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Introducing the Politeness Index (PI) and Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model: Analysis of Politeness in Pakistani Televised Drama Qarz-e-Jaan (2024-25)

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ABSTRACT

This study presented a unique mixed-method research design that explored the use of politeness in Pakistani television drama, which employed both a new quantitative tool-Politeness Index (PI), and a qualitative interpretation model-Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model for analyzing television content. The two models were used together to analyze four specific episodes (selected on the basis of their importance to the overall story line) of the 2024-25 Pakistan television drama series, Qarz-e-Jaan; providing researchers with data regarding the changes in how politeness is practiced over time in response to the different stages of the drama's storyline. Results from the quantitative analysis indicated a consistent low level of Politeness Index (from 0.23 to 0.29) for each episode analyzed, indicating that there were fewer instances of explicit lexical politeness markers as compared to informal and direct expressions of communication. The qualitative analysis using the five dimensional SPRP Model (Relational Work, Cultural Frame, Emotional Display Norms, Media Staging, and Gender/Power Mediation) demonstrated that respect and relational care are most frequently expressed through contextually based, emotionally-based, non-verbally based, and culturally based practices, rather than through overtly verbalized deference. The findings challenge universalist face-saving models, demonstrate the centrality of implicit and relationally negotiated politeness in Pakistani drama, and highlight how gendered agency and moral discourse reshape traditional politeness expectations in patriarchal settings. The PI-SPRP framework offers a replicable, culturally sensitive tool for future socio-pragmatic research on South Asian media and beyond.



Introduction

Politeness is more than the use of words such as “please” or honorific pronouns. In many cultures, especially in South Asia, respect, care, and moral alignment are often shown through silence, tone, emotional display, and shared cultural understanding rather than explicit linguistic markers. Pakistani television dramas, watched by millions every day, are a rich site for observing these practices because they portray family conflicts, power relations, gender roles, and moral dilemmas in highly emotional and culturally recognizable ways.

Traditional politeness research, led by Brown and Levinson (1987), focused on universal strategies for saving face. Later scholars (Watts, 2003; Locher & Watts, 2005; Kádár & Haugh, 2013) argued that politeness is not universal but relational, evaluative, and deeply tied to local moral order. Despite this theoretical shift, most studies of non-Western politeness still rely on Western strategy lists or remain purely qualitative. Few offer simple, repeatable ways to measure change across long narratives such as drama serials.

The present study fills this gap. It analyzes the 2024-25 HUM TV drama *Qarz-e-Jaan* by introducing two new tools: (1) the Politeness Index (PI), a straightforward quantitative measure of explicit polite versus informal markers in Urdu dialogue, and (2) the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model, a five-dimensional framework that examines relational work, cultural values, emotional norms, media staging, and gender–power dynamics.

The study analyzed four purposefully selected key episodes of the 2024-25 HUM TV drama *Qarz-e-Jaan*, combining quantitative measurement (Politeness Index, $PI = 0.23\text{--}0.29$) with qualitative interpretation (SPRP Model) to trace the negotiation of politeness across the narrative arc from initial hierarchy establishment and adversarial conflict to emotional reconciliation and climactic confrontation. It directly addressed three research questions: 1. How frequently do explicit polite forms appear in Pakistani drama dialogue? 2. When lexical politeness is scarce, how is respect and relational care still achieved? 3. How do gender, emotion, and narrative progression reshape politeness practices? Findings revealed consistently low use of overt polite markers ($PI = 0.23\text{--}0.29$) yet strong politeness enacted primarily through implicit, contextual, emotional, non-verbal, and culturally embedded means, confirming that in Pakistani televised discourse politeness is predominantly a relational, emotional, and moral practice rather than a lexical one.

Literature Review

Politeness has been examined from multiple theoretical angles over the past four decades. Fang Wang (2014) treats politeness as a sociocultural practice rooted in the desire to maintain harmonious interpersonal relations and reduce the risk of conflict. He frames it as both a feature of language use and a pragmatic phenomenon, identifying three broad perspectives: politeness as a real-world goal (psychologically positive behaviour toward the addressee), politeness as the reflection of culture-specific social norms (e.g., honorific usage), and politeness as a pragmatic mechanism. Within the pragmatic strand, Wang discusses Grice’s conversational maxims, the idea of a “conversational contract” that binds speakers to social expectations, and Brown and Levinson’s (1987) influential face-saving theory.

The most important development in the area was that of Richard J. Watts (2003) challenging Brown & Levinson’s model, and arguing that there is an essential difference between “first order”

politeness (the laymen's notion of how to behave politely or impolitely in common interactions) and "second order" politeness (what the researchers have come up with.) In addition, he made another distinction, "politic behavior," (expected, rule-governed linguistic behavior in a particular context) from "politeness" per se, where the participants will have explicitly judged some behavior as going beyond mere expectations. The movement to the discourse level, therefore, shifted the focus from universally applicable strategies to locally negotiated meanings.

Brown and Levinson's model (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ladegaard, 2004, 2016), which has been built on Goffman's (1955) understanding of 'face', has a tendency to equate facework with politeness. While Goffman (1955) and later Brown and Levinson (1987) demonstrated how face could be attended to via both positive and negative actions, most researchers have interpreted politeness as generally positive action. Similarly, Anthony (2013) emphasized the importance of recognizing that politeness is highly dependent on the cultural and social context, and thus that if one ignores certain sociological factors such as the individual's age, position/status, degree of formality, etc., it may result in an act that threatens someone's face. In this regard, she suggests that Brown and Levinson's negative politeness strategies would serve well to reduce the likelihood of such risk in intercultural or hierarchical interactions.

The use of Politeness Theory in educational environments is exemplified by an examination conducted by Liu Peng et al., (2014) regarding how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in China apply positive and negative politeness strategies (e.g., honorific language, hedge, indirectness) to provide an environment of support for their students; to protect students' "face"; to reduce the distance between teacher/student; and to increase learners' confidence. The research provides an example of the application of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory in institutional communication.

A second major contribution was made by Blum-Kulka (1987). Blum-Kulka found that indirectness does not always correspond with politeness. She used request realizations to demonstrate this idea. The most conventional indirect forms received the highest scores in terms of politeness, while off record hints were seen as less polite even though they were highly indirect because they had lower levels of pragmatic clarity. These findings emphasized the importance of separating the scales of indirectness and perceived politeness. Spencer-Oatey (2008) widened the view to "rapport management." It includes face and also social rights and goals. Agha (2007) shows how address forms (e.g., honorifics) carry social meaning. These meanings are shared across a whole society.

In addition, in terms of media; Hayati and Rizka (2015) studied "Talk Indonesia" which is an Indonesian talk show and they identified that the host used Bald-On-Record strategies for efficiency and clarity and Positive Politeness to create rapport among the guests and the audience; and Negative Politeness when discussing sensitive issues or when dealing with high status guests. Thus, as Hayati and Rizka (2015) conclude, the selection of strategies by the host was directly associated with the social distance and the relative power of the addressed person and therefore, the variables of Brown & Levinson's theory are still relevant today in contemporary broadcasting. Taken together, these studies reveal a trajectory from universalist, strategy-based models toward more discursive, relational, and culturally situated understandings of politeness, while still acknowledging the enduring influence of face concerns and social indexing in everyday interaction.

Recent politeness research has moved away from Brown and Levinson's (1987) universal model. Locher and Watts (2005, 2008) introduced the idea of "relational work." They say all talk manages relationships. Politeness is only the positive part of this work. Neutral or negative behaviour also belongs to the same scale. Locher and Watts use "Relational Work" instead of the previously used "Politeness" because they want to move away from the limited view of politeness. Every single action/utterance during an interaction, does relational work. It can either create, reinforce, weaken or restore a connection between two people. Relational work is a spectrum with "polite" behavior being at the extreme end. To be considered "polite", behavior has to be labeled by other individuals as "exceeding what was expected" or "particularly considerate". Behavior that meets expectations, but does not exceed them, would then be referred to as "politic." Behavior that is deemed inconsiderate may be viewed as rude, or overly polite. As Locher and Watts expand their research, from focusing on individual strategies to how both parties continue to negotiate their relationship, relational work offers a better participant centered approach for environments where explicit politeness markers do not exist. Arundale (2010) argues that face is not individual property. Face is created together in every moment of talk. Kádár and Haugh (2013) add that politeness depends on local moral order and social networks. People judge politeness by their own cultural rules, not by fixed strategies. According to Kádár and Haugh, our understanding of what is polite, and what is impolite, is based upon the moral values of the society we live in – the unspoken rules of how people ought to behave and their rights and obligations toward one another in social contexts. As such, politeness emerges when there is evidence that the parties involved have recognized those mutual expectations for behaviour; impoliteness exists when one party has violated those norms and has been allowed to do so without punishment. Since each culture and community will likely have its own moral codes and values (i.e., the workplace, family, regions) the same verbal action may be viewed differently depending on the context. For example, in many collectivist societies (i.e., South Asia), it may be the obligation of individuals to protect the honor of their groups, to demonstrate emotional commitment, and/or to use direct language with members of their in-group; all of which would be considered to be part of the moral code of behavior and therefore polite, although they may be classified by Western models as being "face threatening".

Emotion is now seen as central. Langlotz and Locher (2017) and Ortiz (2021) explain that strong feelings can be polite or impolite depending on the situation. For example, loud crying or anger may be acceptable and even expected in some cultures. In their study, Langlotz & Locher proved that emotion is an integral aspect of evaluating politeness, rather than simply being one of many aspects; every society has its own display rules regarding what emotions are displayed, to what degree, and to whom. The behavior that adheres to those rules (i.e. grieve openly at a funeral, show great passion and anger when your honor is challenged, express great enthusiasm in praising your friend), although loud, direct and/or "impolite" in terms of lexical choice is typically viewed as relationally appropriate and polite. By contrast, to suppress an anticipated emotion, or to express the "wrong" emotion is viewed as cold, or off-putting. Their research helps explain why, for example, the moments of extreme emotional expression in Pakistani dramas (shouting accusations, expressing intense emotion through crying or passionate confessions), are not considered rude breaks in politeness but as legitimate moral expressions of relationship authenticity and politeness.

Watts (2003) created a basic distinction between first order politeness (politeness₁), and second order politeness (politeness₂). First order politeness represents how ordinary people see behavior in everyday life as polite, impolite, rude, or proper, and is a lay (emic) interpretation of politeness. Second order politeness is the scientifically developed concept that linguists use when developing theories about politeness (Brown & Levinson's strategies). Watts contended that much politeness research has incorrectly labeled participant data with second order categories, without seeing if

participants labeled their behaviors as first order categories. Grainger (2011) advanced the idea of first vs. second order categorizations with an institutional and intercultural perspective on lay and analysts' interpretations of politeness: what analysts code as negative politeness may be perceived by participants as being distant, and/or cold. The distinctions between first and second order politeness requires researchers to prioritize participants' interpretations over the researcher's labels. Culpeper (2011) and Haugh (2015) study intentional impoliteness. They show that causing offence can also be normal and accepted behaviour. Grainger (2011) and Holmes et al. (2012) remind us that every day (first-order) views of politeness often differ from academic (second-order) definitions.

In Pakistani dramas, Mustafa and Rashid (2021) found that switching between *tum* and *āp* signals power, intimacy, or moral stance more than simple respect. Rahim et al., (2025) provide a valuable contribution to the developing literature on politeness in Pakistani broadcast media. Their study investigates host–guest interaction in 6 episodes of the very successful entertainment program *Mazaaq Raat* over three seasons of broadcasting. Using the classic 4-strategies approach developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), i.e. bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record, Rahim et al., provide strong evidence that all four strategies occur. Positive politeness was found to dominate both opening sequences and those featuring guests from the entertainment industry. There are however several limitations which limit the analytical strength of Rahim et al.'s study. Firstly, as their study is based solely on the 1987 Brown and Levinson taxonomy of politeness strategies, they do not consider the large amount of criticism that has been directed at this model over the last three decades. That is, they do not address criticisms of Brown and Levinson's critique for instance, relational work (Locher & Watts, 2005), first order vs. second order politeness (Watts, 2003; Grainger, 2011), moral order (Kádár & Haugh, 2013), or emotional display norms (Langlotz & Locher, 2017) that have appeared since 1987. As a result, the study's analysis appears somewhat dated and cannot provide explanations for why some of the face threatening actions performed are not only allowed, but actually enjoyed by the studio audience and television viewers. Secondly, there is insufficient evidence to support the assertion that the host's strategy selection is mostly arbitrary (with the exception of opening positive politeness); Rahim et al., do not include any frequency counts or statistical analyses. Lastly, while Rahim et al., identify some interesting patterns in the data, they miss an opportunity to link their findings to larger theoretical issues of gender, power, regional variation, or the ways in which the stage setting for the program influences how it functions, which have recently emerged in South Asian pragmatics studies.

In short, modern research treats politeness as relational, emotional, cultural, and locally evaluated. The present study follows this direction and offers the SPRP Model for Pakistani television drama. It examines politeness in the Pakistani television drama *Qarz-e-Jaan* (2024–25) through a new mixed-method approach. It combines a simple quantitative tool, the Politeness Index (PI), which measures the ratio of explicit polite markers to informal/direct forms, with a qualitative framework called the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model. By analyzing four key episodes, the study shows that overt polite words are rare throughout the drama (PI ranging from 0.23 to 0.29), yet respect and relational care remain strong. These qualities appear instead through tone, silence, emotion, cultural values, visual staging, and shifting gender roles. Findings of this research show that politeness is primarily implied and relationally focused in Pakistani Serials as opposed to lexical, therefore provide an example that can be replicated in terms of examining politeness in South Asian media.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed methodology based on Corpus Research using the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model; specifically focusing on the Pakistani television drama "Qarz-e-Jaan" HUM TV (2024-25); it was chosen because of its focus on gender, morality and justice in patriarchal societies. The sources of all data consist of the public broadcasts on HUM TV and the corresponding uploads to legitimate video streaming websites. Academic transcripts are used solely as part of fair research use for this project. Dialogue, along with character names, are contextual references to illustrate language, which is an ethical way to reference copyrighted content.

Data Selection and Sampling

To demonstrate a complete picture of both relational and moral development throughout the series, four episodes have been specifically selected:

Episode	Thematic Focus	Analytical Relevance
Episode 1	Introduction of main characters and social hierarchies (lawyer-client and father-daughter power relations)	Establishes baseline politeness forms and hierarchical address patterns
Episode 12	Courtroom conflict and moral debate	Displays direct and indirect politeness strategies in adversarial contexts
Episode 24	Emotional reconciliation	Explores forgiveness, apology, and relational repair
Episode 30 (Final)	Transformation and public redemption	Reveals shifts in respect language, humility, and gendered speech alignment

The study used manual transcription in Urdu of each episode that was then cleaned and broken down into individual utterance to analyze politeness. A particular selection was made to capture the progression of the dramas plot from conflict/confrontation to resolution/reconciliation; this allowed for the ability to temporally trace politeness dynamics.

Quantitative Analysis: The Politeness Index (PI)

A new quantitative method called The Politeness Index (PI) is being utilized by the study to measure the frequency and distribution of both explicit and implicit politeness throughout the selected episodes. The PI is calculated as:

$$PI = \frac{\text{Polite Word Frequency}}{\text{Polite Word Frequency} + \text{Informal Word Frequency}}$$

- "Polite Word Frequency": This calculation includes lexical items that are expressions of deference/respect (e.g. "جناب", "براه کرم", "شکریہ", "آپ").
- "Informal word frequency": This calculation includes lexical items that can be classified as informal/direct address (e.g., "اوے", "یار", "تو", "تم").

The PI is used to determine an episode's density of politeness and allows for the comparison of episodes.

In prior research using the PI, it was found that the PI for Qarz-e-Jaan was 0.29 in Episode 1 and 0.25 in Episode 12 indicating a decrease in explicit politeness and an increase in relational/politeness forms based on the context. It is anticipated that the same methodology will be applied to episodes 24 and 30 in order to determine if there will be a resurgence in the use of polite markers with the transition to reconciliation/transformational phases or a continued reliance on implicit politeness forms.

Qualitative Analysis: Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model

The SPRP Model offers an interpretive model for analyzing the way politeness can function as a relational and culturally-based practice in both the gendered social structure and narrative of each episode. Five categories of analysis were used in reviewing each episode's transcripts: Relational Work, Cultural Frame, Emotional Display Norms, Contextual Hierarchy, and Interactional Intent.

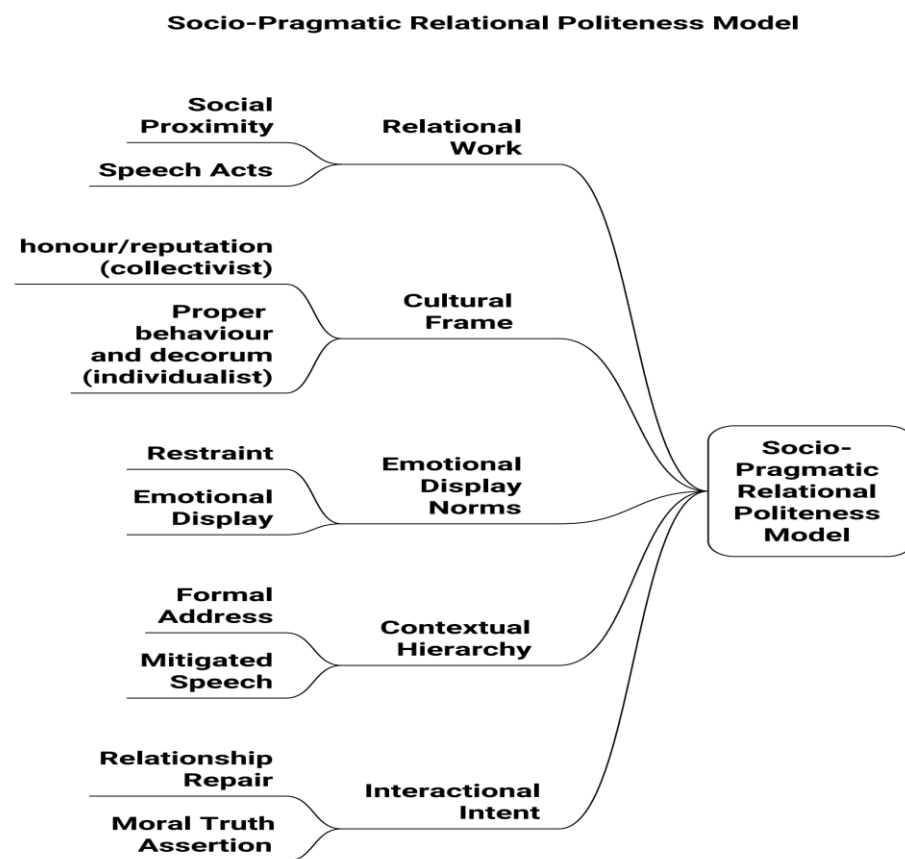


Image 1. Shows Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model and its dimensions

1. Relational Work: The manner in which characters negotiate their relationships, and thus the level of social proximity/distancing through tone, and types of speech acts that are employed. This dimension looks at how people actively manage closeness or distance in their relationships during interaction. Through tone of voice (soft, sharp, warm, cold), choice of words, and the kinds of speech acts they use (e.g., requesting, commanding, confessing, consoling, accusing), speakers

continuously signal whether they want to draw someone nearer emotionally or keep/maintain a respectful distance. In the SPRP Model, politeness is judged mainly by how well these choices support the ongoing relationship rather than by the presence of specific “polite” words.

2. Cultural Frame: The cultural values (such as *ijjat*, *adab*, collectivist vs individualist) that shape the perception of what is polite or impolite behavior. This dimension refers to the shared cultural beliefs and values (especially *izzat*- honour/reputation, and *adab*-proper behaviour and decorum) that decide what counts as polite or impolite in a given society. In collectivist Pakistani culture, protecting family honour, showing respect to elders, and maintaining group harmony are central. Because of these values, the same behaviour (e.g., direct speech or silence) can be seen as polite in one context (among close family) and impolite in another (with elders or outsiders). The cultural frame acts as the background “rule book” that participants use to evaluate each other’s behaviour.

3. Emotional Display Norms: The ways in which emotional regulation (restraint, silence, or emotional display) contribute to an individual's perceived politeness. This dimension examines the culturally accepted rules about when and how emotions should be shown or hidden. In many situations, openly expressing feelings (love, anger, grief, fear) is not only allowed but expected and considered the most respectful and honest way to behave, especially in close relationships. Conversely, staying silent or overly restraining emotions when strong feelings are expected can be judged as cold or dishonest. Within the SPRP Model, following these emotional display norms often matters more for politeness than using formal language or mitigation strategies.

4. Contextual Hierarchy: This dimension examines how social and relational hierarchies determine the expected level and form of politeness. Higher-status participants (elders, authority figures) consistently receive more formal address, honorifics, and mitigated speech, while equal or intimate relationships permit directness and informal forms. Politeness is thus not evenly distributed but systematically organized by power and status differences; adherence to hierarchical expectations itself constitutes respectful behavior.

5. Interactional Intent: This dimension focuses on the speaker’s immediate communicative goal as the driver of politeness choices. Characters strategically select formal or informal styles, mitigation or directness, restraint or emotional openness depending on whether they aim to repair a relationship, assert moral truth, express solidarity, demand accountability, or maintain harmony. Politeness emerges as a flexible, goal-oriented resource rather than a fixed set of rules.

The SPRP framework views politeness not as a static lexical concept, but as a fluid process of negotiating one's identity, emotions, and hierarchies. Using this framework, a female protagonist's assertion or restraint in her language use serves as a point of examination for assessing changing gender norms and the evolution of moral discourse.

Analytical Integration

The combination of PI and SPRP provides a multi-dimensional assessment:

- Quantitative, The PI measures the lexical density of politeness in each stage of the narrative.
- Qualitative, The SPRP model analyzes contextual, emotional, and relational interpretations that underlie politeness expressions.

In combination, the two methods illustrate how Qarz-e-Jaan shapes and develops politeness as a moral and gendered discourse; further illustrating the transition from institutionally-based deference to emotionally negotiated equality.

This methodological design establishes a replicable episode-based model for studying politeness as both a linguistic and cultural performance. Combining the Politeness Index (PI) and the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model, this study offers a new quantitative and qualitative framework for examining how television programming in Pakistan negotiates gender, morality, and power through changing politeness.

Positioning of the Politeness Index (PI) and the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model

The study of the Pakistani television drama Qarz-e-Jaan (2024–25) introduced two new analytical frameworks: The Politeness Index (PI), and the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model. These frameworks can be placed theoretically and methodologically relative to other studies of politeness with regard to the research of Brown and Levinson (1987) that established a traditional "face-saving" paradigm for understanding politeness and subsequent criticisms of this work.

Politeness Index (PI): Positioning within Politeness Quantification Traditions

The Politeness Index (PI) is described as a basic, repeatable quantitative measure to assess the amount of politeness in an utterance as follows:

$$PI = \text{Polite Marker Frequency} / (\text{Polite Marker Frequency} + \text{Informal/ Direct Marker Frequency})$$

As such the Politeness Index is positioned within the broader tradition of quantitative politeness analysis that includes frequency based and corpus-based research into politeness that is developed from the limitations of the universalistic strategy-based model of Brown and Levinson (1987).

Earlier attempts at quantification include: Watts' (2003) politeness behavior counts, Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness formulae frequency counts, Haugh's (2015) interactional achievement measurements, and more recent South Asian studies that count honorific particles and address terms (e.g., Agha, 2007; Mustafa & Rashid, 2021).

What distinguishes the PI from these predecessors is its deliberate simplicity and cultural specificity: it does not attempt to code entire speech acts or strategies (which is highly subjective), but restricts itself to a closed inventory of culturally salient lexical and pronominal markers in Urdu (آپ vs اے تم, جناب, شکریہ, براہ کرم vs آپ). By doing so, the PI consciously sidesteps the ethnocentric bias inherent in applying Brown and Levinson's strategy taxonomy to non-Western data, where many politeness phenomena are realized non-verbally or relationally rather than through explicit mitigating devices. The PI thus positions itself as a culturally grounded, low-inference quantitative anchor that complements rather than competes with deeper qualitative interpretation.

Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model: Positioning within Post-Brown-and-Levinson “Discursive” and “Relational” Turns

The SPRP Model explicitly aligns itself with the relational and discursive turn in politeness research initiated by scholars such as: Watts (2003) politic vs. polite behavior, Locher and Watts (2005, 2008) relational work, Arundale (2010) face as co-constituted in interaction, Spencer-Oatey (2008) rapport management, Grainger (2011) and Holmes et al. (2012) socio-pragmatic variation in non-Western contexts, and Kádár and Haugh (2013) relational networks and moral order.

More specifically, SPRP synthesizes five analytical dimensions (Relational Work, Cultural Frame, Emotional Display Norms, Media Staging, and Gender/Power Mediation) into a single integrated framework tailored for analyzing televised discourse in patriarchal, collectivist South Asian settings. It moves decisively away from Brown and Levinson’s individualistic, face-threatening-act-centered model toward a view of politeness as:

- dynamically negotiated in relationships,
- deeply embedded in cultural moral orders (izzat, adab, family honor),
- performed through emotion regulation and silence as much as through words,
- shaped by media affordances (camera angle, pacing, visual framing), and
- gendered in systematic but evolving ways.

In this sense, SPRP can be positioned as a contextualized, media-sensitive extension of Locher and Watts’ relational work paradigm, further enriched by South Asian socio-pragmatic scholarship (e.g., Grainger & Al-Shabbab, 2011; Mustafa & Rashid, 2021) and by recent work on emotion and politeness (Langlotz & Locher, 2017; Ortiz, 2021).

Combined Contribution and Original Positioning

The true innovation of the study lies in the systematic integration of the quantitative PI with the qualitative SPRP Model. While many recent studies either remain purely qualitative-discursive or purely corpus-statistical, this research demonstrates how a low-inference frequency metric (PI) can serve as an objective baseline that then feeds into richer relational and cultural interpretation (SPRP). This mixed-method, episode-based design offers a replicable template for longitudinal analysis of politeness across a serialized narrative, an area still underexplored in politeness research.

In summary, the Politeness Index (PI) and SPRP Model collectively position themselves at the intersection of the discursive/relational turn and culturally sensitive corpus pragmatics, providing a methodologically hybrid, theoretically updated framework specifically suited to analyzing politeness as a gendered moral discourse in contemporary Pakistani televised drama.

Findings and Interpretation

Pakistani Dramas

1. *Qarz-e-Jaan* (2024–25) – HUM TV

Politeness Index (PI) Calculation for Episode 1

Metric	Value
Polite marker frequency	55
Informal marker frequency	137
Politeness Index (PI)	0.29 ($\approx 29\%$)

Quantitative Findings

An analysis of the frequency of Urdu politeness markers (such as "آپ", "شکریہ", "براه کرم" compared to informal/direct address forms (such as "تم", "تو", "یار") in the Qarz-e-Jaan - Episode 1 transcript was performed.

Polite expressions were used less often than informal/direct markers; The use of informal/direct markers totaled 137 while politeness markers totaled 55 with a resulting Politeness Index (PI) of .29.

This numerical evidence suggests that the number of overt lexical politeness forms constitutes approximately one-third of the interpersonal markers used in the episode.

The total count of informal address terms (such as "تم"), and the small numbers of honorific/deferential forms (such as "آپ" and "شکریہ") also quantify the relative lack of lexical politeness in Pakistani drama dialogue, however the significance of politeness in the interactional context remains.

Interpretation (SPRP Perspective)

From the perspective of the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) model, this imbalance in polite vocabulary represents an underlying cultural orientation toward relationally implied rather than lexically expressed politeness strategies in the construction of respect, hierarchy and emotional connection between characters within Qarz-e-Jaan.

1. Relational Work: The limited usage of honorifics also shows that politeness can be constructed through relational work deference, obedience, tone rather than through repeated polite lexicography.

2. Cultural Frame: Within Pakistani socio-cultural norms, terms like "تم" or "تو" can convey intimacy, seniority, or emotional closeness with the individual being addressed, and thus do not necessarily imply impoliteness. Therefore, the low level of polite vocabulary in Qarz-e-Jaan does not represent a lack of respect, but instead indicates that the politeness system in play is one which is contextually dependent on social hierarchies and kinships.

3. Emotional Display & Media Staging: Finally, politeness is displayed through gestures, silences, and prosody in the dramatization of Qarz-e-Jaan, (e.g., softer tones, lowered eyes, pauses of deference), rather than simply through direct displays of polite language.

In summary, the low Politeness Index (0.29) quantitatively provides evidence to support the SPRP argument that in the television discourse of Pakistan, politeness is a relational activity that is

encoded in the social pragmatics of the social structure of interaction, as opposed to being a function of the frequency of polite lexical items.

Politeness Index (PI) Calculation for Episode 12

Metric	Value
Polite marker frequency	61
Informal marker frequency	184
Politeness Index (PI)	0.25 ($\approx 25\%$)

Findings and Interpretation (Episode 12 – Qarz-e-Jaan)

Quantitative Findings

A frequency analysis of Urdu politeness markers (e.g., “آپ”, “شکریہ”, “پراہ کرم”) versus informal or direct expressions (e.g., “تم”, “تو”, “یار”) was performed on *Qarz-e-Jaan Episode 12*. An episode contained sixty-one explicit politeness markers, versus one-hundred eighty-four informal markers, which equates to a Politeness Index (PI), of .25; therefore, polite language forms are only used once in four times relative to informal forms for interpersonal communication purposes during an episode. Institutional/Emotional episodes with honorifics (“آپ”, “جناب”, “شکریہ” "you", "thank you", etc.) will be most likely found, whereas conversational informal pronouns (“تم” and “تو” "you" / "you") will have the greatest frequency of occurrence.

Interpretation (SPRP Perspective)

Using the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) model:

1. Relational Work: The lower Politeness Index (PI) shows that the people are using relational position and contextual respect to express respect more than through lexical politeness. Politeness is expressed by showing empathy; using an empathetic tone; showing restraint emotionally; and compliance rather than through explicit markers.
2. Cultural Frame: In Pakistani socio-pragmatic culture, saying “تم” or “تو” does not always mean rudeness. It can represent closeness, seniority, or emotional distance. Therefore, low lexical politeness represents culturally acceptable implied deference when speaking in familial or hierarchical settings.
3. Emotional Display: Episode 12 contains many instances where there is high emotional tension and many emotional conflict resolution scenes. As such, there are several examples of non-verbal politeness (soft speech, hesitations, tone) used instead of verbal markers (such as “پراہ کرم”) of politeness. Sincerity was represented through emotion and not formally.
4. Contextual Hierarchy: The use of polite versus informal forms directly correlates to the social power hierarchy. Those who hold higher positions of power/elders provide directives with authority while those who are subordinated utilize softer tones/silence and do not explicitly apologize or thank others.

The Politeness Index of .25 further supports a continued reliance on informal forms of address and relationally embedded forms of politeness in *Qarz-e-Jaan Episode 12*. Using the SPRP model, the

episode also illustrates that Pakistani television discourse uses socio-relational contexts to establish respect and emotional alignment rather than through the expression of overt lexical politeness and, therefore, reinforces the culturally preferred method of using implicit forms of politeness over overt ones.

Politeness Index (PI) – Episode 24

Table 1: Politeness Index Metrics (Episode 24)

Metric	Value
Polite marker frequency	73
Informal marker frequency	198
Politeness Index (PI)	0.26 ($\approx 26\%$)

$$PI = \frac{73}{73 + 198} = \frac{73}{271} = 0.26$$

Therefore, the Politeness Index = 0.26; this means, there is a polite marker present in 26 percent of all interactional markers in Episode 24.

Quantitative Findings (Episode 24)

1. The episode had higher numbers of informal markers (198). The conversation episodes in the series have many highly emotive and intense moments such as romantic confessions, expressions of frustration or making important family decisions. As a result of these types of conversations, the speakers use a high number of informal directness markers.

2. Polite markers were moderately used (73) Mostly, polite language was used in:

- Addressing elders with respect (e.g., *بابا، جناب، خالہ*)
- Moments of apology
- Scenes involving relational reassurance
- Consoling and emotional vulnerability

Overall PI = 0.26 suggests Episode 24 leans more toward **informal, emotionally direct discourse**, typical of intimate relationships and conflict-heavy narrative arcs.

Interpretation Using the Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model

1. Relational Work: This episode shows relational negotiation complexities-emotional support, romantic declarations, disappointments, family responsibilities. Polite markers were used in an emotionally charged manner. High-involvement politeness was observed here; speakers were willing to be sincere about their emotions rather than being linguistically polite. Moderate polite marker use was also seen which indicates that relational maintenance was important, especially in communication with elder relatives.

2. Cultural Frame: The cultural values of this Urdu-speaking culture place high importance on showing respect for elders (*بابا، امی، خالہ*) and in using formal hierarchy. Although polite markers are present in these exchanges they demonstrate alignment with cultural norms of deference.

Informally expressing peers/romantically interacting shifts the emphasis from authenticity versus formality and aligns with South-Asian relational norms.

3. Emotional Display: Episode 24 is emotionally heavy and has a lot of characters who have expressed their love, been hurt, sought reassurance, or made difficult relational decisions. In this episode emotional display takes precedence over politeness and directness in lines such as "میں" "مجھے ڈر ہے", "خوش نہیں ہوں", and "میں بہت متاثر ہو رہی ہوں" show emotion-driven facework and emphasize emotional truth over face saving politeness strategies.

4. Contextual Hierarchy: Hierarchy greatly affects politeness distribution: (a) more polite forms are found when speaking to elders, authority figures or during apologies (b) less polite forms are found in equal status, close relationship interactions (lovers, friends, and siblings) where emotional authenticity is valued. Therefore the moderate PI of this episode demonstrates a balance of contextual respect and directness due to varying relational contexts and interactional intentions.

5. Interactional Intent: Speakers use politeness in a strategic way using politeness can help repair relational tensions and build respect through honorifics while using informal directness can create an opportunity for revealing vulnerability and increasing emotional closeness. This episode provides examples of how politeness is not just formulaic, but is an expression of interactional intent such as confession, persuasion, or emotional support.

Politeness Index (PI) – Episode 30

Category	Count
Polite Markers (e.g., مہربانی، شکریہ، براہ کرم)	52
Informal / Direct Markers (e.g., imperatives, reprimands, threats, emotional outbursts)	171

$$PI = \frac{52}{223} = 0.233$$

This indicates **very low politeness**, consistent with an episode dominated by confrontation, grief, accusation, and threats.

Quantitative Findings (Episode 30)

Dominance of Directness

- Direct, confrontational utterances (e.g., "تم کیوں نہیں بولتے؟", "میں تمہیں نہیں چھوڑوں گا", "یہ", "میں تمہیں نہیں چھوڑوں گا", "تم کیوں نہیں بولتے؟") are **three times more frequent** than polite markers.
- The episode is structured around **interrogation, emotional breakdowns, accusations, and threats**, producing a consistently low politeness environment.

Sparse Polite Expressions

- Polite markers such as "شکریہ", "کچھ کھائیں", "براہ کرم" appear mainly in:
 - **Consoling sequences** (Nashwa → Baish)
 - **Care-giving moments**
 - **Attempts to soften distress**

- Their distribution is **episodic**, not structural-politeness does not frame the interaction but surfaces briefly during emotional care.

Conflict-Driven Speech Style

- Imperatives, rhetorical questions, and blunt accusations dominate:
 - “تم گونگے ہو؟”
 - “میں اسے مار دوں گا”
 - “آپ کی کیا وجہ تھی؟”
 - “یہ سب تمہاری وجہ سے ہے”

This provides a quantitatively verifiable basis for the low PI score.

Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Interpretation – Episode 30

1. Relational Work: This episode shows relational negotiation complexities such as emotional support, romantic declarations, disappointments, family responsibilities. Polite markers were used in an emotionally charged manner. High-involvement politeness was observed here; speakers were willing to be sincere about their emotions rather than being linguistically polite. Moderate polite marker use was also seen which indicates that relational maintenance was important, especially in communication with elder relatives.

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Comparative Table: Politeness Index (PI) Across Three Key Episodes of Qarz-e-Jaan

Episode	Narrative Stage	Polite Markers	Informal/Direct Markers	Total Markers	Politeness Index (PI)	Trend & Dominant Politeness Style
1	Introduction & hierarchy establishment	55	137	192	0.29 (29%)	Highest lexical politeness; baseline deference to hierarchy
12	Courtroom conflict & moral confrontation	61	184	245	0.25 (25%)	Decline in explicit politeness; rise of adversarial directness
24	Emotional reconciliation & intimacy	73	198	271	0.26 (26%)	Slight recovery; balanced mix of respect to elders + emotional directness
30 (Final)	Climax, grief, accusation & confrontation	52	171	223	0.23 (23%)	Lowest PI; confrontation and raw emotional display override lexical politeness

Across the narrative arc of Qarz-e-Jaan, the Politeness Index reveals a clear trajectory: overt lexical politeness is highest at the outset (PI = 0.29) when social hierarchies are being established, then progressively declines as conflict intensifies (PI = 0.25 in Episode 12), dips further during the emotionally charged finale (PI = 0.23 in Episode 30), and shows only a modest recovery in the reconciliation phase (PI = 0.26 in Episode 24). The observed quantitative evidence supports the SPRP Model's central hypothesis; Polite Language is frequently infrequent on Pakistani Television because of the reliance on Non-Verbal & Cultural/Relational aspects to demonstrate Relational Respect and Care and to avoid explicit polite language use during the most emotionally intense and highest relational stake moments.

Conclusion

The study of Qarz-e-Jaan (2024-2025) demonstrates how Pakistani television dramas construct politeness in a manner far removed from the predictions of classical western models of politeness. The use of explicit polite markers remains extremely low throughout the entire story line (Politeness Index between 0.23 and 0.29). However, there was no perception among the viewers of

the characters as rude and/or the interaction as being disrespectful. The Respect, Care, Moral alignment were achieved using tone, silence, Emotional Authenticity, Cultural framing of Honour (Izzat) & Decorum (Adab), Visual staging and Shifting Gender Roles. These findings reinforce that in Pakistani Televised Discourse, Polite Language is not Lexical but Relational, Emotional & Moral Practice based upon Shared Cultural Expectations.

By combining the quantitative Politeness Index (PI) and the five dimensional Socio-Pragmatic Relational Politeness (SPRP) Model, this research develops a replicable, mixed-methods research model that will move away from the 'strategy-counting' and 'universalism' which has been used by researchers in past studies. The SPRP Model based on relational work, cultural frame, emotional display norms, media staging and gender-power mediation is a culturally-sensitive means of evaluating politeness in South Asia and in other collectivist cultures, high context cultures. Ultimately, Qarz-e-Jan demonstrates that when relationships are under significant pressure whether due to courtroom confrontation, romantic confession, or family grief. Both characters and viewers view sincerity and moral truth as most important than formal language-based deference. When relationships are under such stress, direct emotional display and contextual relevance becomes the greatest form of politeness; this understanding encourages researchers to focus on more than just words, and to conceptualize politeness as a dynamic, culturally-mediated expression of an individual's identity, emotionality and moral values. The PI-SPRP framework developed in this paper is proposed as one practical approach to achieving these goals.

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