

# Reinforcement of Masculinities and Femininities through Soap

## Operas: A Discourse Analysis



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# Reinforcement of Masculinities and Femininities through Soap

## Operas: A Discourse Analysis



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*This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of*

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It is certified that thesis submitted by Ms Hifsa Nisar Khan Reg No 160-FSS/MSSOC/S14 titled "*Reinforcement of Masculinities and Femininities through Soap Operas A Discourse Analysis*" has been evaluated by the following viva voce committee and found that the thesis has sufficient material and meets prescribed standard for the award of MS degree in the discipline of Sociology

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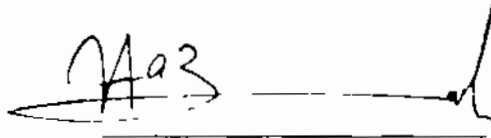
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## ABSTRACT

The study examined and explicated television as site of maintenance and reproduction of masculine and feminine identities in Pakistan. By examining Pakistani soap operas and television dramas, my main focus was to explore how television constructs and reinforces masculine and feminine identities. This analysis focused on representations of men and women or masculinities and femininities on two leading Pakistani television (PTV home) and Hum TV. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, R. W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity and Michel Foucault's concept of power and disciplining power provided useful theoretical framework for my analysis of television texts. I used Foucauldian discourse analysis to shed light on how television discourses construct and perpetuate men and masculinities and women and femininities in contemporary Pakistani society. My concern in discourse analysis was to explore how gender identities (masculine and feminine characteristics) are achieved in and through language (dialogues in soap operas and dramas) drawing on culturally available discourses. The analysis revealed that television soaps and dramas reinforce hegemonic masculinity and emphasized/idealized femininity. Men are portrayed as competitive for position of status, controller of children and women, holding unquestionable authority, making and announcing decision both in the private and public domains, expressing lack of visible emotion, demonstrating social and economic dominance, good in handling crisis and able to live independently. Contrary to men's depiction, women are appreciated for their beauty, dress, hairstyle, obedience to their men, sacrificing for their family, good in domestic chores and being in home settings. These stereotyped patterns of men and women portrayals on television screen convey powerful messages (or beliefs) about masculine and feminine identities and what it means to be a boy/man and girl/woman in Pakistan. This study is one of the first pioneering academic studies of the nexus between the television dramas, and the construction of gender-identity in Pakistan. Therefore, it is not only significant to policy makers but also to academicians who could use it as a resource material for preparing students & critical thinking who evaluate and highlight the role and power of the television in reproducing gender hierarchies.

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**HIFSA NISAR KHAN**

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HIFSA NISAR KHAN

To My  
Husband and Daughter

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1.Introduction

Television is one of the most important cultural institutions in contemporary society. It is becoming increasingly important in our society and houses. Television watching, in the majority households, is cited as the third most time-consuming activity after sleep and work (see Signorielli and Bacue, 1999). Television is believed to teach us values, norms and gender roles (see Davis, 1990). Keeping the pivotal place of television and its role in the construction of viewers' perception of reality, it became subject of serious academic inquiry since the 1970s. In other words, like other aspects / institutions of society, television is one of the most important areas of sociological research, especially from feminist perspective.

Feminists, in the western context, have extensively researched and debated the issue of gender stereotypes and sexism in television programmes: soap operas, advertisements, news and talk shows (see Furnham & Paltzer, 2011, Kay *et al* , 2011, Ullah & Khan, 2014). Most of these studies have found that television texts reinforce gender stereotypes by portraying men as dominant, rugged, engaged in the public domain and women as submissive, homemakers and sexy (see Chan, K & Cheng, 2012, Wood, 2004, Goffman, 1979). Dough MacLean analysis "explicated television as site of maintenance and production of masculine identity (Maclean, 2011: 3). Research evidence has highlighted television as one of the tools used by men to perpetuate their dominance and reinforce hegemonic masculinity and traditional femininity. Television in Pakistan, like other societies, reinforces and perpetuates specific stereotypical image of women as desired by the patriarchal social structure of society in general and that of media in

particular. Despite Pakistan's commitment to various international declarations, (i.e. Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women), women are still facing discrimination, both in the public and private domains of life and continue to have a lower social, political and economic status as compared to men. Various studies (i.e. Zia, 2014, Tarar & Pulla, 2014, Ullah, 2013, Ullah & Khan 2014) assert that in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, women have stereotypical representation in school resources (Ullah, 2013) and television texts (Ullah & Khan 2014). It is important to mention here that, unlike the West, research on television texts has not received much and serious attention of academicians. Albeit some studies (i.e. Ullah & Khan, 2014, Ali *et al.*, 2012) give a scholarly insight, but the issue of gender representations in television texts in Pakistan need to be studied in a more holistic manner. Drawing on insights from feminist media research, this study aims to examine whether television discourses/texts (soap operas, advertisements and talk shows) in Pakistan challenge or reinforce traditional notion of masculine and feminine identities and traditional gender stereotypes. My attempt is to examine and highlight how television discourses in Pakistan are used to naturalize domestic ideology, objectify women, snub women agency and discourage their aspiration and participation in the public domain. My attempt, in this study, also focuses on the intersection of gender and social class in television texts.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

As mentioned earlier and reiterated here that women representation in television texts is one of the key areas of sociological research (see Berberick, 2010, Barber, 2011, Gettman & Roberts, 2004). Despite the importance of television and its influence in contemporary society, only a few authors addressed this issue in Pakistani context (see Ullah & Khan 2011, 2014, Madni *et al.*, 2014). Albeit, there is an influx of women in television as professional, actresses, models, some

with strong aspiration to a top management position men and women portrayal and representation is still stereotypical and biased. Keeping in view the importance of television texts and the influence of television's discourses on the viewers in contemporary society, the purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of men and women representation in Pakistani television dramas and soaps. The main aim is to examine whether television discourses challenge or reinforce the traditional 'gender roles' and traditional notion of masculinity and femininity. This is to be seen different because gender representation or gender on television remains subject of researchers who attempted to unmask and highlight the depiction of women on the television screen. The focus of this study, I argue, offers an important contribution to the analysis of masculinity and femininity on television screen. Thus, the exact statement of the problem of this study can be stated as *Reinforcement of Masculinities and femininities through Soap Operas: A Discourse Analysis*. In order to gain a comprehensive insight in the existing literature and to answer the statement of the problem, the following objectives and sub-questions will be addressed.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

This study will be carried out with the following objectives in mind

- To examine whether television in Pakistan challenges or reinforces gender stereotypes and conventional gender roles
- To study women's engagement and portrayal in the public domain
- To explore how hegemonic masculinity and normative femininity are reinforced through soaps and dramas
- To suggest some gender equality measure in the light of study findings



#### **1.4. Research Questions**

The aim of this study is to apply the theories of representation and different forms of discourse analysis to examine how gender is represented in television soaps and dramas in Pakistan. The following prime research questions guided me towards the aim of this study:

- How men and women are represented in Pakistani soap operas and dramas?
- Does television text challenge or reinforce gender stereotypes?
- What is the ideological politics in television discourses?
- How do television discourses legitimize and naturalize hegemonic masculinity and normative femininity?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Since sociologists recognize that media in general and television in particular is immensely important in all present day society, it will not be a sweeping statement to claim that this study will be of great practical and theoretical significance with reference to Pakistani society. Theoretically, the findings of this study will contribute to the local and global body of knowledge in the area of 'Sociology of Media'. It will be a rich source of reference for classroom teaching as well as further research. Practically, the study's findings may be shared with the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to address the issue of gender biases and use television text for establishing an egalitarian society along the line of gender.

#### **1.6. Organization of the study**

In the following section of this study, I outline the structure of this study and give a brief account of each chapter.

In *chapter one* I have already introduced the study by giving a detailed overview of the representation of men and women on television. The chapter continues to highlight how television text reinforces gender hierarchies in Pakistan. It outlined the study's objectives, research questions and significance.

*Chapter two* gives a comprehensive picture of the key concepts, philosophy and theories that inform media research and constitute sociology of media. Theories and concepts that inform media research have been reviewed which gave the background knowledge and theoretical framework for conceptualizing this study. The chapter also consists of relevant empirical researches and studies in the area of gender and media. This enhances my understanding of how other academicians and researchers have worked in area of gender and media. This also helped in adopting and employing methodological steps in my study. Some of the findings and arguments of the published research as well as theoretical concepts have been used as secondary source of data in the form of quotations for substantiating my study findings.

*Chapter three* outlines my methodology and techniques used to analyze television soaps and dramas. It explains the methodological steps taken for conducting this research. The chapter sheds light on the uses and limitations of textual analysis. It is important to mention here that television pictures and verbal discourses in soap operas and dramas are dealt with as texts. It also describes the discourse analysis methodology and its use in this study as discourse analysis as the main methodological and analytical tool adopted in this study. Anglicizing the text I looked at discourse (spoken statements, body language) and images (where applicable), and the general tone of the text to highlight how men and women are represented in television soaps and dramas.

*Chapter four* presents data and discussion. The key focus of this chapter is to examine the overall representation of the male and female characters in television discourses. I have

attempted to see how males and females are being represented both visually with their behaviour and orally through the dialogues in soap operas and dramas. The chapter highlights that females are portrayed as submissive, obedient, concerned with their physical appearance and beautiful look by using make-up, having hair style, busy in shopping and wearing branded clothing. Similarly, the main female characters are shown as skinny and beautiful. Women's struggle to question men's authority and patriarchal privilege is depicted as fruitless effort. On the contrary, male characters are depicted as busy in business, jobs, assertive, aggressive, decisive, supporter and custodian of women, controller of homes, offices and resources. The chapter vividly highlights how media are persuasive in using discourses and assumptions for 'normal' gender identity. Drawing on feminist scholarship, the chapter concludes that the way males and females are represented in the television soap operas and dramas does not challenge the conventional gender power structure in which men are strong and masculine with unquestionable power and authority whereas women are depicted as weak and fasten tightly in the rope of traditional femininity.

*Chapter five* contains critical analysis of 'why gender representation in television soaps and dialogues matter'. It includes closing thoughts and points for discussion and also a critique of television soaps and dramas in Pakistan. In this chapter I have related my findings to key theories within these issues, such as Connell, Gramsci and Michel Foucault theories of hegemonic masculinities, hegemony, ideology, disciplinary power and discourse. The theoretical lens from these theorists helped me to make my analysis academically sophisticated and rich.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical and empirical literature review so that the current study is connected with theoretical perspective(s) and empirical works already done for attaining an overall relevance and purpose of the study. It is important to mention here that the insight and information obtained from literature review has been used as context knowledge, source of deriving categories for content analysis and sociological and feminist lens for interpreting and deconstructing television texts (pictures and verbal discourses). Overall, skimming the existing literature helped me to seek answer to key questions: what theories and philosophical debates exist and are used in the area of media and gender? What concepts are used as potential concept for analysing gender issues in television discourse? What strategies and discourses are used to perpetuate male hegemony in the wider Pakistani society? What questions in the area of gender and media research may be placed for further academic deliberation?

### 2.2 Feminist concern about gender representation in television

Gender representation in mass media has been a central field of academic inquiry since 1970s. Feminists have focused on women representation in media, especially in television. Looking at gender as social construct, feminist researchers have focused on women and femininity and men and masculinity (see Gill & Rosalind, 2006) to highlight how mass media, especially television reinforces gender boundaries (Ullah & Khan, 2014). Keeping in view the study's focus reinforcement of masculinities and femininities through soap operas- and to give a clear direction

to my study, I deem it essential to give a compressive discussion of empirical and theoretical review

Gender and media research characterize two distinctive approaches to this field. The first is that of mainstream forms of gender and media studies research, which has been grounded in large part by assumptions about the ways in which the media contribute to the individual acquisition of gendered attitudes and behaviours and how sex-role stereotypes can impact negatively on an individual's life chances, especially in terms of a person's sense of self-worth, and social perceptions of women and their career prospects (see Gill 2006 and Ross 2009). The other field is that of feminist media studies, which is characterized as a political movement for gender justice, examining how gender relations are represented, the ways in which audiences make sense of them, and how media practitioners contribute to perpetuating gender injustice. At the centre of this is the view that hierarchical gender relations (re)produce social inequalities across time, cultures and places, thereby making it difficult for men and women to be equal partners in a society. Getting insights from these approaches, this study aims to see how state run and private television channels in Pakistan reinforce hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity.

I divide this chapter into two sections. Section one presents key findings and arguments from empirical research studies. It also encompasses key concepts and theories used in media and gender research which provide basis for the theoretical framework of this study. Part two of the chapter present theoretical framework developed for the analysis of television soaps and dramas in Pakistan and placing this study in the larger body of academic scholarship.

## **Part One: Empirical Studies on Television**

### **2.3. Stereotypical gender representation in television advertisements and soap operas**

A lot number of studies have been carried out in the area of gender and media, especially women's representation in television soap operas and advertisements. This part of the review summarizes some of these studies and presents their key findings in order to see what and how this study will contribute to the existing scholarship in the area of sociology of media.

### **2.4. Mass media as agency of socialization**

Mass media, especially television is one of the key institutions/agencies of socialization. Many academicians and researchers (i.e. Huesmann, 1995) argue that mass media, particularly television, has steadily become more influential in socialization of children and traditional socialization agencies (i.e. family and school) have been losing their influence. Aubrey & Harrison (2004) claimed that television might be more influential than parents and peers as it offers more commonly and widely shared messages than other agencies and sources of information.

Television can, and does, profoundly influence boys/girls and women and men's perception of their and others' gender roles (McGhee & Frueh, 1975, Jennings et al., 1980, Aubrey & Harrison, 2004). Gerbner & Gross (1976) asserted that television is the central cultural arm of society, serving to socialize most people into standardized roles and behaviours. Viewing television involves the observation of others' behaviour and its reinforcement contingencies, television is considered to be a major vehicle through which children [individual] learn about appropriate behaviours, particularly gender-appropriate behaviours (Rak & McMullen, 1987). The scope of such advertisements [programmes], their nature and their social consequences may make

mparticularly potent socializing tools in the development or reinforcement of gender roles (Merril, Lee & Freidlander, 1994) In addition, it is a critical agent of socialization and influences the way adults and children view themselves and learn appropriate gender behaviours (Frueh & McGhee 1975, Signorielli, 1989, 1993) Furthermore Gunter (1987) argued that the impact of television upon social behaviour may be greatest during advertisements, which are often quick-paced, dynamic, and attention riveting Furthermore, because their messages must be easily comprehended by the audiences, producers often use roles and situations that are easily identifiable by the viewers and that are in agreement with prevailing cultural values particularly those regarding gender appropriate behaviour (Manstead & McCulloch, 1981, Kim & Lowry, 2005) This means that gender representation in television reflect fundamental features of the social structures such as norms, values and beliefs (see Goffman, 1979) Drawing on these arguments and assertions, this study aims to see how gender roles are produced and reproduced on television screen in Pakistan and the possible impact this may have upon the viewers

## **2.5. Reinforcement of stereotypical gender roles**

Television, the most pervasive communication medium, continues to depict highly stereotyped roles for women and men (Anderson & Taylor 2002) Television programmes and advertisements may have a particularly powerful impact on reinforcing our gender role attitudes, values, perceptions, beliefs and behaviours (MacKay & Covell 1997) Studies from gender and media perspective indicate the extent to which media portray men and women differently (Furnham & Schofield, 1986) Gender role stereotyping is more deeply woven into the fabric of television programming than the obvious numerical distinction between the sexes suggests (Gunter, 1986)

Researchers, i.e Gerbner et al (1994) have argued that television programs [talks show, soaps and dramas] and commercials reinforce conventional gender stereotypes

I use stereotypes in this study in the same sense as used by Lippmann Lippmann (1957-90) defined stereotypes as “preconceptions” that are “not a complete picture of the world, but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted” Drawing on Lippmann, many studies have found that advertisers tend to use a limited meaning of values or beliefs about gender roles in advertising by reinforcing the same stereotypical images of gender roles, as if those images are desired by society (Pollay, 1986, Williamson, 1978, Kim & Lowry, 2005) Bardwick & Schumann (1967), in one of the earliest studies on gender role portrayals in television advertisements, found that women (compared to men) appeared more often as homemakers and as housewives This study was followed by several others that looked at gender stereotyping in television ads, the most notable among these are the works of Gilly (1988) and McArthur & Resko (1975)

The contemporary American sociologist Erving Goffman (1979) argues that gender representation in advertisements reflects “fundamental features of the social structure, such as values, beliefs, or norms” (8) Goffman (1979) and Schudson (1984) argued that advertisers use “reality” that is believed to sell their products effectively For example, idealized (or desired) values and gender roles are often employed in advertising, although they are only real in the advertising world (Schudson, 1984, Williams, 1993, Williamson, 1978)

Similarly, Livingstone & Green (1986) and Mackay & Covell (1997) pointed out that modelling and identification with advertisement portrayals may reinforce existing gender-role stereotypes It has been argued that exposure to stereotyped gender portrayals in advertisements may actually engender negative gender role attitudes (see Schudson, 1984, Kim & Lowry, 2005) The general claim that researchers made that exposure to gender-role stereotyping in advertisements is associated with more gender-typed views of the social world (see Signorielli, 1989, Williams,



1993) This indicative of the fact that advertisements are not messages for selling products but have constructive power Power in this study is used in the same sense as used by Foucauldian feminist or feminist poststructuralist (see theoretical framework)

Contrary to the aforementioned claims, some researchers (Caballero, Lumpkin, & Madden, 1989, Callcott & Phillips, 1996, Jaffe & Berger, 1994) have found that the use of stereotypes in advertising cannot always persuade consumers to buy products Advertisers believe that the use of stereotypes makes it easier to communicate to a target audience and to sell their products than the use of multiple, realistic values and beliefs

The crux of discussion here is that media stereotypes (including those presented in advertisement and soap operas) are socially constructed images that are often one-dimensional and distorted in their portrayal of women (Dates & Barlow, 1990, Das, 2011) Many researchers (i.e., Gunter 1995, Manstead and McCulloch 1981) believe that television advertisements present idealized (rather than typical) images of appropriate behaviours and roles for males and females i.e., making television advertising an important factor in developing notions of what appropriate behaviours and roles are for each gender It has been argued that the manner in which men and women are portrayed in advertisement and soap operas maintains and reinforces existing stereotypes of masculinity and femininity (Allan & Coltrane 1996, Furnham & Mak 1999 Manstead & McCulloch 1981)

## **2.6. Women as homemakers**

Television depicts male characters focused on their career while female's characters more concerned and focused on household and family care or they combine these activities with their work Many studies (i.e., Signorielli, 1982, Lauzen et al , 2008, Bartsch et al , 2000, Lauzen

&Dozier, 2005, Stern & Mastro, 2004, Luif, 2014) found that female characters were largely found in programmes about home and family

Women are more often represented in interpersonal roles related to household and care (Greenberg & Collette, 1997, Signorielli & Bacue, 1999) Women are portrayed almost exclusively as housewives, mothers or sex objects (Judith & Levine, 1973) Judith & Levine (1973) claim that the important roles assigned to women are cooking, cleaning and nurturing (housewives) Brown & Campbell (1986) asserted that males are seldom shown doing housework Horovitz (1989) pointed out that men are typically represented as uninterested in and incompetent in domestic chores (cooking and child care)

Studies have also found that women are portrayed as much younger than men (Caballero & Solomon, 1984, Dominick & Rauch, 1972, Ganahl et al , 2003, Gilly, 1988, McArthur & Resko, 1975, Kim & Lowry, 2005)

Marital status of female characters was more likely to be known than the marital status of males Signorielli also spotlighted that 'notions of marriage, home, family and romance are important aspects of the way characters are portrayed and tend to be much more developed in female characters than male characters'' (Signorielli 1982 589)

## **2.7. Men as professionals**

Women in television soap operas were less likely to be portrayed as having an occupation (Bretl & Cantor, 1988, Furnham & Bitar, 1993, Glasscock, 2001, Lauzen et al , 2008, Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001) On the contrary, males are more likely than females to be portrayed as officials, officers and labours in the public domain (Allan & Coltrane, 1996, Dominick & Rauch, 1972, Ferrante et al , 1988, Ganahl et al , 2003, Gilly, 1988) Similarly, men are more

represented in instrumental and leadership roles, they are shown with clear career oriented goals than women (see Lauzier & Dozier, 2004) It is now an establish fact that television text depict men in work settings, and women in home settings (Arima, 2003, Furnham, Babitzkow, *et al*, 2000, Furnham & Bitar, 1993, Furnham *et al*, 2001, Gilly, 1988, Mazzella *et al*, 1992, Mwangi, 1996)

## **2.8. Men and women representation with products**

Young girls and women have been found to be more likely than young boys and men to represent household products (domestic products), whereas male characters have been found to be more likely than female characters to represent financial or technical products-non-domestic products (Allan & Coltrane, 1996, Caballero & Solomon, 1984, Ganahl *et al*, 2003, Lovdal, 1989; McArthur & Resko, 1975, Kim & Lowry, 2005) Researchers have argued that female characters are likely to represent body or household products, whereas male characters are likely to represent service products-automobile [computers, cameras, watch and other machines used in the public domain] (Furnham, Babitzkow, *et al*, 2000a, Furnham, Mak, *et al*, 2000b, Furnham *et al*, 2001; Furnham & Voli, 1989, Neto & Pinto, 1998, Das, 2011) Similarly, Craig (1992) found that women were more likely than men to appear as characters in medicine advertisements than in advertisements for other products. Women were also portrayed as experts on home medical care often as mothers caring for ill children or [wives caring for] sick husbands (Craig, 1992) The point to be highlighted here is that this depiction of women in medicine advertisements and their association with medicine communicate several messages, i.e. women are fragile and get ill and sick easily. This also reinforces the assertion that the association of medicine with women in television advertisements “shows that advertisers take advantage of

stereotypical images of women as home nurses and naturalize stereotype of women as nurturers” (Ullah & Khan, 2011 : 13)

## **2.9. The reinforcement of femininity and masculinity through Television Voice**

Women have been found to be portrayed as product users rather than as product authorities or experts (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000, Gilly, 1988). Generally, there has been a consistent preference for men as spokespersons for various products (Craig, 1992, Furnham & Bitar, 1993, Lovdal, 1989, Moore & Cadeau, 1985). Albeit, women are thought to be more likely to be spokespersons for food, cosmetic and beauty products (Craig, 1992), a large proportion of these products were endorsed by male voice-overs, a situation that depicts men as more credible and authoritative. As noted by Furnham & Bitar (1993), advertisements use voice-overs for conveying important information about a product in an authoritative manner. Previous studies have consistently indicated that male voiceovers are more likely to be used than female voiceovers in the United States, Britain, France, Spain and many other countries (Bresnahan et al 2001, Breit & Cantor 1988, Ferrante et al , 1988, Furnham & Bitar 1993, Furnham et al , 2000a; Milner & Higgs 2004). I do claim that the findings of this study will fill the gap in the existing literature from Pakistani perspective.

Henslin (1997) claimed that females are more likely to be portrayed as passive and indecisive. In TV commercials women's voices are rarely used as the voiceover. In voice-overs, men's voices dominated women's voices (Dominick & Rauch, 1972, Ganahl et al , 2003, Lovdal, 1989, Pierracine & Schell, 1995). Many research studies examined that male characters have been more likely than female characters to appear in voice-overs (Furnham, Babitzkow, et al , 2000, Furnham & Bitar, 1993, Furnham & Farragher, 2001, Furnham, Mak, et al , 2000, Gilly, 1988, Mazzella et al , 1992, Neto & Pinto, 1998, Das, 2011).

According to Syed (2006), in voice-overs, male voices were presented as 'authoritative' and female voices as informative and seductive. Wood (2005) asserts that one of the most pervasive ways in which media define males as authorities is in commercials. Even when commercials are aimed at selling products related to women, up to 90 percent of the time, men's voice is used to explain the value of what is being sold (Basow, 1992, p 161, Bretl& Cantor, 1988)

In terms of argument types, female characters have been found to be more likely to use non-scientific arguments, whereas male characters are more likely to use scientific arguments when representing products (Furnham, Mak, et al , 2000, Mazzella et al, 1992, Neto & Pinto, 1998). Henslin (1997) pointed out that females are more likely to be portrayed as passive and indecisive. In commercials women's voices are rarely used as the voice over. These images have restrictive ideas about women's role in society (Signorielli, 1989, 1990)

#### **2.10. Women's identity and recognition**

Identity formation and the fluidity of identity are subject to feminist research for almost six decades. Much of media researchers (i.e. McArthur & Resko, 1975, Furnham & Bitar, 1993) concluded that television represent and defined women in roles that defined them in terms of their relationships with others in the capacity of spouse, parent, friend or girlfriend. Feminists have argued that although soap operas and dramas are women's fiction, they present a conservative view of the social world. Many of the interactions that occur on soaps operas are family centred (spouses relationship, parent children relationship, siblings relationship and so forth). This means that viewers may tend to believe that family is centrally important in life (Ahmed, 2012). The point to be noted here is that soap operas/dramas, and identification with the characters within them, have the potential to challenge or reinforce young people's views and opinion about their social worlds. Soap operas, no doubts, offer spaces in which traditional

notions femininities can be performed or new femininities can be envisioned and performed through their relatively safe mediated genres of television fictions. Thus, soap operas are productive, “it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1977, 194)

It should come as no surprise that traditional gender stereotypes posit that men represent the ideal or norm against which women are judged. As such, women become the perpetual other, valued primarily in their relations to others, men in particular (Donelson, 1999, Lauzen, Dozier et al., 2008). When multiple programmes across TV channels repeat these gendered roles, they assume the air of truth and credibility (Merskin, 2006). Traditional portrayals of women, thus, serve the dual purpose of seeming “natural and normal” (Merskin, 2006: 5) while simultaneously perpetuating gender hegemony. This study uses theories of gender hegemony as they were used by R. W. Connell (1990). I attempt to take up Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity as one of the central concepts in the theoretical framework to come up with an explanation for how hegemonic relations are reproduced alongside the production of plural femininities and masculinities (see theoretical framework for detailed discussion).

### **2.11. Women representation in the public domain**

Research studies on school textbooks (see Ullah, 2013) and television (see Khan, 2010) in Pakistan have found that women are represented in selected professions/occupations in the public domain. Macdonald (1995) argued that male as well as female characters are mainly employed in the service sector of economy, although men tend to occupy the leadership and managerial positions while women characters are depicted engaged in cleaning, cooking or washing dresses. According to Wood (2004), when media portray women work in public domain their career lives typically receive little or no attention. Although these characters have titles such as lawyers

or doctors, but they are shown predominantly associated with homemakers, mothers and wives. Sandra Bem (1981a) argued that television portrayals of females in the public domain is narrow and restricted to midwives, doctors and pink collar jobs which Sandra calls sexism and unprofessionalism of media.

Rigid gender stereotypes regarding appropriate domestic and work roles may be teasing for women inspiring to experience both work and family lives (Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001). Lauzen et al., argues that "through long-term exposure to television, viewers' career choices may suffer as these portrayals seem to communicate powerful message that women cannot have higher status, better paying jobs and maintain a successful marriage" (Lauzen et al., 2008: 20). Male characters were more likely than females to work and that males held a wider variety of occupations than females (ibid). Van Evra (1990) identified that television presents a misleading and stereotypical picture of occupational choice for women.

## **2.12. Men as supporters and women as dependent**

Many research studies found that television programmes represent women dependent on men (see Furnham et al., 2000, Furnham & Bitai, 1993, Furnham, et al., 2000b, Neto & Pinto, 1998). Television programmes (soaps, dramas and advertisements) show women as passive and dependent who always needs men's care and attention, while males are shown ignoring, exploiting or directing women (see Brown, Campbell & Fisher, 1986). TV programmes reinforce gender stereotypes by portraying males as dominant, sometimes even as rugged and females as sexy and submissive. Television represents men as the competent authorities who save women from their incompetence (Modleski, 1982). Prime time television contributes to this image by showing women who need to be rescued by men and by presenting women as incompetent more than twice as often as men (Boyer, 1986, Lichter et al., 1986).

Peirce's (1990) study found that women do things that please others. Women continue to please men even at the cost of their health and pleasure. Advertisements persuade women to use various products to please others, especially men. Women are constantly cautioned that if women fail to look good and please men, men might leave them (Rakow, 1986). Wood (2004) argues that advertisements manifest power cues that echo the male dominance and female subservience pattern. For instance, men are usually shown positioned above women, and women are more frequently pictured in varying degrees of undress (Masse & Rosenblum, 1988, Nigro et al., 1988).

### **2.13. Women as sex symbols and objects**

Sexism in mass media has been researched widely across societies. The existing body of literature (Lysonski, 1985, Kilbourne, 1999, Cortese, 1999, Lazar, 2006, Ullah & Khan, 2014), reveals that advertising vividly contributes to gender inequality by promoting sexism and distorted body image. Sexism refers to the portrayals of women in an inferior way relative to their capabilities and potential, and is manifested in the depiction of traditional and decorative roles in advertising (Lysonski, 1985; Pollay, 1986, Plakoyiannaki, & Zotos, 2009). Women continued to be portrayed as sex objects (Henslin, 1997). For Courtney and Whipple (1974), sexual object means when women had no role in the commercial, but appeared as an item of attraction and decoration. Kilbourne (1999) argued that sexual victimization of women, once limited to pornography, has found expression not only in films and television shows, but in advertising as well. The body positions, facial expressions, and sexual power relationships between men and women that occur in advertising have often been adopted from violent pornography. Women's presence in advertisements has no substantial relation to the product, increasingly, the woman's role is to be sexy and alluring (Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988, Timson,



1995, Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008) Women are especially vulnerable because their bodies have been objectified and commoditized for so long (Kilbourne, 1999) In fact, some have suggested that the increased emphasis in advertising on sexuality and sexual availability has reached an extent previously considered pornographic (Soley & Kurzbard, 1986 Mackay & Covell, 1997, Hunt & Ruben, 1993)

Research findings demonstrate the power of advertisement portrayals of women in influencing gender-role attitudes. Lanis & Covell's (1995) study found that television advertisements portrayed women as sex objects as compared to males who were shown in progressive role images Such portrayals have been shown to encourage rigid, authoritarian gender-roles and support male dominance (Lanis & Covell, 1995, Walker, Rowe & Qumsey, 1993) In addition, a link has been described among males' gender-stereotyped beliefs, their opposition to women's equality, and their likelihood of violence against women (Mosher & Anderson, 1986, Walker et al., 1993) It is asserted that advertisements in which women are presented as competent, good decision makers and progressive roles models rather than sex objects would reinforce attitudes supportive of equal treatment (MacKay & Covel, 1997)

#### **2.14. Self-objectification**

It is not only men who control media and objectify women, but some women themselves become agent of their as well as other women's objectification In mass media, the contemporary woman has been described as young, thin, slutty, panting sex machine with nothing on her fragile mind but fantasizing ways to assure her lover's ecstasy (Reynolds, 1996) Constant exposure to such images of women may make the average woman feel self-conscious, uncomfortable, embarrassed and insecure about her appearance It is not only making common women

embarrassed about their appearance but women who strive for equality is negatively affected by continued representation of women as sex objects (Wolf, 1991)

Sexualized images of young women saturate the media, teaching girls from an early age that their bodies and appearance are important measures of their self-worth (American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, 2007) The exposure to sexually-objectifying media has been linked with self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame, and anxiety over appearance (see Grabe *et al.*, 2008, Monro & Huon 2005) Various studies have found that exposure to media, particularly television, predicts appearance-related concerns, dieting awareness, and body dissatisfaction (see Dohnt & Tiggemann 2006, Harrison & Hefner 2006, Goodin *et al.*, 2011) Girls are encouraged to dress and behave in ways that accentuate their bodies and signify their sexual availability At the same time, they learn that they will be judged harshly (via terms such as slut or tease) if their sexual conduct or appearance is “too sexual” These contradictions have led some feminist researchers to describe girls as walking a “tightrope of femininity” (Farvid & Braun, 2006), needing to strike a careful balance between being sexually available but not sexually experienced, and sexually desirable but not desiring in their own right (Durham,1998, Kim & Ward, 2012) Self-objectification-with its heightened consciousness of one’s own body-may also constrain girls’ physical movements and impair their cognitive development or motor performance (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005, Goodin et al, 2011) It is argued that women’s increased self-consciousness can lead to a decrease in achievement aspirations (Gould, 1987, Mackay & Covell, 1997) One of the key concepts that this study would focus is what constitutes tightrope of femininity for Pakistani women and how television in Pakistan frame tightrope of femininity for women in Pakistan?

### **2.15. Men's belief about women's position in society**

Walker et al , (1993) suggested that male who holds traditional stereotyped beliefs about women, are "suspicious of and threatened by the women's movement and willing to use force to impose his will on women" (Walker et al , 1993 1037) In fact, there is considerable evidence that authoritarian attitudes and/or highly traditional gender-role views are connected to patterns of marital violence both sexual and non-sexual, as well as to sexual aggression outside of marriage (Finn, 1986, Mosher & Anderson, 1986, Szymanski et al , 1993, Walker et al , 1993, Mackay & Covell, 1997) In addition, Baron & Strauss (1984) noted that rape rates correlate with women's status Although these findings show no direct link between the media and violence against women, it is possible that continuous exposure to advertisements in which women are shown as objects for sexual gratification may reinforce male attitudes supportive of sexual aggression and opposed to women's efforts to equality (Mackay & Covell, 1997)

### **2.16. Theories and concepts engaged in media and gender research**

There is a wide variety of theories and concepts utilized in media and gender research But the most relevant of these concepts and theories for this research are the ones concerning gender construction and gender representation Some of these are discussed here and will be utilized later on in developing the theoretical framework for this thesis

### **2.17. Social learning theory**

One of the key theories of gender socialization is social learning theory Learning through 'imitation' or 'observation' as a key mechanism is proposed by social learning theory Social learning theory thinks of gender identity and role as a set of behaviours that males and females learn from their social environment (see Fagot, 1978) The social environment includes family,

peer, school and media. The concern in this study is media, particularly television. To analyze mass media, social learning theory asserts that media images might lead to the imitation of depicted behaviours by males and females and to the creation of norms of acceptable behaviours (Bailey 2006, Morgan & Signorielli, 1990). It is believed that the behaviours performed on television is being observed and imitated by the viewers (see Bandura, 1973, 1986). Similarly, Bailey (2006), Larson (2001), Kahlenberg & Hein (2010) argue that television images may also be stored in memory and which may serve as cognitive scripts for later retrieval and use by others. This study, while engaging social learning theory, attempts to highlight how the stereotypical gender representation on television in Pakistan may contribute to the perpetuation of gendered social order in the succeeding generation.

### **2.18. Cultivation theory**

Cultivation theory is a social theory that examines the long-term effects of television on its viewers. The primary assertion of cultivation theory is that the more time we spend living in the television world, the more likely we are to believe social reality portrayed on television (Cohen & Weimann, 2000). This theory suggests that exposure to media content creates a worldview, or a consistent image of social behavior, norms, values, and structures, based on the stable view of society provided by the media (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, Gerbner, Gross et al., 1994, Das, 2011). It claims that consumers' perceptions of social reality are heavily influenced by how they see themselves and others portrayed in the media (see Shrum 1996, Tapper 1995, Das, 2011). In other words, cultivation theory posits that consistent images and portrayals construct a specific portrait of reality, and as viewers see more and more images, they gradually come to cultivate or adopt attitudes and expectations about the world that coincide with the images they see. Although this model has typically been employed to explain the impact of television violence

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(see Gerbner & Gross, 1976), it has also been widely applied to the cultivation of attitudes toward gender roles (see Signorielli, 1989) For detailed discussion of television's effects on its viewers, see James Shanahan and Michael Morgan's (1999) book *Television and Its Viewers, cultivation theory and research*

According to cultivation theory Gerbner (1998), peoples' view of social reality is constructed by the mass media, especially television. They tend to learn and practice stereotypes presented to them by mass media as reality. These realities are presented in ways that contour individual behaviours in a way that even the relationships of human beings with themselves, their bodies and their partners are influenced by advertising (Giddens, 1991). This means that television texts, as system of visual representation, creates meaning within the "circuit" of culture, it reflects as well as contributes to perpetuation of cultural norms and values (Hall, 1980, Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996). Television texts, advertisements and soap operas, constitute our environment in which "we swim like fish swims in the water. We cannot escape it. Advertising messages are inside our intimate relationships, our home, our hearts, our heads" (Kilbourne 1999: 57-58). Goffman (1979) argues that advertisements picture men and women in interaction offer 'gender displays' that educate the viewers about conventional modes of gender interaction and sex roles. Taking all the above into consideration, it could be suggested that the truth lies somewhere in the continuum between the "mirror" and the "mold" argument (Zotos & Tsihla, 2014). Since advertising, as a system of visual representation, creates meaning within the "circuit" of culture, it seems that it both reflects and contributes to culture (Hall, 1980, Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996).

The nature of the relationship between gender-related values of society and gender stereotyping in advertising is the focus of a long-standing debate. Two opposing arguments have been articulated, the "mirror" versus the "mould" argument (Holbrook, 1987, Pollay 1986, 1987).

According to the “mirror” argument, advertising reflects values that already prevail in a cultural context (Holbrook, 1987, Eisend, 2010) The rationale behind this argument lies in the existence of multiple interrelated factors in the contemporary socio-economic and political environment that influence the value system of a society Therefore, the impact of advertising seems insignificant (Zotos & Tsihla, 2014) In this light, men and women featured in advertisements generally have been typecast to adhere to the dominant concepts held regarding gender roles (Holbrook, 1987) Conversely, the “mold” argument postulates that advertising molds and impacts on the values of its target audience (Pollay 1986, 1987) This view considers advertisements as a reflection of society, and its prevailing cultural values (Manstead & McCulloch, 1981)

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), subjective reality cannot be maintained without a certain social base and social processes Subjective reality is continued by confirmation or alternating possibilities of reality In other words, consistent media images of stereotypical gender roles have reinforced the public’s subjective reality (Pollay, 1986), and those images remain in the public without portraying the actual “reality” of the society (Schudson, 1984)

### **2.19. Sexism theory**

Like race and ethnic inequalities, sexism has received considerable attention in the past few decades Contemporary academicians have elaborated sexism and talk about ambivalent sexism Ambivalent sexism is a theoretical framework which asserts that sexism has two sub-types ‘benevolent sexism’ and ‘hostile sexism’ Hostile sexism refers to manifest negative evaluations and stereotypes about a gender (for example the belief that women are incompetent and inferior to men) “Benevolent sexism” reflects gender that may seem subjectively positive, but are actually damaging to women and gender equity (for example, the belief that women need to be

defended and protected by men) Hostile sexism is vividly antagonistic toward women who try to challenge men's power and seek to gain control over men. In other words, direct criticism to women who do not ascribe to traditional gender roles. It shows women as incompetent to make important decisions, depicting them as easily manipulated, vulnerable, and weak (Glick & Fiske, 1997). On the other hand, benevolent sexism is a subjectively positive attitude toward women who are seen as warmer but less competent than men. This form of sexism is more subtle and it evokes feelings of protectiveness and sympathy toward females, on the grounds of their inferiority. Benevolent sexism is suggested to promote traditional subservient female roles and is related to the depiction of women in decorative roles in advertising (Glick & Fiske 1996, 1997, Plakoyiannaki *et al.*, 2008). Both hostile and benevolent sexism are evident in categories of female role stereotypes in television text (Glick & Fiske 1996, 1997). It is interesting to observe that modern media seems to portray female bodies through the use of "retro-sexist" imagery of women in advertising (Gill & Arthurs 2006, Plakoyiannaki & Zotos 2009, Zotos & Tsihla, 2014). Retro-sexism is defined as a social and stylistic phenomenon, based on the communication of culturally sanctioned aspects of femininity related to notions of dependency, attractiveness, and adherence to household tasks (Whelehan, 2000, Williamson, 2003). Whereas some researchers claim that retro-sexism in advertising appears to empower women, others suggest this phenomenon can be seen as a backlash against feminism (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006). The main difference between retro-sexism and earlier female sexualized images lies in the assimilation of feminist criticism against sexist advertising, so as to produce "commercial femininities" in the service of commodity consumption (Lazar, 2006 p 505).



## Part Two:

### 2.20. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame work for television soap operas and dramas can be traced back to two principal preceding research approaches the analysis of the representation of gender, social class and race based on the narrative structure of the text, and the analysis of consumption and perception of these soap operas and dramas, in which ethnographic studies play a crucial role. The purpose of this research study is to examine gender representation in Pakistani soap operas and drama serials. Therefore, the study is broadly located in the representation approach within the framework of feminism and feminist media studies.

For the informed analysis of the soap operas and dramas serials, I outline the theoretical framework to understand and highlight the ways in which television in Pakistan reinforces hegemonic masculinity and idealized femininity. The analysis of television discourses around gender demands for the application for several theoretical concepts/theories such as Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Louis Althusser theory of ideology, Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity and Michel Foucault's concept of discourse.

The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci developed the concept of *hegemony* to describe the manner through which the ruling class dominates by securing the popular consent to its rule (Gramsci, 1971). In other words, Gramsci used the word hegemony to describe the dominance of one social class over others (ibid). The theory of hegemony brought to light how institutions (family, education and mass media) function as tools that support and transmit the ruling ideology (ruling class ideas and beliefs) as common sense reality. In this sense television can be seen a particular instrument of ruling class hegemony. For the purpose of this study, I assume men as the ruling

class and women as the subjugated class and try to highlight how men use television discourses as common sense reality to encourage subjects (men and women) to experience gender as “natural” and that masculinity is self-identical with men and femininity with women. This study, however, does not take into account the notion of masculinity and femininity as singular constructs but draw on Connell’s approach to masculinities and femininities as plural and socially situated.

Masculinity means a set of attributes, behaviours and roles generally associated with boys and men whereas Femininity is a set of behaviours, roles and attributes generally associated with girls and women. This study takes the sociological perspective on gender/masculinity and femininity or gender identities as socially constructed categories rather than biological ones. Femininity and masculinity has changed over time and differ from society to society and even within a society (Kehily, 2007). It was this social constructionist understanding of gender / masculinity and femininity that the Australian sociologist Raewyn Bob Connell extensively argued on subject of masculinity and shifted attention away from the notion of masculinity as a singular, universal category towards the idea of masculinities as a plural and socially situated category (Connell, 1995). This means concepts of masculinity and femininity are multiple like other gender categories. Connell differentiated between various types of masculinity that occur in reality and argued that in any given situation certain version of masculinity become dominant or *hegemonic masculinity* (Kehily, 2007).

For Connell, hegemonic masculinity is a particular variety of masculinity to which women and other (young, homosexual men) are subordinated. In hegemonic masculine societies, masculinity is the standard from which everything else is measured, and masculine traits are the most desired and valued in society (Connell, 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is the culturally idealized form of

masculine character (Connell, 1990: 83) which emphasizes physical toughness and competitiveness as well as the subordination of women. Connell argued that "such idealized form of masculinity became hegemonic when it is widely accepted in a culture and when that acceptance reinforces the dominant gender ideology of the culture (Trijillo, 1991: 290). This reveals that hegemonic masculinity is not "the property of a certain man, but a specified socio-cultural normative standard, to which men and boys are geared. This normative structure gives the location on the top of the gender hierarchy to a boy or a man who supposedly possesses these properties and shares these values (Kon, 2008). Thus, hegemonic masculinity is the general acceptance of masculinity as the primary characteristic of [any] society that places women in positions below men (Pedersen, 2002). In simple words, hegemonic masculinity is what it means to be a man/boy in a particular cultural context. My goal in this study is to employ Connell's concept *hegemonic masculinity* to television discourses in Pakistan.

Media and gender studies scholars highlight at least five features of hegemonic masculinity: (1) Physical toughness and force, (2) Professional and occupational accomplishment, (3) patriarchy, (4) heterosexuality, (5) frontiersmanship (see Brod, 1987, Connell, 1990).

Looking at the first feature of hegemonic masculinity, this study argues that masculinity is hegemonic when power is demonstrated as force or control that is vested in the body of gender relations that define men as holders of power and women as subordinate and this is one of the main ways in which the superiority of men is naturalized (Connell, 1983: 23). Secondly, the study takes into account masculinity as hegemonic when it is associated with professional and occupational success and achievement in contemporary society. Here my focus will also be to highlight how television soap operas privilege men's work over women's work. Drawing on the third feature of hegemonic masculinity, this study argues that masculinity is hegemonic when

men control women and children in the family (familial patriarchy) as well as control women and other (poor) men in society in general (public patriarchy). Familial patriarchy exists when men are breadwinners, family protectors and strong father and husband figures whereas women are housewives, nurturing mothers and sexual objects (see Trujillo, 1991). The fourth feature, frontiersmanship, allows me to argue that how television discourses idealize men with good middle class values and career aspirations as men's domain.

Thus, drawing on Connell's notion of multiple *masculinities* (1995) and *hegemonic masculinity* (1987, 1995) as central concepts, I attempt to examine and highlight how *hegemonic masculinity* and *emphasized femininity* have been naturalized through television soap operas in Pakistan. I highlight how hegemonic masculinity and emphasized/idealized femininity operate on the terrain of common sense and conventional normative standards. I use the *emphasized femininity* as interchangeable concept with *idealized femininity*. By these terms I mean a complete compliance to patriarchy. This insight from Connell's work is helpful to shed light on how some femininities are hegemonic and other subordinate when it comes to gender relations. I also touch upon the concept of multiple femininities and explain how hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity are implicated in and intersect with class.

I also engage and draw on Michel Foucault's concepts of *power* and *discourse*. For Foucault, power is something that exists everywhere and emerges from every social interaction and thus pervades the social body. He argues that "power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978: 93). Criticizing the traditional notion of power (power exists in the hands of the sovereign or the state) and previous Marxist and Freudian analyses of power (power is fundamentally repressive), Foucault argued that power flows through the capillaries of the social body and is primarily productive, as he puts

it “power produces, it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (1977, 194) It also, according to Foucault, produces subjects (McNay, 1992) For Foucault, power subjects individuals, in both senses of the term, it simultaneously creates them as subjects by subjecting them to power Foucault's emphasis on the local and capillary nature of power clearly has been extremely fruitful for feminists interested in analyzing domination Power is therefore a crucial concept in feminist analysis Many feminists (known as Foucauldian-feminists) have extensively drawn on Foucault's analysis of power

Foucauldian-feminist analyses of power draw on Foucault's account of *disciplinary power* in order to critically analyze *emphasized or normative femininity* In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault highlighted the 18<sup>th</sup> century disciplinary practices in schools, prisons, industries-including regulations of bodily movements, detailed time tables/schedules, and surveillance mechanism He explained how these practices shape the bodies of pupils, prisoners and labors into docile bodies (1977, 135-169) Foucault argued that these disciplining practices are designed in ways that compel the inmates to self-surveillance, in Foucault's words subject to their own subjection” (1977 203) Drawing on the extending Foucault's account of *disciplinary power*, Sandra Bartky argued that the disciplinary practices engender feminine docile bodies- dieting practices, limitations on mobility and body language, and bodily beautification The gendered disciplinary practices (dieting, restricted one's movement, occupying less space, keeping body hairless, hair perfectly styled and other beautification strategies) pushed them to self-surveillance Bartky, observing the gendered disciplining practices argued,

“it is women themselves who practice this discipline on and against their own bodies The woman who checks her make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her

hardo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle, or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate in the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to relentless self-surveillance. This self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy” (1990, 80)

Foucault’s concepts of *power* and *disciplinary power*, particularly the way Bartky used the later one, are extremely helpful concepts to my analysis of television soap operas. Drawing on Foucault’s concept of power and disciplinary power, I analyze how women are subjected to normative femininity through television discourses. The discourses of diet, exercise, skin care, hair style, good girl, good woman, good mother and good wife, push women to self-surveillance and complete compliance and obedience to cultural norms and compliance to patriarchy.

The theoretical framework outlined above directed my research focus and facilitated my analysis and argument. It provided me with a lens to investigate the television discourses from feminist stand point. I use discourse as it used by feminist poststructuralist (see methodology)

# CHAPTER THREE

## Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I position my research study within the wider field of qualitative research. As stated earlier and reiterated here that most of our news and entertainment comes from television. Therefore, sociologists in general and feminists in particular focus to examine the dynamic of gender issues in television soaps and dramas, there are at least two principal preceding research approaches (a) the analysis of the consumption and reception of these serials, in which ethnographic studies play a crucial role, and the analysis of the representation of gender based on the narrative structures of the text. This study, as explained in the start of the theoretical framework, has been carried out in the broader domain of representation approach with the specific focus on how men and women are portrayed and represented in television soaps and drama serials in Pakistan.

This study qualitatively examines whether men and women are represented as typically feminine or masculine. In this study I am also interested whether the traditional gender roles are challenged and if so in what way and to what extent. My key research questions are of a descriptive nature. When conducting research of a descriptive nature, it is not enough to just describe data, the data also needs to be used in an interesting and critical way. This demands that the analysis needs to be based on a clear analytical tool, in order to draw conclusions other than those explicitly revealed in the data (Esaïasson *et al*, 2007). In qualitative research it is immensely important to tell the readers what the researcher did and why s/he did this way. Having said this, the forthcoming discussion explains how did I carry out this research? What

dramas and television channels were analyzed and why? How data was collect? What analytical tool and method were used to analyze data and make sense of it? In shot it outlines the methodological steps adopted to conduct this research

### **3.2. Selection of Channels and Dramas**

This study is a qualitatively examines television discourses in four television dramas/soaps broadcast on PTV home and Hum TV. It would have been an impossible task to analyze all dramas broadcast on all channels. Therefore, I confined my study to four dramas of two channels so to set and determined the parameters of my research. The focus was thus limited to the dramas broadcast on PTV Home and Hum TV in the year 2015 (July to December) because the aim is to examine the present nature of representation. The selection of PTV and Hum TV for analysis was purposive and not random. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research uses a different logic and follows non-probability sampling techniques for selecting a population or unit for study. The population or study units are selected deliberately for their specific characteristics that are of significance to the research study.

### **3.3. Selection of PTV Home**

This study examined the portrayal of men and women or masculinity and femininity on Pakistan Television Network (PTV Home). PTV Home, the original PTV, is twenty four hour state run entertainment channel founded on 26 November 1964. PTV was the first major televised media broadcasting network in Pakistan and popular for its hour-long drama series and serials. The reasons for examining the representation of men and women on PTV Home were first, "it is accessible to all Pakistani citizens irrespective of their geographical locations in the country" (Ullah & Khan, 2014: 28). Second, this channel is widely available to the people of rural areas of Pakistan where private cable television networks are either resisted on religious and cultural



grounds or do not exist at all. Third, broadcasting on PTV home is to be considered as an expression of the state's point of views (Ullah & Khan, 2014: 28). Fourth, PTV home, in the official discourses, is titled a "family channel" which means parents, children and other family members, irrespective of their age and sex, can watch together.

### **3.4. Selection of Hum TV**

Today, Pakistan has over 60 private Television channels. The broadcasting of these private television channels largely remains concentrated in the urban centres/cities of the country. Many of these channels broadcast multiple entertainment programmes and dramas. I feel it is important to mention here that analyzing more than one private channel was not feasible for this study due to time constraints. I also felt that at least one popular private channel would be enough for analysis and discussion of gender representation in private TV channels. Hum TV was selected on the basis of purposive sampling. Hum TV is one of the several private channels popular for its hour-long drama serials and short duration soaps (Khan, 2010). Madni *et al* , (2014), on the basis of their study, concluded that Hum TV is widely watched by all age groups and classes. Based only on Hum TV, I cannot make too broad generalizations about gender representation on private channels. However, I still believe that the study of Hum TV, in conjunction with the country official TV channel, adds to the overall understanding of gender representation in Pakistani television dramas. Thus, the decision of selecting Hum TV was not random but was based on purposive sampling. By purposive sampling here I mean a series of strategic choices about how, when and with whom one does one's research (see Palys, 2008).

### **3.5. Selection of Soaps/Dramas**

Soaps were chosen for analysis because they are rarely recognized for their potentially stereotypical representation of men and women in Pakistan. Soap operas and dramas have an

established presence on Pakistani television. Pakistani soaps and dramas have been successful across Pakistan and abroad from the very inception of television in 1964. It will not be an exaggeration to argue that soaps and dramas are among the most popular forms of entertainment in Pakistan.

I think it is important to mention here that it would have been an impossible task to analyze all dramas broadcast on all channels, therefore, boundaries were needed to be set to determine the parameters of my research. The focus was thus limited to the dramas broadcast on PTV Home and Hum TV in the year 2015 because the aim is to examine the present nature of gender representation. A sample was then selected from PTV Home and Hum TV dramas. The main sampling method chosen for the selection of dramas was simple random sampling. Therefore, the research may be considered a case study focusing primarily on four drama serials, *Jeena DushwarSahi*, *Mahi Ray*, *Akeli* and *Jugno*, which were broadcast by the selected channels. I accept that the selection of four dramas from two channels may be criticized from a quantitative research perspective as weak bases for broad generalizations about gender representation in Pakistan. This does not mean that the research is not representative. I still believe that this study, albeit small and only concentrating on four dramas from two channels, sufficiently explicates and adds to the overall literature regarding gender representation and if the dramas, as this study found, are showing similar types of gender representation as in previous studies on television programmes and commercials in Pakistan, broader generalizations are possible and relevant since they are substantiated by previous studies. Thus, these four soaps and dramas may be taken into account as a representation of the Pakistani television dramas. Moreover, this sample size may not be considered problematic by looking at the qualitative nature of the study.

### 3.6. Method of Collecting and Transcribing the Data

The data for the study came from 155 episodes of the four dramas (*Jeena Dushwar Sahi*, *Mahu Ray*, *Akeli*, *Jugno*) It is important to mention here that the aim of the study is not to verify or falsify any particular theory or theories, but simply to highlight different types of representations seen in the dramas concerning men and women representation. I gathered data through watching the dramas and taking notes of what I saw in dramas or heard in conversations/talks among characters. I watched dramas live and took notes. However, my focus was to ensure the quality of data so I revisited the website-[www.dramasonline.com](http://www.dramasonline.com) where all dramas are uploaded and available. I watched each episode again and listen to the dialogue again and again, adding missing words, sentences in the dialogue and making all necessary corrections in my notes. I noted down the data in *Urdu* as these dramas were in the *Urdu* language. The data were later on translated into English language as per the academic requirement (thesis is to be written and presented in the English language)

I claimed that the translation of my study findings/data from the Urdu to English Language did not affect the validity and quality of data and its final report. I was cognizant of the issues such as the linguistic competence of the translator/s, the translator's knowledge of the culture of the people under study, the circumstances in which the translation take place, words which exist in Urdu language but not in English, concepts which are not equivalent in different cultures, idiomatic expressions and/or differences among languages in grammatical and syntactical structures.

I adopted all the technical steps at this stage to overcome the cited issues. I translated the dialogues in the best of my knowledge and with the help of dictionary use. I then submitted the dialogues (my data) to an expert in linguistic (native Urdu speaker with a Ph. D in English

Language) along with the dialogues noted in *Urdu*. This decision was taken to fix the idiomatic expressions, grammatical and syntactical structures of the dialogues so that the quality and validity of the data be ensured. Therefore, the transcripts I finally used in this study are completely verbatim from the dramas' conversations. The use of direct quotations was to support the argument and conclusion. This was intended to bring the readers to the reality of the issue of gender representation on television. It is "acknowledged that there are various types of approaches that can be applied to deconstruct television [text]" (Ullah & Khan, 2014: 28) but I opted for discourse analysis. Thus, selected samples of texts from my notes have been analyzed with the help of discourse analysis.

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

Since the aim of this study is to assess the representation of men and women or masculinity and femininity in soaps/dramas, I employed discourse analysis as the best technique to guide the analysis. My decision of employing discourse analysis as the main methodological and analytical tool was based on the belief that this enables me to explore the constructive power of television discourses. It is important to mention here that discourse analysis has many different types and different researchers use different versions of discourse analysis in their researches (see Flick, 2009). "It can be used in different ways depending on the field and purposes of the analyst" (Ullah, 2013: 147). As already mentioned at different places throughout this study, my study focuses on how women and men are represented in television dramas. The main aim is to explore how gender is represented in the dramas discourses by looking at femininity and masculinity. I selected Foucauldian discourse analysis as the most suitable for this study. The key reason why I believe that Foucauldian discourse analysis is the best choice is that it is one of the widely used methods used by feminist researchers for studying gender representation in media. Thus,

discourses analysis in this study has been used with an insight from poststructuralist / Foucauldian feminists. Discourse, for poststructuralist / Foucauldian feminists, is the site in which language is used and where meaning and subjectivity are constructed and contested (Ullah, 2013). Discourse is not only conversation and talk for poststructuralists it is also written text. Poststructuralist theorizing on gender asserts that gender, gender inequality and gender identities arise from discourse. Drawing on insight from feminist poststructuralist, the study, employing discourse analysis, explains how gender representation in television dramas contributes to the construction of gendered identities and perpetuation of gendered hierarchies in Pakistan. My analysis of dramas points out how the circulation of gendered discourses on television screen explicitly and tacitly offer preferred forms of subjectivity so that viewers take up their subject position according to their socially constructed "gender category" (see Walkerdine, 1987, Ullah, 2013). Drawing on the fundamental assumption of Foucauldian discourse analysis enabled me to go beyond the surface meaning and shed light on how television text is ideologically invested and loaded with hegemonic messages. The analysis explicates that television dramas are ideologically invested and used for the production and reproduction of gender order and gender hierarchies in Pakistan.

Conducting discourse analysis and looking at the power relation in television text the study has tried to explore how dramas are used as power/force in the construction of gender male and female as masculine and feminine individuals. My analysis focused to highlight the way television dramas reinforce the existing social and cultural power structures, how males and females are portrayed in dramas' discourse, underlying power structure in gender interaction. I have also attempted to explicate how gender identities are constructed and hegemonic masculinity is reinforced through television dramas.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Gender Representation in Television Soaps in Pakistan

This chapter focuses on the representation of men and women or masculinities and femininities in television soaps and dramas. The chapter provides detailed description of what it means to be a man and woman in the socio-cultural context of Pakistan. The chapter analyzes conversations (dialogues) in television soaps and dramas with the belief that routine day-to-day interactions between women and men and even among women themselves perpetuate gender hierarchies (men dominance over women). The chapter further highlights how television discourses are ideologically invested and contribute to the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity in contemporary Pakistan. Throughout the chapter, social constructionists understanding of gender/poststructuralists theorizing on gender (masculinity and femininity) provide some useful concepts for the analysis and discussion. Concepts such as ideology, power, hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity, gender code, gender order, gender identities have been engaged for interpretation and analysis of television text.

The chapter explicates that television dramas not only valorised and affirmed hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity but also made these socially constructed characteristics appear natural to the viewers. It also explains how television dramas function in favour of powerful groups (males) by depicting women as silly, scattered-brained, confused and easily crying, and men as wise, focussed, strong, bold, independent and practical rather than emotional. The analysis sheds light on how television acts as powerful tool in a male dominated society by reproducing different and differentially located 'categories' of citizens for example, women as 'Other' of men and essentializing women across space and time.

#### 4.1. Discursive objectification of women in soaps

Objectification of women is apparent through a range of television text. Television soaps, like advertisement (see Ullah & Khan, 2014), communicate objectifying messages. The message women are receiving is that they should be beautiful, skinny, and should wear makeup at all the time so that they can please men's eyes. Sajjad, on the wedding night, tells his wife,

Sajjad I like lipsticks so always wear it

Tania You mean always?

Sajad Yes always. It is my wish to see you wearing lipstick all the time

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena dushwar sahi*)

The implicit message that quotes like these communicates to women is that by wearing lip liner and lipstick, women become more feminine and more attractive. It also communicates a tacit message that lips are the powerful areas of the face to attract men. Similarly, reminding Savera's about her marriage, her mother tell Savera to regularly visit parlour so that she should be beautiful and fresh at the time of marriage.

Mother to Savera Your marriage is very close. You should start regular visit to beauty parlour for treatment of your hair and skin.

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

In a similar fashion, a conversation between two sisters show how much women are fussy and fastidious about their face freshness and skin,

Mahira to Sara let me apply lotion on my face

Sara There is no need to apply lotion as your skin is already so fresh You should not apply lotion daily

Mahira It is fresh because I do care of it

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

A night before dating a boy, Mahira tells her sister "I am going to sleep early otherwise my skin will not be fresh in morning" (Excerpt from Drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

Savera's mother tells Savera "Sleep soon so that your skin is fresh in the morning" (Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*) Another example that emphasized physical beauty and appearance was the occasion when Mr Azfar (fixing the marriage of his sister) tells Shehnaz (his wife) to prepare Mahnoor very well so that she is liked by the boy's family

Mr Azfar to Shehnaz A family is coming to see Mahnoor tomorrow So prepare her well, do her makeup and dress her in a good manner

(Extract from drama *Akeli*)

In the same drama, Asif calls his fiancée as 'thing' something special

Asif with Savera You are something special

The above quote equates a young woman with thing These discourses shed light on how women are subjected to objectifying discourses These also reveal the ways women discipline and shape their bodies in line with current objectifying discourses about what makes attractive female body (see Holmes, 2007) Television soaps, thus, objectify women by instilling into them that their skin and beauty is their only capital that they have to trade upon These messages when read in conjunction with the television advertisements (i.e., *Bar bairdehko, hazar bar dhuko, Hai yeh*



*dhakni ki cheez hamaridilroba*-Gaze again and again, gaze thousand time, no doubt my beloved is thing to be seen again and again-translated) push women to concentrate only on their appearances (see Ullah & Khan 2014) It can be argued here that television soaps and dramas reinforce the notion of femininity in female bodies and represent women as objects and sites of men gaze

#### **4.2. The gendered marriageable age**

The social meaning attached with early marriage also stresses parents and brothers to marry off their daughters and sisters as early as possible. It is popularly believed that girls become old when they turn 20. This belief clearly reflects social compulsion and the mindset of people keen to marry girls off at an early age.

The century old stereotype of age difference between men and women at the time of marriage is reinforced by television soaps and dramas as natural and essential. Television soaps reproduce the sexist belief that the ideal age for women marriage is 20 to 25 whereas men in their thirties (30s) are considered the best for marriage. Idealizing twenties as the best age for women marriage, Faiza's mother tried to convince Faiza for marriage as,

Mother to Faiza: There is a good marriage proposal for you.

Faiza: I am not going to get marry right now.

Mother: Look you have turned 24 and 24 is the ideal age for marriage. Listen, no one ask about women when they turn 25.

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

In the same conversation, Faiza's mother tells her that men become real men in their thirties. This and many more such discourses throughout the study communicate a strong message that age needs to be understood in terms of symbolic process. The discourse also tells the audience what is meaningful for the culture in which male and female are deployed.

#### **4.3. Representation of young women as source of stress and worries for their families**

One of the main findings of this study is the discursive construction of young women. Television soaps depict young women in love with men as a source of stress and worries for the families as well as a potential source of money making. To escape troubles such as daughter/sister in love with someone, daughter and sister harassed by someone, girls having affairs, parents become eager to marry off their daughters as soon as they reach adolescence. In any of the above situations, girls are blamed and they have to bear the stigma, even if they are not wrong. This associates unmarried young women with family honour and, therefore, source of stress for family, especially mothers. Following quotations from conversations of different soaps and dramas reflect the severity of the situation.

Mawa to her mother: Are you still awake?

Mother: How can I sleep when a young daughter is out of home till late night?

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena dushwar sahi*)

In another example, a brother replies to his sister's question as,

Faiza: *Bhai* (brother) why are you awake?

Faizan: Brothers can't sleep when there are two sparrows [referring to his sisters as sparrows] in the house.

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

The following conversation among two sisters reveals how women themselves construct themselves as a source of stress and anxiety for their families

Fakhara to her younger sister Faiza I don't want to tie myself in wedding knot I have a job offer in *Dubai* and I intend to join it This will make my future

Faiza to Fakhara Api[elder sister) your future is marriage, mom says And you know mothers can't sleep when their daughters become young

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

These excerpts/quotations vividly show how young unmarried women are constructed as a constant source of stress and anxiety for their families. Anosha (a rural woman), who fell in love with a tourist from Lahore, is warned by her father as,

Father to Anosha Do not step out of this house if you care of my honour

(Excerpt from Drama *Mahiray*)

In almost similar vein, another father scolding his daughter said,

Father Did I rear and nurtured you for this day that you bring insult to me and defame me by making affair? [He continues] I wish I kill you with my hands

Sara I have not done anything that you think Kill me but do not doubt me and please do not call me a bad girl

Father There is something from your side that's why he wrote your name on his hand You are equally responsible for this act

Sara I am not the kind of girl that you think of me

Father Whatever, you will not step out of the gate You made me alone You broke my heart No one could dare to gaze you if I had a son

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena Dushwar sahi*)

This is a complex and long excerpt that can be concluded with the assertion that women are blamed for love/affairs even if they are not involved and even do not know about it (see Sara conversation in the above excerpt) Sara consistently says that she is innocent and does not know about the allegation of love affairs that her step mother made against her Sara's step mother scolded her when Sara brings breakfast for her father,

Sara's step mother Why did you bring breakfast? Your father is a man of respect and principles and cannot eat the breakfast [prepared and served by an immoral woman like you]

Sara He is my father [I know him] The [person that you are associating with me] is like my brother. Please forgive me for the sin that I have not committed

When we see these television conversations in the framework of dominant discourses we can argue that young girls' lives are very vulnerable to blames and sexual allegations Due to the fear that young girls bring dishonour and defamation to their family and parents, parents/brothers try to marry off their daughters and sisters as soon as possible

#### **4.4. Career for men and marriage and homemaking for women**

Television soaps generally ignore females' professional lives, or more often, they are portrayed as housewives who take care of children and family chores every-day, with no interest in career Even if females do job, they are often shown in traditional feminine jobs such as secretaries and

nurses (as was noted in the Drama *Jugno* and *Mahī Ray*) For the relatively small number of women who showed some ambitions to further their professional lives, they were invariably discouraged For example, Fakhara got a job in *Dubai* and wished to join it but she was unsuccessful as her mother did not allow her Fakhara [with a good mood and happy face] very proudly tells her mother,

*Ma* (mother) I have a very good job offer from *Dubai* I wish to avail this opportunity It will make my future It will make our future-as soon as I settle there [in *Dubai*] I will call you all

Mother I will not let you go My happiness is lying in marrying you off

Faizan *Ma*, let *Api*[elder sister] go to *Dubai*. One of my friends is also working there She will not have problem as he is there

Mother I will not let my young daughter to go to *Dubai* alone Men are free to go and live anywhere The world [people] becomes beast for a young and lonely woman Young and alone woman are gazed with sexual eyes in her own country, how can I send my daughter abroad

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

The dialogue is one of the several conversations that discourage women to aspire for career, especially away from their families The quote also reveals that men-and not women-have the right to go abroad, make career and live wherever they wish Similarly, in drama serial *Jeena Dushwar sahi*, Ms Mawa (daughter of a businessman) joined Mr Salman Ahmad's office with her insidious desires-to get revenge from Mr Hamad by involving him in love Mawa's mother was very angry and said you do not need a job Despite a considerable social change taking place

in Pakistan, the belief that making career is men prerogative both in Pakistan and abroad is reinforced by television soaps. Young women, especially from middle and lower classes, are discouraged and not allowed to struggle for a career/job abroad. The following quotation from the conversation highlights the importance of career for men

Faiza to Faizan: It is our mother wish that you get higher education and higher status in society. When our brother would be in a prestigious position, our heads will be high with proud.

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

These discourses vividly reveal that television soaps and dramas reinforce the belief that the traditional marriage paradigm is reproduced to keep women out of the public domain, and place a strong emphasis on women role in the private and men in the public domain.

#### **4.5. Discursive construction of the basis of marriage**

Marriage is one of the key events both in men's and women's lives. However, the basis and reasons why one has to marry or the family decides to marry off men and women vary from class to class and culture to culture. The reasons also vary for men and women. Dominantly, families marry off their men to make them responsible and reform them, whereas women are married off to save the family honour and reputation. Television soaps reinforce these stereotypes. Sajjad, the son of a businessman, used to come home late at night, spend lavishly on his girlfriend and was least interested in his father business. Keeping all his bad habits in view, Sajjad's father (Salman Ahmad) decides in a discussion with Hamad (Yonger brother of Sajjad)

Salman to Hamad I know how to deal with Sajjad I will chain him with marriage

Marrying him off will make him responsible He will be on the right track

Hamad But how can a marriage for responsibility be successful?

Salman Ahmad He will be responsible after having a wife.

Hamad Your logic may fail

Salman Ahmad Salman Ahmad's logic can never fail

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena dushwar sahi*)

There are quite a few examples and cases like these that reinforce stereotypes that marrying off deviant men is the best way to reform them and make them responsible and accountable This shows that marriage means different things for men and women, i.e., it is used as a tool to discipline men and make them responsible whereas a strategy to save the family honour in case of women

Similarly, marrying off women as soon as possible is deeply embedded in cultural discourses as parents' and brother "Ultimate Duty" Parents and brothers have been depicted showing serious worries to fulfil their responsibility of marry off their daughters/sisters When Faiza refused to marry and wished to continue her job, her mother tried to convince her by stating,

I have the responsibility to marry you off I pray that Allah bless you with your own home during my life

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

In another occasion, Faiza's mother says that marrying her daughter off will make her son relieve from the responsibility of guarding sisters

Faizan's mother to another woman Faizan is a man He remains out of the house  
Therefore, I wish to marry off my daughters so that Faizan is free of the tension to guard his sisters

The belief of marrying off daughters and sisters as parents' and brothers' 'ultimate duty' persistently stresses them to discharge their duty as early as possible All these discourses show that women are considered a burden that needs to be disposed at the earliest The above excerpt also communicate a strong message that women cannot protect themselves as Faizan was younger but is depicted as the protector of his elder sister The concern of marrying off young women as soon as possible usually exists among middle-class families

#### **4.6. Television imaging of an ideal wife**

The prevailing discourses of ideal wife in television is not different from dominant discourses that women dream all the time about the perfect husband, the perfect in-laws, perfect house In television soaps and dramas, men idealized wife as someone who always beautifies herself for her husband, should wait for her husband and should take care of his every small and big needs Following conversation demonstrates how the traditional and stereotypical discourses of an ideal wife are naturalized by soaps and dramas in Pakistan

Asif to Savera Husbands like their wives in finery and ostentatious dress and good makeup Wife ought to be domestic and obedient to her husband

After divorcing Savera, Asif got married to Mahnoor Asif, on the very first night, announcing his criteria of an ideal wife,



I wish a wife who takes care of my needs, who care of my every small thing She should wait for me at home when I come, she should be well dressed and should wear good makeup

Mahnoor I will try my best to be what you wish

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

Sara asks from her beloved husband-Hamad, what is good wife for him

Sara to Hamad tell me what is the criterion of a good wife for you?

Hamad A good wife is the one who understand and fulfil the needs of her husband without asking him what he needs or likes A good wife is the one who know the mood of her husband all the time

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeenu dushwar sahi*)

These excerpts define a good wife as a woman who spends all her energy and time to understand her husband and keep him happy She is supposed to be domestic and all the time keeping herself attractive, seductive and good looking Men were also portrayed to demand their wives to remove their shoes when they come from outside

Jamal to his wife Ramsha I am tired, remove my shoes [she removed with a bad mood]

Jamal You dislike it

Ramsha No, it's ok

Jamal Our women feel proud to remove their men shoes

Ramsha Did not reply

Jamal Ramsha (he shouted) You did not reply my question and I do not like such behavior so be careful in future

(Excerpt from Drama *Mahiray*)

The above excerpt stresses that it is the responsibility of an ideal wife to do things which can injure their self-esteem and respect such as removing her husband shoes. Similarly, on the first night, Sajjad tells his wife Tania that he likes lipstick all the time

Sajjad to Tania It is unbelievable that such a beautiful girl is my wife. Here is your gold set and I want to see you wearing this when my eyes open in the morning. I like lipstick so always wear it.

Tania You mean always?

Sajjad Yes, always. It is my wish to see you wearing lipstick all the time

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

Similarly, Shehnaz's aunty guides and advises her how to get the maximum love and care from her husband

*Apa*(elder sister) to shehnaz Take care of Azfar. Show concern. Try to be with him so that he shall not think of anyone else. Make delicious dishes for him. Dress-up for him and never disagree with him.

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

The above quotations depict how males' gaze operates as a powerful tool that constructs women as 'ideal wives' in line with sexist and male's hegemonic standards. These discourses give a very narrow and sealed frame of an ideal wife in which women have to fix

themselves as 'ideal wives' These discourses define a woman to be an ideal wife who is (a) physical attractive and good looking, (b) showing concern for their husbands, (c) good in cooking, (d) domestic and fulltime housewives who are totally dependent on their men, (e) wearing makeup and keeping themselves attractive to their husbands all the time, (f) quiet, gentle, and always ready to do what husbands want them to do without expressing their own opinion A persistent stress in these quotes is make up and physical beauty This means that women's looks have become increasingly important to men over the years The emphasis on physical attraction may seem to be the result of changing basis of modern marriages which are more likely based on love and attraction rather than practicalities

To truncate the discussion here, it can be argued that the discursive construction of an 'ideal wife' in television soaps and dramas does not liberate women from the traditional ideal of housewife (good cook, meek and caring etc) but increase the standards for them to combine the traditional parameters and characteristics of an ideal wife with the new ones demanded by men in contemporary society such as good looking, physically smart and wearing makeup etc Television discourses construct an 'ideal wife' in Pakistan as physically attractive, caring, domestic and skilled in house chores These discourses suggest that television texts are not free of ideological politics Soaps and dramas are informed by men's gaze and sexist ideology

#### **4.7. Men have power over women, children and resources**

Television soaps reflect how men and women occupy differential social position and the ways both men and women exercise or resist power Put simply, soaps demonstrate that women in Pakistan continue to have less power than men and are less likely to succeed in the same ways as men do Television dramas and soaps reflect the power imbalance Power here refers to both

resource and domination. See Allen (1999) and the theoretical framework in this study for a detailed discussion on power. Following quotes from the television soaps reveal how men exercise their control over women, children and resources. Following quotes from the drama serial *Mahi Rey* reveal how home is possessed by men. In a crisis time when there was no one to drive Jamal mother to market, Ramsha (Jamal's wife) came forward and said that she would drive the car. Her mother-in-law disliked Ramsha's offer. When Jamal came home, his mother told him to inform Ramsha that she should leave her urban life style. Jamal warned Ramsha very harshly, dragging her violently to bedroom.

Jamal [in a serious and angry tone] to Ramsha: Why did you offer mother that you will drive her to market? You should not say it again.

Ramsha: But Jamal, you know I used to drive car [before marriage] in mom's home.

Jamal: This is not your home. It is my home. Remember, rules are different here.

Such kind of discourses in television soaps reinforce and legitimize the biological differences between men and women by depicting Jamal as angry and violent and Ramsha as weak and terrified woman. The first line in the excerpt communicates a strong message that wives should not say anything without the prior approval of their husbands. Lines two and three affirm that women have no home, i.e., when they are in their parents' house, they are told that they have to go to their homes (husbands' homes) whereas the husbands deny wives the ownership of the home (see line three).

Not only are women denied the ownership of home but men possesses them as objects or things whom men can discard and dispose whenever they wish if they (women) do not fit into their schemes of life. Following quotes are shared here to substantiate my argument.

Sajjad to his wife Tania I take a moment to change a girl if she does not agree with my words

Tania: I am your wife not girlfriend

Sajjad Be a wife and don't try to dominate me I cannot make wife the crown of my head She is a shoe and must remain a shoe And listen, don't make my complaints to my mom like maids If you wish to spend life with me, lets things go the way they are otherwise I will take a moment to kick you out of my life I do what I say

(Excerpt from *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

In almost similar tone, Yazdani (a man) in his discussion with his lawyer says,

Yazdani [he refers to himself] uses and discard women like tissue papers

(Excerpt from *Akeli*)

These excerpts tell women in general and wives in particular that they have to agree with their husbands, no matter what husband says or do, if women want to have peaceful relationship with their husbands, otherwise their husbands will not take a moment to discard them The excerpts also communicate a powerful message that it is the prerogative of husbands to dominate wives and not the wives to dominate their husbands Line six of the first excerpt equates woman with shoe Understanding the analogy in the local cultural context, comparing wife with shoe is to assign women the lowest and degrading position in society Similarly, the analogy comparing women with tissue- put women in the category of a useable object- an object that is disposable

Tania Where do you go by applying scent?

Sajjad Going towards friends

Tania Friends or girl friend?

Sajjad Why are you intriguing to my life like uninformed and uncivilized girls? [Sajjad continued the conversation and warned Tania] keep your voice low You should not be heard outside this room [he pushed her away]

(Excerpt from the drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

Image. 4 1



In image- 4 1, a husband and wife is having a very fierce conversation when the wife objects to her husband going out at night with his girlfriend. The picture reinforces the belief that men who express anger are more likely to influence their wives, peers and other peoples. The picture communicates a strong message that angry men are strong and forceful, which in turn, communicates a powerful message to women to surrender to men and never question and challenge their husbands if they wish to live with them.

Like Sajjad, Yazdani becomes very rude with his wife [Sidra] when she asks him who was the girl he was taking last night.

Sidra: Is there any other woman in this house?

Yazdani Shut up and get lost Don't interfere in my personal matters otherwise I would be very rude and bad

Sidra You forget that now your every matter is my concern Being your wife, I am part of you

Yazdani Shut up Sidra and get lost Don't interfere in my personal matters

Sidra I am your wife

Yazdani Wife! My foot [he shouted with anger].

Next morning, Yazdani tried to console Sidra He went to her and said,

I spoke loud and scolded you last night as anyone who interfere in my activities and business, I do not like it

(Excerpt from drama *Akeli*)

The above excerpt entitles a wife as 'anyone' i.e., an employee, a stranger or anybody This means wife as a normal human in the lines of this husband.

In the same drama serial, Azfar very harshly gave a shut up call to his wife when she tries to advise him on his sister marriage He [loudly] said,

Would you stop advising me, I know my responsibilities and obligations

The above excerpts illuminate the dynamics of power in intimate relationships such as wife and husband These show how power is exercised in marital relationships The power is used here in the traditional Weberian sense (the ability to carry out one's will, even against the will of other) and not poststructuralist or Foucauldian sense Sajjad goes out to meet his girlfriend despite of

her wife objection Sajjad returned late night with lipstick stain on his shirt His wife (Tania) pointing to the stain,

Tania What is this stain on shirt?

Sajjad It may be any colour

Tania Sajjad [she shouted]! This is lipstick stain not colour

(Excerpt from drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

Reading this dialogue in conjunction with the excerpt before it is vividly clear that Sajjad speak loud on his wife and call her uncivilized and uneducated He even pushes her away and threatens her that she should keep his voice low and should not be heard outside the room This, in Weberian sense, means that only men have power in marital relationships and not women It also communicates a message that husbands can continue extra-marital relations whether their wives like it or not

Salman's wife to Salman I have told Sajjad to leave girlfriends and drinking

Salman Tell him if he will not change his life style and attitude I will throw him out of the house

Wife to Salman Ok Try not to be angry otherwise your blood pressure will shoot up/get high

Salman Control your son if you really care for my health

(Excerpt from drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

The excerpt suggests that reforming sons irrespective of their age (child or adult) is the responsibility of mother It also suggests that it is the mother to be blamed for the misdeeds and immoral acts of the children The excerpt also show that Salman who acts as dictator in his



household exercise his absolute power but avoided the expected direct confrontation with his son. The micro-level politics being played here is that he knew that the threat to Sajjad may bring resistance and bad interaction which Salman avoids here and uses his wife to face it. When the mother asks/advises Sajjad why he hangs around with women while his wife Tania is waiting for him at home, Sajjad give a very rude and insulting response.

Mother to Sajjad: Why do you hang around with girls when you know that you are married?

Sajjad: I am not a child. I know what is good and what is bad. You married me off so you did.

Mother [referring to Sajjad angry tone]: In what tone are you talking to me?

Sajjad: I am not an infant to hold your finger and walk the way you dictate me. Stop advising me like lower middle class mothers.

This excerpt very vividly reveals that men do not accept women interference in their lives and question their authority in any capacity. Men, irrespective of their age, think of themselves not to be advised or interrogated by women even in the capacity of mothers. Men think that they are wise and know things better than their mothers, wives, sisters and in other capacities.

#### **4.8. Construction of men as more intelligent than women**

I am cognizant of the fact that the difference between men and women intelligence is a highly contested and researched issue around the world (see Colom & Lynn, 2004). Despite the differences on the issue, many researchers believe that men and women are equal not only in their potential but also in intelligence. Hundreds of studies concluded that men and women are psychologically similar (see Connell 2002). Despite visible progressive change in society, this study finding reveal that television soaps in Pakistan construct men as more intelligent than

women Mr Salman Ahmad, in a conversation with his son, claimed that he is so intelligent that his planning and decision can never fail

Salman Ahmad to his son Hamad I am going to marry off Sajjad so that he becomes a responsible man

Hamad to his father Salman Ahmad How can a marriage for responsibility be successful?

Salman Ahmad to Hamad Sajjad (Salman Ahmad's elder son) will be responsible after having a wife

Hamad to his father But your logic may fail.

Father Salman Ahmad logic can never fail

(Excerpt from drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

In the above excerpt, a businessman claim to be the most intelligent person Similarly, men stereotype women as stupid, gold diggers and dumb Yazdani (a businessman in his 50s) on the occasion of his marriage with a young girl (aged 24) described women in front of his lawyer as,

Yazdani to his lawyer I know women's psychology When women see first page of the property documents, they get crazy and do not read the rest of pages And if they read the rest of pages they cannot understand them These fool and stupid women do not verify documents from a lawyer And if they do so they do it from my lawyer Stupid women [he commented with contempt]

(Excerpt from Drama *Akeli*)

The above excerpt reproduce the stereotype that women are stupid and get crazy when see property documents on their names It is important to mention here that not only men but also

some women also act as agent of women subordination. A mother in law from an elite class tells her daughter in law that she should not compete with her son as women cannot intellectually compete with men.

Ramsha to her mother in law: Jamal has some misunderstanding, but he thinks of himself as perfect and wise.

Mother in law: This is how men are. I told you there is no need to compete with men.

(Excerpt from Drama *Mahiray*)

These kinds of discourses in television soaps represent and reinforce the century old belief and patriarchal mindset that women are unwise, silly, stupid and crazy. They are gold diggers. It will not be sweeping generalization to argue that men scoffing of women are ideologically invested and represent the larger social structure of Pakistani society. Men would be unable to maintain their hegemony if the ideological state apparatus (schools, media etc) are liberated from gender biases.

#### **4.9. Women depend on men for their protection, maintenance and recognition**

Traditionally, women are believed to be innately weaker than men. They are believed to be physically and intellectually less capable of taking care of themselves. Television soaps and dramas reinforce this deep rooted belief that women need to be protected and cared by their men. Women in soaps are depicted asking for and seeking men care and protection in the capacity of brother, fathers and husbands. At the face of cruel treatment by her step-mother, Sara tells her step-sister that she missed her brother-Danial.

Sara to Mahira: Today I miss my brother Danial too much.

Mahira: I am your sister. Please don't weep.

Sara Brothers are matchless They are their sister confidence

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

In almost similar fashion, Ramsha complained that why her brother who visited her house did not meet her

Ramsha to her Husband Brother came home and did not meet me

Jamal Leave it

Ramsha No He is a brother and it is his responsibility to ask about me and see me

(Excerpt from Drama *Mahi Ray*)

These excerpts communicate many messages, i.e., sisters are helpless and lack confidence in the absence of their brothers. Sara seems depressed and needs her brother's shoulder to cry on, it is brothers' obligations and responsibility to protect sisters. This means that the existing patriarchal social structures do not provide women with the environment which enables them to build confidence in themselves and be independent persons with their agency and confidence. Similarly, the protection and care responsibility shifts from brother and father to husbands. In a conversation between mother and son in which the mother tries to make it realize to her son that his wife is his responsibility and he has to take care of her

Mother Are you not concern with your wife She is your responsibility

Sajjad I give her as much money as she needs

Mother She needs your support and attention as well

(Excerpt from Drama *Mahi Ray*)

In almost similar vein, television soaps construct women as innocent and sensitive who needs to be cared and protected

Maryam to Sufiyan Our daughter Anosha is very innocent and sensitive Take care of her and don't hurt her

(Excerpt from Drama *Mahi Ray*)

These discourses reinforced the biological and innate differences belief that women are physically and intellectual weaker than men and have to rely on their parents, husbands and brothers for their protection and support This reproduces the stereotypical belief that women are innately deficient and cannot take care of themselves They cannot solve their problems and do need men as their caretakers and protectors When Faiza's mother got sick, Faiza told her sister to call Faizan (their brother) who is younger to them but has the final say in the family after their mother This reinforces the stereotypes that women cannot handle crisis no matter what their age and status are

Women derive their social class status and identity from the class status and name of their men East or west women change their names upon marriage From feminist perspective, when women subsuming their identity into their husband's, that impacts women's perception of themselves and their role in the world Our name is our identity Changing it, women are not simply who they are, they are defined by their role as someone's wife or mother or daughter or sister When Jamal (Ramsha's husbands) threaten her and sending her back to her mother house forever, Ramsha implores him as,

Ramsha to Jamal You may make my pieces but please do not separate yourself from me

In almost similar fashion, another wife requesting her husband in the following words,



Afshan to her husband. It is enough for me that your name is attached with me Please do not detach my name from your name

*Excerpt and Image from from drama Akeli*

*Image 4 2 In the image a wife, who was threaten by her husband, is requesting her husband not divorce her He is holding his foot Holding feet and lying in feet is the extreme form of sorry/excuse or request*

The Image and the text demonstrate women helplessness and their dependence on men for their identity and recognition Similarly, when Sara's father in law did not accept her as daughter in law, Sara's mother in law tried to convince her husband as,

Wife to her husband Salman Sara's recognition is now associated with Hamad

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

These excerpts reinforce the belief that women do not have independent identity and recognition but depend on men for their identity and recognition In other words, women do not have any identity or recognition without attaching themselves with men in the capacity of wives, mothers or sisters

#### **4.10. Women's place is in homes whereas they have no homes**

Albeit with some changes in the urban centres (Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta) of Pakistan, women's place is believed to be in homes Their husbands' homes are considered their real homes Television soaps very forcefully reinforce these traditional stereotypes that parents

homes are not the real homes for women. Rather, they have to get married and go to their husbands' homes. Television soaps and dramas persistently reinforce this sexist message. A mother, in a conversation with her daughter, says,

Mother to Fakhara. Girls have to go to their husbands' homes. They are like sparrows. They come, sing in the house and fly. They are not supposed to be caged.

(Excerpt from *Drama Akeli*)

In another example, a conversation between Sara and her father described the house very quiet and colourless after Sara's step sister was married off.

Sara to her father. The house is so quiet and colorless after Mahira's wedding.

Father to Sara. Daughters are like sparrows, colorful sparrows. They sit on their fathers' heads, sing and then fly. One day you [he refers to Sara] will also fly.

(Excerpt from *Drama Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

Parents' house is not believed as the real house of young women. Women are constantly given the message that they have to get married and move to their husbands' houses. "Fly" in the above quote means marrying off. In another conversation between father and daughter we see that a father feels relaxed and happy by marrying off his daughters.

Father to Mahira. I am sad and happy that my sparrows (daughters) have gone to their homes.

(Excerpt from *Drama Jeena Dushwar Sahi*)

These discourses very vividly reveal that parents' house is not daughters' place as they have to marry and go to their husbands' houses. These discourses repeatedly compare girls with

sparrows In many cultures, including Pakistani culture, analogies among animals and human are made to equate humans with birds and animals, i.e., powerful man with tiger, stupid man with donkey In many culture (Korea, Japan [even Pakistan] man are compared with tiger, dragon and phoenix whereas women are compared with cat, snake and sparrows (Yol-kya, 2005) “This animal analogy demonstrates masculinity in a position of light, the matching femininity with a contrasting set of animals, in order to position women in an inferior place in relation to men” (Yol-kya, 2005: 123) The repeated utterances of labelling girls as sparrow in television soaps and dramas are ideologically invested-like sparrow is inferior to phoenix girls/women are inferior to boys/men

#### 4.11. The constant threat of displacement

Television soaps and dramas represent women to be kicked out of the houses by their husbands, fathers and fathers in laws for their disobedience and violating male hegemonic norms and



The men image 15 are very poor in their respective locations (Salman Ahmad in urban area and Jamal in rural area) In the cited image, Salman Ahmad is dragging her daughter in law out of the house due to her lower class background Hamad (Salman’s son) married Sara-a lower middle class girl-without seeking his father permission When Hamad was out of country for a meeting.



his father kicked Sara out. In the second picture a young husband-Jamal dragging his wife and constantly tells her this is my house and go to her parents' house. These clips are just few of the several instances that depict men expelling women from homes. The point to be noted here is that such messages tell women that they have no homes but are in constant threat of becoming homeless.

#### **4.12. Construction of 'good girl'/'good woman'**

Television discourses pose no challenge to the traditional hegemonic belief of gender relationship. Females (girls and women) are depicted shy and reserved instead of being bold and outspoken in public as well as private domains. Television soaps and dramas very forcefully reinforce the traditional male hegemonic discourses of an ideal wife. A father in drama serial *Jeena Dushwar Sahi* advises his daughter to surrender herself to her husband and never disagree with him.

Whatever your husband tells you, you must accept and obey him, always tell truth to him, you will be happy.

In almost similar fashion, a mother advising her daughter on her wedding night as,

Ramsha's mother to Ramsha: Jamal is very nice but very stubborn so always surrender to his decision.

This is one of the several conversations that send a very powerful message to women that their happiness will come with their absolute surrender to their husbands like slaves surrender to their masters. Such kind of television discourses will not prepare women to realize their own potential in the way that the values of individuality and self-fulfilment imply she should

The woman is depicted and described as being shy and extremely reserved, while the man is shown confident and bold who can talk without any hesitation and social pressure

#### **4.13. Harassment in the public and private domain**

Women have been shown harassed both in the public and private domains. The concept of harassment in this study refers to verbal, physical, material, emotional, psychological, sexual and gendered abuses of power in the everyday cultures of private and public domains or the social worlds. The study findings suggest that women are often touched by men in situations where it would not be deemed appropriate for them to be touched. In addition to physical harassment, women are emotionally harassed and abused. Following quote is one of the several quotes in which the boss harasses his female staff member. The boss, talking to one of his female assistants, says,

God has gifted you not only with beautiful words and thinking but matchless beauty

Continuing the conversation, he offered her coffee,

Would you like to have a cup of coffee with me?

When she rudely refused, the boss offered her coffee out. If you don't like coffee in the office, we may go out for coffee.

Let's go out and have coffee at some nice and cool place

Above discussion and quotes from the soap opera watched on *Hum TV* is one of the several episodes that working women in Pakistan experience at workplace on a day-to-day basis. The point to be stressed here is that these harassing acts when depicted on television screen as unpunished and unreported encourage men to harass women without any threat to them.

Women have been depicted to be harassed not only by men but also by other women. Several dialogues were noted in which women harass women.

Mother to her step daughter: How long you are involved in love and flirt. The daughter is playing with boys and the father gets tired by working the entire day in office, the cunning woman [she commented with anger and contempt].

Sara (on her third time harassment): Mahira, I might have committed suicide if it is not prohibited.

This excerpt reveals that women are helpless, they cannot raise voice against their harassment, and if they do so they are blamed for happening it as Sara was blamed when a boy wrote her name on his hand.

#### **4.14. The Gendered Marriage**

Television soaps and dramas do not challenge the stereotypical and outdated traditional practices of marriage for women. Marriage is arranged for women by their parents, without getting their consent.

Naina to her mother: Apni (elder sister) is not happy with marriage.

Mother [with angry mode]: Respectable girls do not show their happiness on such events.

This is an urban phenomenon that girls become happy on their marriage event.

Naina: So you know that she is not happy.

Mother: Yes, but this is her father's decision and she has to accept it.

Mother to Afshan: Naina is silly and does not understand. So don't even mention in front of her that you are not happy. If she tells this to Jamal, he will dislike it and will be angry.

This is your father's decision that we have to take care of.

Women are not supposed to be in love or marry with their love ones. If a girl loves someone she is not allowed to express her love or reveal that she is in love and wishes to marry with her beloved. Following conversation between a mother and her daughter tells young girls that they are not allowed to choose men for themselves.

Mother to her daughter (Naina): There is a proposal for you.

Naina: Ami (Mother), I can't think of anyone. I am already in love.

Mother: Watch your mouth. If Jamal hears your voice or comes to know this that you are in love, he would be very bad with you.

(Excerpt from drama *Mahiray*)

These excerpts are some of those several conversations noted in dramas and soaps that normalize men's decision for women as the correct and final decision. Women have to obey them even if they do not like them. This excerpt also shows that many women internalize the culture of patriarchy, holding that it was their moral obligation to obey men and accept their decision even if they are no more in this world as Naina's father was not alive but his decision was implemented even at the cost of Afshan's happiness. Similarly, father-in-law gave money to his expected daughter-in-law and announced that he liked and selected her for his son without asking her consent. The family that came to see Mahira suddenly gave money to Mahira and announced that they liked her for their son.

The boy father after giving money to Mahira: From today Mahira is our daughter. She is our *amanat* with you. We have liked her for son and this is final from our side.

These excerpts reinforce the traditional practices and belief that women consent in marriage is not required. These also tell the viewers that women, like any commodity in the market, are objects that is liked and picked by men.

#### **4.15. Women Insecurity in their Husbands' homes**

In most of the soaps women were reflected insecure in their houses. Husbands always threaten them. In the drama *Jeena Dushwar sahi* Sajad, getting angry at his wife, very loudly tells his wife "get lost. When I come home I should not see you otherwise I will kick you out". Similarly, Salman, threatening his wife, said "I will make you homeless like I did Sara-Salma's daughter in law. Salman kicked Sara out of this house. On another occasion, Salman told his wife to agree with his plan otherwise he will forget that they were married for thirty years and will send her out of the house."

(Excerpt from Drama *Jeena Dushwar sahi*)

#### **4.16. The gendered morality**

Television soaps and dramas reproduced the gendered moral standards. Dramas represent immorality as part of masculinity. Men are not punished for their immorality whereas women are portrayed to suffer even for the false allegations.

Tania to her mother in law: Sajjad drinks alcohol and keeps girlfriend.

Mother in law: I will talk to him and will make it realize to him that you dislike it.

Tania: Do you think you can reform him?

Mother in law: He is man, but he will be ok.

Image 4 4 Sajjad with his girl friend



*In this image Sajjad is lying in his girl friend lap and she is playing with his hair when Sajjad's father entered the room Sajjad's father scolded and abused the girl for trapping his son and offered her money to leave Sajjad The message that has been communicated here is that if a woman and a man are involved in affairs, women are blamed for trapping the man*

Contrary to men, women have to suffer even if they have not done something wrong

Mother to Ramsha Once a daughter's chastity is spotted she can never get marry all her life even if the blame is false

Salman Ahmad after his son-Hamad and Sara love marriage blamed Sara as runaway girl not his son

Salman you are forgetting that run away women have no respect in our society And remember there is no match of our family and Sara's family

Similarly, the entire blame was put on Mahnoor when Faizan took her to a friend apartment and retain her there for a night despite Mahnoor resistance

Friend to Faizan When a girl remain away from her home the whole night what respect she has in society

This excerpt from Faizan's friends reflect what it means for men when a girl spend a night out of home even when she is not wrong or have not done anything that is immoral

#### **4.17. Women as exploiters of women**

Women are not only exploited by men but also by women themselves Sara was all the time emotionally and intellectually harassed and abused by her stepmother

Sara's step mother to Sara All the time you are stick to the books Are you going to become a judge? [She interrogated with contempt and an insulting tone]

Sara *Ami* (mother) exams are about to start

Mother All these are pretext to avoid domestic chores So get up and make a cup of tea for me

Sara's step mother guides her divorced brother how to trap Sara

Trap her, tell her that you love her Make her realize how much you love her Give her some things, gift her dresses

Women terrify other women not to challenge their husbands otherwise they will be in loss

Mother in law to her daughter in law to make a home is very difficult It takes just minutes to be destroyed

Tania Try to realize this thing to your son If my home is destroyed his home will also be destroyed

Mother in law This is your thinking [an false consciousness], and let me tell you that your thinking is wrong Women always suffer in such cases and women are in loss It make no difference to him [Tania' husband], if you will leave the house, he [the mother refers to her son] would bring another woman.

The above excerpt reveals that women are not only subject to men exploitation but are also exploited by other women-some women act as exploiters of other women, especially within the household The conversation between Tania and mother in law tacitly support the son (Tania's husband) The explicit and implicit message that being communicated here is that if the husbands are not proper and are involved in immoral activities, wives have to bear them and live them, if they decide to break up and leave the house they will be in loss The conversation also terrifies women that if they break up they will never find another man/husband but it takes no time for men to find another woman and marry her

To sum up the discussion in this chapter, it can be argued that the way genders are portrayed in television soaps and dramas contribute to how viewers understand and make sense of the social world These stereotypical representations create images and ways of acting that viewers might aspire to To sum up, it can be argued that what is included and excluded in television soaps and dramas are ideologically invested and emerged from gendered power/knowledge relations



## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the representations of men and women (masculinities and femininities) on two leading Pakistani television channels. The study findings indicate that television soaps and dramas are embedded with gender biases and promote sexism and gendered view of the social world. The study expresses serious concerns about the socializing and normalizing consequences of stereotypical representations of men and women in television soaps, given that television is one of the most important sites of representation, construction and contestation of gendered identities and ideologies (Litosseliti, 2006). The study findings suggest that women in television soaps and dramas are not portrayed simply as housewives, they are almost always depicted as silly, scattered brain, dependent, confused and melodramatic housewives, sisters and daughters. The overall claim that the study makes is that women cannot become acceptable and appreciated mothers, daughters, sisters and wives in the existing patriarchal social structures unless they accept males' hegemonic position and dominance. To briefly summarize the main findings, I identify the following as key areas in which gender hierarchies are reproduced and perpetuated through television soaps and dramas:

**5.1. Perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and exaggerated femininity:** Focusing on the broader question-how men and women are represented in television soaps and dramas, the study found that television soaps and dramas do not pose any challenge to the traditional traits of masculine and feminine behaviours. Men are represented *physically strong*-do not depend on other for their protection, *assertive*-who expresses their opinions and point of views, *unemotional*-lacking emotion even in close relationship such as spouse relationship, *Independent*-self-sufficient and not banking on other people for needs such as food, money,

shelter and protection, *Selfish*– caring only about themselves, their goals and material and social gains for themselves. Problem solver- someone who finds ways to solve problems and difficult issues; *Leader*– someone who leads family, offices and other groups, *instrumental and goal oriented*-people with inspiration of higher economic/career status both within and outside country, *intellectual and wise*-someone who demonstrate high level of intellectual prowess and wise that does not need their wives, mother and sisters advices, and *Proud*-someone who is proud of his acts whether good or bad moral or immoral. A close examination of male characters, i.e., Salman Ahmad, Asif, Jamal, Sufyan, Azfar, Hamad, Danial reveal that all of them were depicted as achievers and successful people who possessed the maximum of the above characteristics. Men have been idealized as stubborn. Stubbornness here means what it means to be a man or a woman in the cultural context of Pakistani society. Jamal's mother tells his daughter in law that "*Jamal means what he says*". Similarly, *Ramsha's mother tells Ramsha that 'Jamal is very nice but very stubborn so always surrender to his decision'*". See Chapter Four for detailed discussion of each character.

Contrary to men representation, women are represented as *Physically Weak-unable to protect oneself, lacking body strength to carry weight etc, submissive* -obeying others without questioning their power and authority, *Emotional* –*showing strong feeling for others, especially those in the close relationships, Dependent*- depending others for shelter, food, money or protection and other things, *Nurturing*- *taking care of the children, elder and sick, Fearful*- nervous and afraid of bad consequences or something bad that will happen to him/her, *Troublesome*-causing problem for others especially family, *Follower*-supporting and a following other people or ideas without using his/her independent thinking, *Victim* people who needs to be protected because they are being subjected to violence of others, *Physically*

*attractive*- beautiful/attractive for others, *Unwise*-someone that needs *advice and* assistance of others, *Ashamed*-feeling shame or embarrassment for something that they have done. The study findings suggest that soaps and dramas show women as physically weak (Mahnoor, Ramsha, Tania, Sara could not defend themselves from the violence inflicted on them), emotional (Sara, Sara's mother in law, Anousha, Tania etc show strong emotional feeling for their families), submissive (Tania, Mahnoor, Sara, Ramsha, Afsha and all other women demonstrated complete submission to their fathers, husbands and brothers), physically attractive (stress on lipsticks, finery, fresh skin etc were commonly demanded by husband). See *Chapter Four* of this study for detailed discussion. A critical look on this gendered representation enables me to argue that television soaps and dramas perpetuate hegemonic masculinity -practices that buttress and promote the dominant social position of men (see Connell, 1995) and the subordinate social position of women. It is important to mention here that for Connell hegemonic masculinity is a particular variety of masculinity to which women and other young men are subordinated (see Connell 1995 and theoretical framework in this study)

**5.2. Reproducing and Cementing Private Patriarchy:** One of the main findings of this study is perpetuation and cementing of private patriarchy through television soaps and dramas. See Sylvia Walby (1990) theorizing of public and private patriarchy. In private patriarchy women are dominantly dependent on men as fathers, brothers and husbands. In other words private patriarchy refers to "family structure/family system in which males, irrespective of their age, act as the primary authority figures, and control family affairs, women, children, and property" (Ullah, 2013: 165). Drawing on this definition, it can be argued that television soaps and dramas do not challenge the traditional stereotypical male dominated family structure. Television represents men as the controller of women, children, property, and decisions makers. Soaps and

dramas represent men in the family as authoritative, assertive, unemotional, leaders, independent, problem solvers and protectors of their families, whereas women as completely dependent on their men. Male characters, i.e., Salman Ahmad, Sajjad, Hamad, Jamal, Asif, Sufyan, Azfar in the soaps and dramas were depicted in position of absolute power whereas female characters such as Afsha, Mahnoor, Shehnaz, Ramsha, Tania, Sara etc were depicted as powerless and in complete control of their men. Reminding wife her limits in the family Sajjad tells his wife *"I take a moment to change a girl [wife] if she does not agree with my words and do not stop interference in my life you are wife and be a wife, don't try to dominate me I cannot make wife the crown of my head She is a shoe and must remain a shoe If you wish to spend life with me, lets things go the way they are otherwise I will take a moment to kick you out of my life"* Similarly, Mr Yazdani (a businessman) gives a shut up call to his wife when she asks about the woman he was talking to. He very rudely said *"shut up Sidra and get lost Don't interfere in my personal matters"* Mr Azfar (a site engineer) very harshly shut up his wife by saying, *"would you stop advising me. I know my responsibilities"* These discourses communicate a powerful message that wives are not supposed to interfere in their husbands lives/affairs, even if they are involved in illicit sexual relation such as Sajjad

Men control and own the homes and enjoy absolute power to allow family members to live in it or expel them from house. Asif expelled Mahnoor from his flat, Salman expelled his daughter in law (Sara), Jamal dragged Ramsha violently and ordered her to go back her parents' house. Salman Ahmad after expelling Sara from his house told Sara's parents that *"the dirt was lying here, it was giving bad smell so I threw that out of my house"* Salman (a very rich businessman) has shown a man who exercised authority not only on women but also his children, i.e., [ordering his wife] *"tell Sajjad to leave girlfriend and change his life style, if he will not*

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**5.3. The Defining parameters of contemporary wife are physical beauty and absolute submission to their husbands' authority;** One of the key findings of this study is that television soaps and dramas have been used the most effective tools for constructing an ideal contemporary wife who combines traditional cultural standards of an ideal wife (i.e., perfect housewife-good in cooking, submissive, looking after each and every need of her husband and the family), and modern standard of ideal young girl, i.e., physically attractive, wearing makeup, pleasing her husband with her look. Following excerpts from the data substantiate the aforementioned argument

At the time of her marriage, Asif tells his wife (Mahnoor) "that husbands like their wives in finery and good makeup, domestic and obedient to their husbands" He further said that "*I wish a wife who takes care of my needs, who care of my every small thing She should wait for me at home when I come, she should be well dressed and should wear good makeup*" Similarly, Sara asks her husband (Hamad) what are the parameters of a good wife Hamad outlined a good wife as "*woman who understands and fulfils the needs of her husband without asking him what he needs or likes A good wife is the one who know the mood of her husband all the time*" In almost the same fashion, Sajjad, on the wedding night, gave his wife a gift and said, "*Here is your gold set and I want to see you wearing this when my eyes open in the morning I like lipstick it is my wish to see you wearing lipstick all the time*"

Similarly, wives were depicted to surrender themselves completely to the authority and will of their husbands A father advises his daughter on her wedding day that "*whatever your husband tells you, you must accept and obey him, always tell truth to him, you will be happy*" Similarly, a mother tells her daughter how to live with her future husband The mother advises "*Jamal is very nice but very stubborn so always surrender to his decision and you will be happy*"

because they challenge the existing stereotypes, but because they were depicted as bad characters.

**5.4. Physical beauty is women's capital that they have to trade upon:** Mass media in general and television in particular objectifies women (see Ullah & Khan, 2014) Like television advertisements, television soaps and dramas objectify women. The study found considerable stress on physical beauty in soaps and dramas dialogues. Wearing lipsticks, good looking hair, fresh skin and beautiful face with smart look were stressed throughout soaps and across social classes (see chapter 4). These powerful discourses subject women to self-surveillance-women have to control their diet, keep their bodies hairless, and adopt latest hair-style and other beautification strategies. This means that women experience disciplinary society-they may wish to live differently but they are unable to do so because they have been locked in the iron cage of beautification (see Wolf, 1990). These discourses push women to a situation in which they have to monitor their weight, makeup dozen times a day, monitor everything they eat, just as surely as "inmate in the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self-committed to relentless self-surveillance. This "self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy" (Bartky, 1990: 80).

Similarly, young women are idealized for marriage. A mother convincing her daughter for marriage tells her, "*Look you have turned 24 and 24 is the ideal age for marriage. Listen, no one ask about women when they turn 25*". The implicit and explicit message being communicated in this discourse is that women are of no value for men when they are over 25 year of age. This equates women with things, i.e., like commodities and consumable goods, women have an expiry time and date.

**5.5. Women as source of stress and threats to family honour:** TV Soaps and dramas represent women as source of constant stress and a potential threat to family honour. Women, particularly young, are considered a serious threat to family honour, which in turn, is the source of stress for parents and brothers. The threat associated with their sexuality includes illicit sexual relationship or getting in love with someone they really want to marry with. It is believed and represented on TV screen that women sexuality needs to be guarded in order to save the family honour. The best way to save their sexuality is marrying off young woman as early as possible. Early marriage relieve the parents and brothers from their burden and stress which in turn, not explicitly expressed, allow them to focus on their careers in the competitive public domain.

A daughter coming late at night asks her mother, "*Are you still awake? Mother. How can I sleep when a young daughter is out of home till late night?*" Similarly, a sister asked her brother, "*Brother, why are you awake?*" The brother replied, *brothers can't sleep when there are two sparrows [referring to his sisters as sparrows] in the house*". In almost similar vein, a mother tells her daughter that "*mothers can't sleep when their daughters become young*". These discourses communicate a very clear message that when women reach their puberty they become a constant source of stress for their parents and brothers till the time they are not married. The point to be noted here is that women are seen as 'sexual being' who needs to be controlled and guarded otherwise they will defame the family and will disturb society. Idealizing young age for woman marriage and the obsessed concern of fathers, brothers and even mothers to marry off their daughters and sisters as soon as possible are contemporary practices of surveillance which can be seen as an extended and intensified form of panopticon tower that discipline young woman. It can be argued that modern young women are constantly under power's surveillance (see Foucault, 1979)



Similarly, a woman who falls in true love and wishes to marry with her beloved is considered an extreme act of immorality and society disruption. Anosha (a rural woman), who fell in love with a tourist from Lahore, is warned by her father as, “*Do not step out of this house if you care of my honour*” Similarly, another father talking to his daughter said, ‘*Did I rear and nurtured you for this day that you bring insult to me and defame me by making affair? I wish I can kill you with my hands*” These discourses show that women whether involved or blamed falsely with love affairs bring dishonour to their families. It is important to mention here that engaging in love affairs and revealing it to their family cannot be generalized across classes. Some of the elite circles girls were represented in affairs and love without any objection for their parents. However, these were supposed to be in the same social class (elite circle). If they will be outside their respective class it was rejected by elder irrespective of girl having affair with lower or middle class boy or elite boys with middle class girls. This means that morality is gendered as well as classed phenomena.

**5.6. Women subordination through degrading analogies:** Various analogies are uttered in television soaps and dramas to demean women. Women are equated with ordinary birds, shoes and tissues.

Comparing young girls with sparrow was a common analogy in many dramas and soaps examined for this study. In the dramas serial *Akeeli* Fakhara’s mother tells her that “*Girls are like sparrows, they come, sing and create noise (chatter, prattle) in the house and fly. They are not supposed to be caged*” Similarly, in drama serial *Jeena Dushwar sahi*, Sara’s father tells her that “*Daughters are like sparrows, colourful sparrows. They sit on the father head and sing and then fly. One day you will also fly*” This bird analogy is embedded with the politics of femininity and masculinity when understood with a contrasting set of birds in order to position women in an

inferior place in relation to men (see chapter four) As argued in chapter 4 that the persistent comparison of girls with sparrow is ideologically invested-sparrow is believed to be inferior to phoenix, phoenix is believed to have masculine characteristics and sparrow as feminine (see Yol- kya, 2005) The implicit message then is that phoenix versus sparrow and men versus women, if the sparrow is inferior to phoenix women are inferior to men

Similarly, women are equated with shoes Sajjad, scolding his wife, shouted, "*Be a wife and don't try to dominate me. I cannot make wife the crown of my head She is a shoe and must remain a shoe*" Similarly, shouting his on his wife, "*my wife my foot*" Yazdani in his discussion with his lawyer very proudly asserted that, *Yazdani [he refers to himself] "uses and discard women like tissue papers"* Labelling women as sparrows, shoes and tissues represent a common method of denigration Such kinds of analogies-comparing women with objects, animals and birds are very much common in day today discourses and supply a major semantic foundation for the contemporary assaults on the body, person, and integrity of women

**5.7. Legitimizing public and private divide: women for the private and men for the public domain** This study, like most researches around the world, has found that TV soaps and dramas represent men and women in traditional and stereotypical gender roles and social positions Men were represented as breadwinners (Asif, Azfar, Hamad, Sajjad, Sufyan, Salman, Yazdani) and the rest of male characters were running their business, doing their jobs and were focused on their careers in the public domain Yazdani, Sufyan and Hamad were represented global businessmen whereas Asif, Azfar Faizan etc were doing their jobs in Pakistan and abroad Their wives and sisters (i.e., Savera, Anousha, Sara, and Mahnoor etc) were housewives and were idealized as "*Husbands like their wives in finery and good makeup Wife ought to be domestic and obedient to her husband* (Asif to Savera) Asif to his new wife (after divorcing savera)

outlined the criteria of a wife *"I wish a wife who takes care of my needs, who care of my every small thing She should wait for me at home when I come"* Using discourse in Foucauldian sense, these kind of discourses function as sets of socially and historically constructed norms that tell young woman in Pakistan "what is" and "what is not" (Carrabine, 2001) acceptable behaviours. These kinds of discourses naturalize and idealize men as breadwinner and women as homemakers.

**5.8. Cementing kinship ties and family alliances through marriage:** The study findings reveal that marriage choice of the majority of women and men, irrespective of their social class backgrounds, is a matter of family interest and thus outside their control. It is important to mention here that the groom's family is instrumental in deciding on the selection of the bride. Television soaps idealized women and men who surrender their choice of marriage to their family. It is important to mention here that in the imposed marriages, women become more vulnerable within marriages as they have to sacrifice and keep the tie at the cost of their happiness as was the case in Afsha marriage. They become more vulnerable in the event of separation or divorce.

**5.9. Idealizing young age for women marriages:** Television dramas very emphatically reinforced the cultural ideal-the daughters and sisters marry early. Parents, especially mothers, have been depicted worried about their daughters marriages. The implicit reason for the excessive stress on women early marriage is to curb their sexuality and save the family honour. Several quotes from the data show the emphasis on early marriage. Mother to her daughter *You are 24 and 24 is the ideal age for marriage. Men become real young men in their thirties.* The tacit message being communicated here is that when women marry off at young age their sexual urges are normatively channelled and the family honour and reputation cannot be besmirched by

the dishonourable behaviours or sexual indulgence of women outside marriage. This also communicates an implicit message that men's sexuality and sexual behaviours outside marriage do not defame the family.

### **5.10. Conclusion**

To sum up the analysis, it can be argued that most soaps and dramas show 'normative' ranges of gender roles for male and female characters and emphasize on protecting 'traditional' notions of stereotypical gender behaviours. I also assert that the television and the ideological battles it represents are, of course, located and linked to the broader socio-cultural context of Pakistani society and political economy. Women are represented as sexual objects for the commodification of soap opera and television drama viewers. This is especially, but not exclusively, the case with young women. Certain images of femininity, in which the television is responsible for marking out reinforce boundaries of 'acceptable' femininity that may be particularly harmful to young girls as they are restrictive, unrealistic and focused on physical beauty (Durham, 1999, Wood, 2010). Young women are constructed as childlike, docile, and dependent with exaggerated feminine qualities. Moreover, women rights and equality with men are not touched upon. Looking at the gender representation in television soaps with Wood's lens enable me to argue that television reinforce stereotypical femininity and masculinity in discursive ways. 'Firstly, women are underrepresented in television. This gives a distorted message that there are more men in larger society than women as television 'pervade our lives, the ways in which they misrepresent genders may distort how we see ourselves and what we perceive as normal and desirable for men and women' (Wood, 2010: 32). Secondly, television represent men and women in stereotypical gender roles and behaviours, i.e., men are rarely shown engaging in housework or in caring roles and are instead shown as aggressive and not in touch with their

emotions. Women, on the other hand, are shown as loving sister, sacrificing mothers, loyal wives, and often as victims. Thirdly, the relationship between men and women portrays traditional roles and legitimizes power and violence over women. These relationships reinforce notions of women's dependence and men's independence, women's incompetence and men's authority, and women as caregivers and men as breadwinners. In short, this study, like most researches around the world, has found that men and women have been shown in traditional and stereotypical gender roles and social positions in television soaps and dramas. In summary, men have been portrayed as autonomous, authoritative, physically strong, aggressive, controller, independent, competitive, ambitious, forward looking with decisive power. Good women are presented as submissive, sensitive, domesticated, well mannered, sweet natured, caring and nurturing.

The portrayal of stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity as complete opposites and binaries within mainstream (Carter and Steiner, 2003) TV soaps and dramas is ideologically invested. Ideology is a set of social values, ideas and beliefs, feelings, representation, and institutions by which people collectively make sense of the world they live. It may be defined as a set of deliberately formulated, coherent and rational ideas that is used as ways of defining and understanding how society should be organized (see O' Shaughnessy, 1999: 191). Drawing on these definitions, ideology is a set of ideas that explain how society works. It tells us something about how we relate to the social world, and what our place in it might be. The study findings suggest that television soaps and dramas function to support the dominant ideology by representing women physically weak, submissive, emotional, dependent, nurturing, fearful, troublesome, physically attractive and men physically strong, assertive, unemotional, independent, selfish, problem solvers, career focused, intellectual etc. These beliefs and set of

ideas communicate to males and females what are correct male and female behaviours and also what are correct male and female spaces and domains. Through these subordinating discourses male hegemony is maintained.

To conclude this study, it is once again reiterated here that the key aim of this study was to examine and highlight how television texts in Pakistan perpetuate and reinforce the gender order of Pakistani society. Central to my study was to foreground gender equality debate and generate a research that would enable drama writers and directors, especially women, to portray counter narrative and messages. The findings of this research can be utilized for sensitizing drama writers and directors write and direct dramas and soaps that challenge the gender stereotypes and traditional notion of masculinity and femininity.

Although the study did not intend to focus on comparative analysis of representation on public and private television channels, but the study findings enticed me to give a succinct comparative picture of how masculinities and femininities are represented on state run official channel (PTV home) and private run TV channel Hum TV. Contrary to its public mission of eliminating gender biases in television programmes (including dramas and soaps), PTV Home does not exhibit less gender stereotypes and stereotypical gender roles in soaps and dramas compared to private channel Hum TV, however, there are differences that how both channels represent gender roles and gender stereotypes.

Both channels represent women dependent on men. i.e., Sara, Anousha, Afsha, Naina were main characters in PTV dramas who shown dependent on Danial, Hamad, Sufyan, Jamal, and Sidra, Savera, Mahnoor etc on Asif, Azfar and Yazadni in Hum TV dramas. Similarly, women were depicted oppressed, helpless, confused, and fussy about their appearances and bodies. In both

channels young women were shown as waiting for men, busy in domestic chores, wishing for perfect family and love. The difference can be seen in terms of social class. PTV Home, however, emphasized normative femininity (complete submission to men's authority, being domestic, women's obsession with what they say and do as women and very concerned about how other people perceive them). The emphasis on normative femininity and hegemonic masculinity was observed across classes such as Sajjad's mother, Tania, Mawa's mother were women of the rich families but were completely controlled by their men. In rare cases women were represented as being strong and independent (i.e., mother of Jamal and Sufyan) or Mawa and Anousha, they were not depicted to challenge the prevailing gender power structure. Sufyan's mother was a business woman, but was never shown in office or making business deals. Jamal's mother was helpless in front of Jamal.

Contrary to PTV Home, Hum TV dramas and soaps show a few characters that were challenging the traditional gender power structure. One such character was Jugno (a young woman from a lower) in the drama *Jugno*. Nevertheless, Jugno was shown as a super human being. Similarly, Sidra and Savera were depicted to be ultra modern and free girls who have no time for going out and coming home. However, they were involved in immorality (engaging in affairs with men to get money and property and leaving them when they get something). These kinds of representations further subordinate women instead of challenging the existing gender power structure.

It is difficult to have a concluding statement which channel is more gender biased and reinforces stereotypical gender roles. However, this cursory comparison of gender stereotypes on public and private channels does provide some substantial knowledge on gender representation in private and state-run television. These insights may be used as an avenue for an independent study that compares the extent of different gender representation on public and private TV channels.

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