative of self-development, which implies a self-help culture bolstered by the psy-complex, was fostered by neoliberal subjectivity. The recent investigation discovered that the psy-complex that serves the global economic system has become more dominating.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the subjectivity of working women in Pakistani culture, which is more prone to male dominance. During interviews with working women, this study discovered different subject positions. These ideologies spread under the guise of neoliberal globalization's self-development narrative. These discourses have a natural capacity to interact with one another. In the current study, the dominating discourses in the Pakistani context are depicted. Neoliberal globalisation, it may be claimed, has altered the human spirit, intellect, and thinking to meet their demands and expectations.

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