

“Portrayal of Women in Pakistani Drama, An analysis of selected dramas”

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Abstract

Now-a-days in spite of cyber revolution, television plays a pivotal role in influencing society. Women role has been changed in several fields around world like politics, academics, advertising etc. Women are also distinguishing themselves as professionals in various walks of life, but changing times with new ways of expressing social power is being fashioned which mostly target the weaker component of society which is women. Women have been projected negatively which resulted in framing negative portrayal of women in Pakistani private sectors television dramas. This study is based on mixed method of qualitative and quantitative content analysis of four popular Pakistani private sector television channel dramas. It has been found that women are presented as fashionable way, portrayed stereotypically and never emancipated, intelligent characters.

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Introduction

Background

Human beings can influence each other's opinions, perception, and attitudes about the situations, even way of relationships, whether corporately or individually. Worldview of a community is consequently a result of such influence. In today's modern society, television is fit placed to apply such influence that what we read, hear and see in television; finally take into our belief system which is reflection of selected views and priorities of television.

Television is one of the most powerful sources in this cyber age which is known to shape the opinion and attitudes among the people, importance of television would not be underestimated in this modern world where it is playing a magical multiplier role in the process of the development. Accelerating the process of development by persuading, transforming, involving people and it has been proved that television is one of the most important tool of social change in Pakistani society. Television is effective and powerful tool for shaping the mindset of audience (Ali et al. 2015). Television is not only known as mirror of a society but it is an instrument of economical, political, social and cultural change. Television aim is not only to spread ideas of people and thought, feelings, expression and other aspects but also helps to eradicate discrimination, race, gender, color, inequality, social evils and other source which create violence in society (Adhikari, 2014).

Women in television

Over the years women role has been changed in several fields around world like politics, academics, advertising etc. Women are also distinguishing themselves as professionals in various walks of life, but changing times with new ways of expressing social power is being fashioned which mostly target the weaker component of society, that is women. Women have been projected negatively which resulted in framing negative portrayal of women (Sharma, 2012). Selection and style of presenting certain stereotypes assumption regarding women's status and

role in the society which affects the manner women are portrayed in media especially in television.

The research context

Television plays a vital role in influencing society. Now-a-days in spite of cyber revolution, television manages to influence our society. As what we see, we believe, (Sassatelli, 2011) stated that whatever we watch on screen of television should and could be interpreted as bearing a partly hidden and latent, reflecting , meaning, the profound concerns of the culture it emerges from, thus eliciting, pain, pleasure and emotions.

Since with the introduction of television in 1964 Pakistani drama got started and dramas given us a lot of extraordinary serials such as Dhoop Kinaray, Khuda ki Basti, Tanhaiyan, Dhuwan, Parchaiyan, Aankahi and many more. These dramas were not only popular in Pakistan but also across the border but with the passage of time it has lost its legacy due to script and plots quality of the drama, old dramas portrayed true picture of the society whereas recent dramas are not portraying the real picture of our society, the language, makeup, and dressing representing another culture of Pakistani society, specially focusing on female character. Female character is never justified on screen because in some dramas she is presented as oppressed but on the other hand it is shown negatively (Huda, 2015). Portrayal of women throughout drama has been controlled to their apperences, generally women are presented as commodities, objects of physical beauty and a source of attraction and enjoyment for men. Women representation in media has been confiscated throughout media history (Isanonic, 2006).

For further examining the representation of women in Pakistani drama this research will examine four dramas namely Sher-e-Zaat from Hum TV which was telecasted in the year 2012, Rangbazz from Express TV on aired in the year 2014, Besharam from ARY Digital TV year 2016, and Baaghi from Urdu 1, on aired in 2017.

Mass media is playing key role and it is a powerful tool of interpretation, enjoyment, surveillance. This research tries to find out whether women are sensationalized and trivialized in Pakistani dramas. According to Gallagher (1981) media treatment about women can be best

described be as a narrow since women's interest and activities in general go no further than confined of the home and family, essentially women are characterized as romantic, active, and fictional material in electronic media.

This research will focus on the portrayal of women in four selected Pakistani television dramas and will answer the following objectives.

- To identified the portrayal of women in Pakistani dramas.
- To examine the positive and negative images of women through selected dramas of Pakistan.
- To identify the language, dialogues along with makeup and costumes which is being used in Pakistani dramas.

It is assume that, women are always portrayed stereotypically by the Pakistani dramas and women are not portrayed positively by the Pakistani dramas. Moreover, Costumes and makeup of Pakistani dramas are totally adopted from western culture. This study has set some research questions that states, how the dramas do portrays women's characters. What themes are prevalent in dramas? Does the current dramas content resonate with old dramas in portraying women? The study is guided by two of the main theories which are: Agenda setting theory by McCombs and Shaw. Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory says media is seen for setting agenda for the modern society all the way through downplaying, highlighting, excluding and constantly focusing on any issue, thus such an issue turning into a public agenda. Theory posits a large number of influence by media on audiences by the choice which stories and how much space and prominence are given to that or them, hence influence the public opinion. This theory also argues that "media influences people not to much in regard to what they think but in regard to what they think about." In this manner, media is accountable for the pictures in eyes of the eyes of their audiences. Media always sets an agenda for people what to think about and order of importance of such thoughts. Agenda-setting theory's fundamental argues is the transfer of vital items on mass media agendas to public agendas, thus influencing people's worldviews and perception (McQuail and Windhal, 1993) as illustrates in figure 1. Agenda-setting theory hypothesized that issues displayed prominently and emphasized frequently in mass media which will be regarded very much important by

media consumers. It seems the most a woman is portrayed in a drama, the more importance it seems to public.

Agenda-setting theory has suitably explained why people with parallel media exposure will place importance on same issues. Though different individual may feel different about issue at hand, most of the individual feel the same issue is important, nevertheless, public agenda can influence media too. Alike, agenda-setting theory is somewhat circular by nature.

Based on such theoretical paradigm, the study significantly analyzes the electronic media's about portrayal of women in Pakistani dramas context. For example, how the women are portrayed in electronic media in Pakistan? What position women do hold in drama and how this reflect true picture on ground and society? Who control and owns the media market?

Relevant Studies

In today's modern age women are considered as strong and independent character in Pakistani dramas that are seen as role model by the girls, because most active viewers of dramas are women therefore they relate themselves with the characters. Identified the active image shown on television drams where women role keep changing the findings were analysis by five Malaysian television dramas (Ibrahim, 2017).

Similarly Mishra, D. (2015) argue that media have a huge socio-cultural influence on society, women shown in soap opera and advertisement are worsened over time, the paper emphasis that women who wear modern cloths, appear more confidence on counterpart not-so-modern. Collins (2011) studies about gender roles in the media, with content analysis where she found common themes and women are underrepresented in media and usually portrayed negatively. Her study concludes that women are depicted in every level lower than man.

Kaul and sahani (2010) investigates portrayal of women characters in Indian television serials and its impact on the viewers of Jammu. For collection of data researchers used interview method, where findings suggest that a small variety of reality is founded in projecting Indian women in serials. The analysis opened up that several respondent among women agreed that Indian serials had a huge impact on thoughts and also admitted that they learnt and gained

confidence by the serials. Qaiser, S. (2008) examine the portrayal of women in Pakistan television (PTV) where the researcher studied whether portrayal of women in PTV dramas are showing stereotypical image. In conclusion researcher found that PTV dramas comprehensively brought forward the women' issues positively.

Research design

This research is a qualitative cum quantitative content analysis study to collect data from the theme, social roles, dialogues, costume and make up style with a special focus on the projection of women. The data is mainly analyzed under two sections: social roles and appearance. Data is categorized and analyzed to see the differences found in the portrayal of women in the four selected television dramas. For this study four dramas namely Sher-e-Zaat from Hum TV in the year 2012, Rangbazz from Express TV year 2014, Besharam from ARY Digital TV year 2016, and Baaghi from Urdu1 2017 of Pakistani Private TV channels are selected.

Data collected through content analysis. Harold Lass introduced Media Content analysis in 1927 and used it to study propaganda and became a systematic way to study the mass media. Content analysis is used because it can be the easiest way to describe and inference in mass media and this method easily examine the coverage and portrayal of women (Berger 1991).

Content analysis is a tool which is used to establish the existence of certain concepts or words within the sets of texts. Analysis and quantification of the meanings, presence, or relationships of such concepts and words that makes inferences about messages with the writer(s), texts, the audience, even the time and culture of which they are parts, texts is defined as books, essays, speeches, conversations, headlines, articles, theatre, dramas, informal conversations, or any communication language occurrence (Omari, 2008). Conducting a content analysis of any data the data is coded into manageable categories of a variety of levels like words, words sense, phrases, theme or sentence.

It is examined by one of basic content analysis method i.e. , relational analysis and conceptual analysis. Qualitatively, content analysis is comprised of analysis that where communication content are in speech, written, text, interviews, images, moving picture, classified and categorized.

Content analysis enables researchers to research and examine a large amount of information, data and systematically identifies their properties, for instance, frequency of keywords used to find out more important structures of communication content.

Findings and Results

Table No 1. Role portrayed as

| Portrayed as | Beauty | Religious | Entertainer | House wife |
|--------------|--------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Shehr-e-zaat | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| RangBaaz | 4 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| Besharam | 5 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Baaghi | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Total | 15 | 5 | 15 | 7 |
| 100% | 55% | 18% | 55% | 25% |

In table no. 1 reveals that 55% of women characters are portrayed as beauty in dramas whereas 5% are shown as religious and 55% as an entertainer and 25% as in house wives.

Table No 2. Appearance

| Appearance | Sexual | Thinness | Attractive | Simple |
|------------|--------|----------|------------|--------|
|------------|--------|----------|------------|--------|

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Shehr-e-zaat | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| RangBaaz | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Besharam | 5 | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| Baaghi | 6 | 6 | 6 | 1 |
| Total | 18 | 18 | 18 | 4 |
| 100% | 66% | 66% | 66% | 14% |

Table No. 2 illustrates that 66% of women characters are shown as sexual thinness and attractive in Pakistani private sector television drama serials whereas 14% are shown as simple according to appearance.

Table No 3. Behavior

| Behavior | Victim | Weak | Strong | Emotional | Bold | Independent | Dependent |
|-----------------|--------|------|--------|-----------|------|-------------|-----------|
| Shehr-e-zaat | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| RangBaaz | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Besharam | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Baaghi | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 12 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 13 | 8 | 11 |
| 100% | 44% | 33% | 33% | 25% | 48% | 26% | 40% |

Table no. 3 reveals that 33% of women characters are shown as strong, 48% as bold and 26% as independent characters, likewise 44% women are shown as victims, 33% as weak, 25% emotional and 40% dependent.

Analysis and discussion

Four private sector Pakistani television dramas which are selected for study have different genre, “Besharam” comes under the genre of drama, “Rangbaaz” comes under the love and romance genre, “Baaghi” comes under the drama, romance and biographical genre, and

“Shehr-e-zaat” comes under the spiritual romance. In these all dramas, women are represented as strong characters in leading and supporting roles. As this study is based on mixed method of qualitative and quantitative content analysis, it has been observed that in the selected drama chronic theme of dramas are mostly portraying women with great determination and in a strong character.

Moreover, Pakistani private television dramas are portraying the women’s image, which are seen to be in dual image of orientations, either audience are bored with the good and positive portrayal of women or it is thwarted with portrayal of negative and bad image of women in drama. The characters do have a dominant role in drama but mostly end up with death, mishap, and disaster. They are portrayed as successful and beautiful but unlike the main leading characters they are shown evil. Sara (shown as having extra marital affairs) who is the mother of Mashal is not presented as a perfect mother, because she plotted and schemed with her elder son-in-law to destroy her younger daughter’s marriage life. Her dialogue is evidence,” main in medal class families ko apne bete ki zindagi main rehne nahen don ge, main b dekhte hon k kitni dino tak ye dono saath rehty hain, main ne apne bete ko bohot nazoon se pahla hai.” (I know such kind of medal class family and will not allow to spent my daughter’s life with them, I will see how with how many days they will stay together, and I have brought up my daughter pampered.

Raangbaaz is a story of five women, who get married by the same person. Every women character of this drama serial is focusing where women are shown as materialistic and fond of plotting and scheming about next women. The Bela character is shown as having extra marital affairs also portrayed as witchcraft lady. And the most powerful dialogue of the drama serial which is stereotypical” Aurat kabhi sachi tareef kar hi nahen sakti, aurat sirf khud se pyar karti hai, jab wo kisi ki tareef karti hai, tu samj lo k koi lalich hoti hai ya koi raaz.” Means (women never praises any one, women just love herself, if she praises it means she is greedy or may has a secret).

Shehr-e-Zaat story revolves around a self centered beautiful and day dreamer girl Falak, who is the only child of her rich parents, seem to be empathetic and vulnerable in spite of her

flaws. Beauty, social status and wealth blinded her from reality of the world. She hates ugliness and couldn't see human unseen grime of poverty. She falls in love with a man Salman, who later on does extra marital affairs with other women.

Kanwal Baloch in Baaghi died in tragic death after where her brother killed her, her character is found in these words, "jooti izzat aur be-maani girat ne mujh jisay kahi kandilon ko waqt se phely boja deya, samajne aur badalne ka jo haq khuda ne mujhe deya tha, wo aap ne cheen leya, main maashere k leye karab thi, logon k iqlak k leye khatra thi, main jisi b thi, aap ki dunia se chale gayi, apne ko b safahi pash kiye bager, main sirf ye pochna chahte hon, k, ab tu borahi katam ho gaye na.. Logon k iqlak b bach gaye, mashra. s ka kiya howa? Mashra teek hogaya? (Fake respect and meaningless dignity of yours towards me, has vanished so many Kandeels (Lantern) like me and you have snatched the right, that was given to me by God to be on right track and to understand, I was wrong for the society and I was danger for people morality, whatever I was, I am gone from your world. I will not argue with you that I was right, but I ask you that after me everything is on track, is people moral intact, evils deeds are finished.... people morals survived, society, what happened to it? Does society become good?) Beautiful and sexy Kanwal Baloch was plotted to be killed by her brother in the name of honor killing.

Study found that even if women's representation in dramas rise above with the passage of time but portrayal remains same that defines the image either absolutely evil or bad, or perfectly good. To some extent the selected Pakistani private sector television dramas have showed a number of empowerment elements that can reflect through dominant portrayal of women which showed strong will women where they fight to stand to their own values and beliefs. This research also found, women's job status, social class and status, character traits and level of education are depicted neutral more than before, nonetheless the portrayal of supporting characters in dramas presented stereotypical, mostly supporting characters of women have negative orientations.

Conclusion

Private Television drama content which portray women's issues and women, needs to be reoriented, present day programs and coverage especially on women be likely to emphasize the five F's, food, fashion, fun, furnishing and family which spell out to be femininity. Programs and drama should devote more upon people, cultures, lifestyles, values and attitudes, dramas should be rational, future oriented, inspiring, educational and highly informative which could empower and inspire women in our society. There should be serious check and balance at media contents, both news and entertainment, there is a serious need to inspect all dramas carefully to make ensure that producers and directors and writers don't portray women in stereotype and derogatory image, because media is known as powerful tool for social change and education. Media has the capacity to define, record, preserve the human history and culture. Nonetheless, because of insensitivities content which are produced be likely to project stereotypical generalizations portraying women image. Media should picture moralistic impulse and wide ethical decent contents in society for better roles for women. There should not be any vulgarity and obscenity in drama. Women should be shown working in extensive multiplicity career settings. Women should be projected as in various roles in drama such as liberated, emancipated, self-sufficient, decision maker but according to the light of existing society.

Present position of media especially television in private sectors is more commercial. Media should sensitize issues in their perspective. Drama should present survival stories of female that are struggling among several roles and different kinds of obligations which today's society imposes on them.

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