

**MS Research Thesis**

**EXPLORING HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY: PORTRAYAL  
OF MALE CHARACTERS IN PAKISTANI TELEVISION  
DRAMAS**



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## THESIS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

It is certified that we have read this thesis submitted by Zonaira Murtaza. It is our judgment that this is a sufficient standard to warrant acceptance by International Islamic University, Islamabad for MS in Media and Communication Studies.

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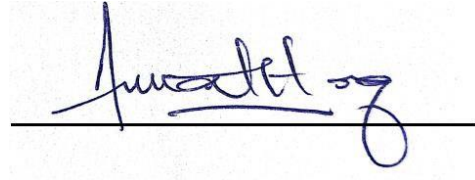
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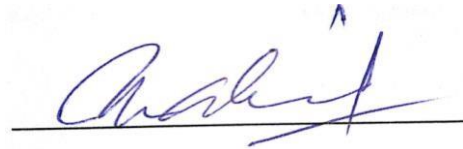
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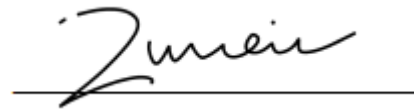
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### **Declaration**

The thesis has been submitted as partial fulfillment of MS in Media and Communication Studies to the Department of Media and Communication studies. I solemnly declare that this is my original work and no material has been plagiarized and my material quoted from a secondary source has been provided with proper citations and references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zunaira', is written over a horizontal line.

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All praise and gratitude are due to Allah Almighty for bestowing upon me the strength to successfully complete my work. I am highly indebted and eternally grateful to my supervisor, Dr Qurat-ul-Ain Malik for her invaluable guidance, productive critique and endless support throughout research period.

## **Dedication**

My heartfelt devotion is dedicated to my mother, my greatest support and the pillar of my strength without her unconditional love and constant encouragement, it would never be possible for me reach where I am standing today. I also dedicate this to my brothers and my only best friend whose motivation and belief in me help me to stay strong and keep going throughout this journey.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The researcher was aimed to analyzing five Pakistan's most popular dramas Mere Paas Tum Ho (2019), Raqs-e-Bismil (2020), Parizaad (2021), Kaisi Teri Khudgharzi (2022), and Tere Bin (2023)—through quantitative content analysis, this study delves into the portrayal of hegemonic masculinity in Pakistani prime-time television dramas that aired from 2019 to 2023. By guidance of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and Goffman's framing theory the research examines, how certainly lead male characters portrayed distinction like aggression, authority, technology capability and subordination of women. It also seeks how background factors like age, education, marital status, profession, and social class play a role in how views perceive these characteristics. Surprisingly, research shows that although overt manifestations of hegemonic masculinity are uncommon (1.2%), more subtler expressions are present in 34% of male character depictions, indicating a continuous societal upholding of patriarchal standards. The most common characteristic was aggression, but less common characteristics were authority, female subordination and technological capability. Hegemonic masculine traits were most commonly associated with elite, older, illiterate, separated and professionally dominant characters. The findings of the research indicate that Pakistani dramas continue to maintain patriarchal gender hierarchies in subtle ways through the narrative, as the need for more progressive and inclusive constructions of masculinity in the mainstream media.



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant idealized version of masculinity that promotes male domination and establishes gender inequalities. Similarly, according to early scholars, Masculinity is socially and culturally produced and, sometimes, repeated via institutions, including media, religion, family, and education (Connell & Pearse, 2022). Television, in particular, is of great significance in the construction, reinforcement, or challenging of dominant masculine norms, and it works as a media that builds, stabilizes, or challenges the perception of gender. One of the most broadcasted forms of media that has a significant impact on gender ideologies is television drama, which is a powerful vehicle in the transmission of gender ideologies among society in defining and enacting how societies view and conceive masculinity.

Pakistani television dramas have been an important storytelling channel and represent cultural norms and reality to their audience. Dramas since the golden age of Pakistani television in the 1970s and 1980s have informed public debate on family, relationships, morality, and gender roles. However, male characters of these dramas are portrayed overwhelmingly in terms of hegemonic masculinity that promotes traditional gender roles where men are conceived with the attributes of authority, dominance, emotional restraint, and protectors of familial honor. Usually, women in these depictions are portrayed in a subservient role, dependent on male figures, and reproducing a patriarchal social structure.

Changes in gender discourses worldwide and local contexts have stimulated debates about the changing configuration of masculinity, rendering men's representations in media more diverse. Increasing exposure to the international media and changing socio-economic structures have led people to recognize alternative masculinities, such as nurturing fathers, emotionally expressive men, and egalitarian partners. However, these changes have so far failed to fully guide in such representations onto Pakistani television, which continues to depict male characters in stereotypical ways that reproduce not only gendered power hierarchies but also other racial discrimination.

This study examines how hegemonic masculinity is constructed, reinforced, and potentially challenged in Pakistani television dramas. It will undergo an analysis of such male characters in dramas to see if they still uphold traditional patriarchal norms or as a case of gradual transformation in gender narrative. This will contribute to broader cries in media

studies, gender studies, and cultural sociology debates on how media representations affect, ‘how we see masculinity in society’.

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

The issue of representations of masculinity in media has been debated for decades as it impacts gender norms and society's expectations. Connell (2005) refers to hegemonic masculinity as the dominant form perpetuating male authority and hierarchy. These ideals are shaped powerfully through media, specifically television dramas, films, and advertisements that typically portray men as dominant, emotionless, and masculine, often pushing other masculine into the background. Masculinity is deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and historical contexts in South Asia, and the media primarily act as a vehicle to cement patriarchal norms further. For decades, television dramas in Pakistan have represented men in authoritative, provider, and protector roles and women in submissive and dependent roles. The next chapter examines the global and regional importance of hegemonic masculinity, how it is represented in media, and its consequences on gender socialization in Pakistan.

According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity is the idealized version of masculinity that embodies male supremacy over women and others in branded masculinities. Nonetheless, this concept does not imply that all men conform to such an ideal, it is a normative standard that sets barriers for what society expects of a man's behavior (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For instance, things like aggressiveness, competitiveness, and emotional detachment are things that the framework can explain why some traits are celebrated and others are stigmatized, like emotional vulnerability and caregiving.

These ideals are important to the media industry because they play a significant role in their formation and perpetuation. For instance, when we look at Hollywood films, such as James Bond, Rambo, Batman, etc., these are traditional action hero archetypes that embody hegemonic masculinity, i.e., physically powerful, dominant, and emotionally suppressed (Jeffords, 1994). Nevertheless, current trends have been established for more varied masculinities, such as in the character of Captain America, who is full of strength and yet of emotional intelligence, or that of Black Panther, who represents masculinity, cultural pride, and communal responsibilities (Gillam & Wooden, 2008).

Advertisement has traditionally upheld hegemonic masculinity by portraying men as strong, ambitious, and successful and women in supportive or objectified roles (Goffman,

1976). While such narratives exist, contemporary advertising such as ‘The Best Men Can Be’ challenges these by promoting toxic masculinity and encouraging men to be empathetic and respectful (Hennen et al., 2003). These are just examples that show that although hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic in global media, there is a discursive space for redefining masculinity more inclusively.

Masculinity in South Asia is eternally tied to cultural, religious, and historical traditions. Masculinity upholds family honor, economic responsibility, and social authority. The patriarchal structure endorsed traditional masculinity in South Asian societies: men should be authoritative, decisive, and emotionally detached; women should be obedient, nurturing, and dependent (Osella & Osella, 2006). These norms depend on the media's ability to maintain them. For instance, in Indian cinema, men are generally the protagonists, portrayed as hyper-masculine heroes who are violent, sacrificial, and dominant (Dwyer, 2019). Bollywood has, however, come a long way towards softer masculinities, with actors such as Ayushmann Khurrana changing the landscape by tackling conventional gender roles in their films in the stances of male vulnerability and gender equality.

Television dramas became a major cultural force in Pakistan in the 1970s. Aslam’s study analyzes hegemonic masculinity in one Pakistani TV serial, *Rang Mahal*, and *Qayammat* using Connell’s hegemonic theory. Consequently, it states that masculinity would be extremely dense in Pakistani society, and male domination would be perpetuated together with women’s rights suppression. The study serves to underscore the role of media in reinforcing hegemonic masculinity because educated people adopt less, while the rural population is less aware of women’s rights. The mean masculinity rate of 2.98/4.00 continues to emphasize authority and aggression. The research’s importance of media reforms is stated to de-standardize patriarchal representations about genders in Pakistani society (Aslam et al., 2022).

Media is a powerful socializer in how people understand and internalize gender roles (Bandura, 2009). In particular, television dramas have an evident impact on public perception since they repeatedly present some behaviors as usual, desirable, and unacceptable. Pakistani dramas also reinforce gender stereotypes, as early discussions suggest that men are rational decision-makers and women are emotional dependents.

Despite modernity and globalization, masculinity in global and Pakistani media remains portrayed using hegemonic ideals that promote traditional gender norms and the establishment of societal hierarchy. Western media is, finally, starting to deconstruct these norms ever so slowly; however, South Asian media and specifically Pakistani television dramas continue to perpetuate the idea of men as authoritative and nearly non-existent emotionally distant figures. Television has been known to play a decisive role in socializing gender. Hence, analyzing these representations and finding ways of resolving the progressive change is crucial. The contributions of this study will assist in media and gender discourse about whether Pakistani dramas enable the space for evolving gender narratives and how they construct perceptions of masculinity in Pakistan.

Television dramas are still dominant in Pakistan's media world. However, new days are also emerging, with television-driven gender discourse increasingly being reshaped by new digital platforms, including YouTube, Netflix and the like. Content on these platforms often presents masculinity in more diverse (sometimes global) media narratives of emotionally intelligent, empathetic, collaborative men (Gill, 2017). However, while such portrayals have been made on mainstream Pakistani television, it has largely refused to acknowledge hegemonic masculinity (the ideal standard) and instead stuck to hegemonic masculinity.

As per Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh (2020), digital spaces open new possibilities to challenge conventional gender roles in South Asia. However, their influence and reach are still less powerful than traditional national television dramas, attracting a larger mass. Even though some part of the urban, educated population is exposed to alternate masculinities through web-based content, the majority of the audience watching television dramas is being socialized to patriarchal gender norms by the propagation of hyper masculine heroes.

It is essential here that hegemonic masculinity in television dramas can be disguised as moral leadership or self-sacrifice so viewers won't see its dangerous nature. It is romantic about the emotional repression of male characters and ridicules expressions of sensitivity or vulnerability. It was highlighted in a content analysis by Jamil and Alam (2021), they found that more than 80 per cent of male protagonist serials in Pakistani serials had emotional stoicism, possessiveness and patriarchal decision-making with a limited emphasis on the emotional complexity of relationship or in dialogue.

Additionally, the intersection of being a man with being a member of a racial or ethnic group and a particular religion and class status tends to be ignored in mainstream media accounts. In other words, a man attending public or low socioeconomic schools tends to be more aggressive and backward, whereas the men in elite schools are healthier but somehow stronger at the back end or in some way. The combined effect of class and privilege is that masculinities are portrayed as stratified, where some behaviors are more acceptable depending on one's class and privilege. Still, the underlying ideal of masculinity is as much of control and emotional detachment (Ali and Bokhari, 2022).

Missing intersectional and inclusive portrayals reinforce an acceptable male identity spectrum that continues to marginalize non-conforming male identities, such as queer men, stay-at-home fathers or emotionally expressive men. According to Khan and Qureshi (2023), this one-size-fits-all approach to masculinity is part of the cultural landscape. Any movement from the hegemonic norm is seen as weakness, immaturity or failure to meet social standards.

In light of the abovementioned aspects, media scholars, producers, and educators should reconsider how masculinity is formulated in popular culture. Particularly, television dramas must evolve to address the new realities of today's Pakistani society, which involve men challenged by new economic roles in changing gender relations and the emotional demands of the new age of modernity. By using this study, we will gain an evidence-based understanding of these representations that we can use to change television narratives, promote gender equity, and support the psychosocial well-being of men and their relationships in a changing cultural condition.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Television dramas are a powerful medium of mass communication that not only represents social norms but also influences the perceptions of social roles related to gender. The characteristics that idealize masculinity across Pakistani television narratives are primarily one-dimensional and constructed around hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Despite the extensive work on representations of females and a lack thereof on gender inequality in media, we still need more research on hegemonic masculinity in Pakistani dramas and how they continue acting on the traditional gender ideology. This study closes a gap by analyzing the portrayal of male characters and the audience's response.

In Pakistani television dramas, there is a dominant trend that reinforces stereotypical archetypes of male characters in which men often take up the role of emotionally detached, authoritative, and aggressive, given that men are expected to be dominant and controlling. The more general, the more prototypical male protagonist is described as a rigid disciplinarian, self-sacrificial provider, and hyper-masculine who resolves conflict through domination, aggression, or manipulation. In contrast, the mainstream narratives sell bacon wrapped in women. Alternatives to these (such as nurturing, emotionally expressive, vulnerable male characters) are either marginalized or completely absent from mainstream narratives. The rigid portrayal of this further reinforces the idea of binary relationships of gender: men are expected to be strong, men are the authority, and women are seen as submissive and dependent.

The main problem with these representations is that they perpetuate the hyper masculinity ideal. What constitutes an ‘authentic’ man is one who shuts down his emotional state, has no trouble asserting authoritarianism, and can exert unjustified aggression. Research on South Asian media indicates that images such as male entitlement, domestic violence, and discrimination based on gender are embedded within the normalizing process. Many popular dramas portray such romantic relationships, in which, for emotion or protection, the male lead is controlling or emotionally abusive, but this is justified as a form of love. This also serves to reinforce patriarchal norms in that it discourages men from being vulnerable and sensitive, as well as distorts healthy gender dynamics.

In addition, Pakistani dramas convey the message of idealized heroism in which the male figure is depicted as the savior of the family honor and moral fabric. These contribute to the deskilling of different forms of manhood, where those who fail to adhere to their ideals are laughed at, removed, or constructed as vulnerable. The absence of most media that depict progressive, compassionate, or gender-equitable male characters makes it hard to defy traditional gender stereotypes and retransforms the masculinity culture in Pakistan.

In this regard, this study aims to analyze male characters in Pakistani television dramas by adopting the lens of media theories like hegemonic masculinity, as outlined by Connell 2005, and gender socialization theory, as provided by Bandura 2002. This study seeks to discuss the ways television dramas contribute to the reproduction of gender roles and norms on perceptions of male characters in order to come up with specific insights into how television dramas input the construction of perceptions of male characters in gender relations

in post-colonial societies. Therefore, this project will add a considerably fresh focus to South Asian TV content and male identity by expanding the understanding of gender and media studies.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Masculinity in the media has been long debated as an academic subject, especially in the form of hegemonic masculinity, which establishes dominant norms about gender. This contribution is academically, practically, and socially valuable for the continuing debate about gender in media. This research contributes to the occupational closure of a global phenomenon towards a localized perspective by concentrating on Pakistani television dramas as filling the gap in South Asian media studies as it offers a lens to critical discussions on gender constructs.

It offers several important theoretical contributions to the existing discourse on gender representation in the South Asian media. Much research on hegemonic masculinity has been developed in Western contexts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Jeffords, 1994); however, this notion has not received enough scholarly attention within Pakistani media. Here, Pakistani television dramas are located in the wider criterion of masculinity in the world, which shows how hegemonic masculinity works within a South Asian cultural and ideological context.

Additionally, this research expands the use of hegemonic masculinity theory as it is applied in media studies by how Pakistani dramas express or subvert prevailing masculine archetypes. Furthermore, it helps media framing studies to demonstrate the construction, reinforcement, and legitimation of male identity in television narratives. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of media's role in gender socialization by linking societal norms and television representations.

Besides that, this research is based on important practical implications for media professionals, policymakers, and gender advocacy bodies. Finally, under the aegis of the most influential forms of media in Pakistan, television has become a gigantic factor in shaping public perceptions of what is perceived as the ideal man. These findings can help filmmakers, scriptwriters, and directors diversify male representations and go beyond the conventional, stereotypical depiction of some form of dominance, aggression, and the lack of any form of emotional expression.

This study can also benefit media regulators and policymakers by helping them realize the social effects of gendered narratives in television dramas. The study's findings can help shape press policies that expose balanced and progressive views of masculinity. Additionally, the research can be incorporated into gender advocacy work to reduce gender-based discrimination and violence through advocacy for reforms and influence on media representation that contradicts harmful gender stereotypes.

The results of this study go beyond the interpreted results for their implications for society as a whole, especially in reminding the audience of the damaging effects of toxic masculinity in the entertainment industry. Television dramas, with their profound impact on Pakistani audiences, especially the younger generations, determine how men and women think about society. This research emphasizes hegemonic masculinity by counter posing its problem/horrible aspects, thus provoking critical media consumption and involving the viewers in the critical consideration of gendered portrayals and social outcomes that represent them.

In addition, this paper offers recommendations for progressive gender representation focusing on other masculinities that divorce from rigid, patriarchal conceptions. This can encourage Pakistani drama to feature more diverse, emotionally expressive, and non-dominant male characters, which will aid in shaping the idea of the traditionally enjoyed male sphere as an exclusive space for its dominant masculinity.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to present a well-defined response to the portrayal of masculinity in Pakistani television dramas. From them, one can get the general guideline through which male characters are presented in these narratives and the consequent implications on the existing societal gender roles. The study's objectives are:

1. To identify how often hegemonic masculine traits show up in lead male characters.
2. To analyze the impact of demographic factors on the portrayal of Hegemonic Masculinity.
3. Explain particular characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, including aggression, authority, technology capability, subordination of women as embodied by male lead characters.



By these objectives, the study aims to fill gaps within the media and gender literature, unveiling the impacts of media content on definitions of masculinity.

### **1.5 Research Questions/Hypotheses**

This research analyzes the messages about traditional masculinity held by Pakistani television dramas, the country's most popular cultural commodity. In order to analyze the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity in these dramas, the following research question and hypotheses shall be used:

**RQ1:** How frequently does Hegemonic masculinity occur on prime-time television drama in Pakistan?

**RQ2:** To What extent do demographic indicators influence the display of Hegemonic Masculinity?

**RQ.3:** Is there a significance annual difference in a display of Hegemonic Masculinity?

**RQ.4:** Is there a significance difference in the display of hegemonic masculinity b/w the different TV channels?

**H1:** Lead Male Characters frequently demonstrate aggression on prime-time television drama in Pakistan.

**H2:** Lead Male Characters frequently demonstrate authority on prime-time television drama in Pakistan.

**H3:** Lead Male Characters frequently demonstrate advanced capability in dealing with technology on prime-time television drama in Pakistan.

**H4:** Lead Male Characters frequently demonstrate subordination of women on prime-time television drama in Pakistan.

The presented research question/hypotheses help the study achieve its overarching goal of offering a socio-cultural analysis of male character portrayals. Solving them will develop media studies, gender studies, and the discourse on masculinity in South Asian societies.

## 1.6 Delimitations of the Study

- The research is limited to Pakistani television dramas broadcast between 2019 and 2023 on the leading entertainment channels.
- It deals only with the depiction of male characters, with, in particular, reference to hegemonic masculinity.
- Dramas that are analyzed are those that were broadcast at prime time and which have serious cultural visibility or social bearing.
- The excluded part from the research includes analysis of female characters, representations of gender in movies, advertisements, web series, or digital platforms.
- An approach of quantitative content analysis was chosen, with no studies involving audience reception or quantification of viewer responses.
- The theoretical analysis is based on the hegemonic masculinity theory, media framing, but not the wider gender or intersectional theories.
- Only the Urdu-language dramas that have countrywide coverage are considered. Regional language productions are not part.

These limits define the boundaries of the study's subject, what is in the center of the study, and what theory the study relies upon, guaranteeing the depth of analysis and its consistency.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATUREREVIEW**

### **2.1 Review of Related Literature**

Extensive research indicates that television media exerts a measurable and profound influence on viewers' perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors since they absorb significant content from regular media exposure (Chaffee, 1986). The narratives presented in television dramas can influence viewers and alter their perceptions of reality significantly. Subsequently, the viewer endeavors to use concepts in practical situations that could significantly transform their life patterns. Television viewing is seen as a passive activity, and due to its ubiquitous everyday use, it has emerged as the most prominent contemporary technology. Television, the most economical medium for viewing films, television programs, news, dramas, and various entertainment forms, is present in nearly every household in contemporary society (Gerbner et al., 1986).

Srivastava and Roy (2011) assert that the concept of masculinity or male supremacy is employed to rationalize the inequitable allocation of resources across genders and to empower men to exert control over decisions made by women in their surroundings. Research has demonstrated that the media's representation of masculinity about race often favors white men over men of colour (Luyt, 2012). Studies indicate that, notwithstanding its perceived worth, masculinity imposes considerable expectations on individuals, resulting in social, psychological, economic, and physical burdens on males (Adil, Shahid & Arshad, 2017; Aurat Foundation, 2016; Greig, Kimmel & Lang, 2000).

The Aurat Foundation (2016) identified aggression, power, control, dominance, and courage as nearly synonymous attributes of masculinity in Pakistan. Self-reliance, engagement, and diligence constitute the primary traits of an authoritative individual (Courtenay, 2000; Greig, Kimmel & Lang, 2000). Strength, competitiveness, and resilience are indicators of the second aggressive trait (Courtenay, 2000; Greig, Kimmel, & Lang, 2000). Research indicates a robust association between hostility and violence, often shown through the possession and utilization of firearms, which are perceived as symbols of authority. Moura (2005) designates this form of masculinity as "militarized masculinity."

The concluding facet of male masculinity is the subjugation of women, characterized by men's supremacy over women in social, political, and economic domains, alongside the belittlement of women's roles and capabilities (Donaldson, 1993). Moreover, male supremacy over women and the dissemination of biased and patriarchal ideologies that reinforce male control over women's bodies and thoughts have entrenched male hegemony (Ali & Batool, 2015; Aurat Foundation, 2016; Torre, 1990). Male aggressiveness and violence against women, arising from insecurities over masculine identity, is a key element of women's subjugation (Heise, 2007; Moore, 2021).

The evolving concerns and anxieties of the public, which elevate specific topics in media discourse, also influence the representation of masculinity. Consequently, it was revealed that the representation of masculinity transitioned from the authoritative and formidable physician archetype in the United States Post-World War II to the resilient cowboy persona during the early Cold War (White, Oliffe, and Bottorff 2012).

Gender role representations are a subject of television content analysis, as research indicates that television depicts men and women as fundamentally opposed to each other. Male characters are often depicted as the most refined and dominant. Despite the common perception of women as subservient, romantic, and emotional, they frequently subordinate to male leadership (Rivadeneyra & Ward, 2005)—a possible explanation for gender roles in children's television programming may be this. Notwithstanding the extensive array of media accessible today, children continue to engage with television as one of the most impactful and commonly utilized media forms. When we recognize our inability to connect with someone in reality, we tend to embrace and concur with their portrayals on television (Signorielli, 1989). Ruggiero and Weston's 1985 investigation indicates that women are predominantly depicted in lower-paying occupations, such as secretarial or service-related positions, with less portrayal as influencers in professional settings. Men can advance and excel professionally (Mirza & Iftikhar, 2016).

Specific research projects have examined historical trends of male character representation in Pakistani television dramas (Malik, 2021). Mirza and Iftikhar (2016) observed that women constituted merely 12.7% of the professional and occupational roles in Pakistani dramas. His examination indicates that the female characters were predominantly passive and did not require using their creative or intellectual abilities for housework,

cooking, or sewing. Conversely, male characters were assigned roles necessitating significant inventiveness and intellect, including business, warfare, sales, driving, sailing, aviation, and wealth generation. Ullah (2012) analyzed gender representation in 24 dramas from 2000 to 2015, concluding that these representations are politically influenced and often perpetuate recurring.

Indeed, characters embodying leadership, heroism, and control reinforce these traits, and the media play a part. On the other hand, masculinity in non-Western cultures is shown through familial obligations, honor, and community roles (Hofstede, 2011). In Asian and Middle Eastern societies, masculinity is associated with keeping family honor in place and social hierarchy and is reasserted through media representation (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Western media is often portrayed in the West as masculinity to individualism and competitiveness. In contrast, non-Western media is often represented in non-Western media as masculinity to collectivist ideals and moral responsibility (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). For instance, samurai-like discipline and loyalty represent masculinity in Japanese media, and in Latin American media, this is machismo, dominance, and control over women (Gutmann, 2007). A hybrid interpretation of Pakistani television dramas alongside mainstream Western involvement and traditional patriarchal expectations. These dualities impact the social perception of hegemonic masculinity as a norm (Khan, 2020).

Pakistani dramas depict masculinity through Hollywood and other global media industries. Hyper-masculine characters are created based partly on Western action heroes, like James Bond and Superman because their ideals of physical strength, intelligence, and emotional detachment are reinforced (Buchbinder, 2012). Bollywood also lends to the plot by romanticizing masculinity, smoothing the line between aggression and sentimentality. Through the hybridization of men in Pakistani media, these external influences encompass a range of masculine plights in the form of assertive and emotional vulnerability (Britton, 2019).

Feminist scholars argue that masculine portrayals at the local and global levels have no bearing on gender hierarchies or absolute masculinity (hooks, 2004). According to them, media representations will never glorify male dominance and eradicate other masculinities, such as caregiving and emotional intelligence (Connell, 2005). This is an important critique

of Pakistani dramas because, in this genre, male characters often overshadow female ones and thus create a patriarchal narrative where women have limited agency (Iftikhar et al., 2020). From a feminist perspective, a more inclusive representation that breaks rigid gender norms for gender equity is advocated (Butler & Trouble 1990).

The media is paramount in the formation of popular imagery surrounding masculinity. Repeated exposure to dominant masculine tropes serves to make audiences understand normative masculinities and norms of masculinity: how men should behave (Gerbner, 1998). Television, movies, and commercials promote hyper-masculinity (aggression, independence, and control) and instill these traits in real-world gender contexts (Kilbourne, 1999). This helps to strengthen the idea to society that men should be providers, protectors, and untouchables when it comes to emotions (Kimmel, 2017).

Examples of hegemonic masculinity in the Western media are numerous and have ingrained themselves into the world of contradictions of stories. Hyper-masculinity is epitomized by charisma, intelligence, and physical prowess (Bennett & Woollacott, 1987). James Bond is such hyper-masculinity. Superman, too, is the ultimate hero and relates to invulnerability and absolute righteousness (Reynolds, 1992). More often than not, such portrayals in Pakistani media contribute to audience expectations of male protagonists of television dramas in terms of exaggerated masculinity (Aslam et al., 2022).

Research has shown that male viewers' perceptions of the 'self' are linked to media representations of masculinity (Miedzian, 1991). The action of experiencing characters that are too hyper-masculine, forcing men to play with pretend to live the ideal of life into emotional and mental health challenges, such as internal suppression and being aggressive. In Pakistan, the emphasis on the dominant male characters leads to societal pressure to demonize men to avoid expressing their vulnerability or receiving emotional support (Khaleeli & Iqbal, 2024).

Traditionally, Pakistani television dramas show men as controlling voices, answering crucial decisions related to finances and families. In contrast, women are usually portrayed as inferior, restricted to the status of domesticity, and dependent upon male protection (Khan, 2020). These representations support patriarchal norms and validate the gendercide of reality. At the beginning of Pakistan's drama history, early dramas had rigid masculine characters;

however, in recent times, there have been new narratives with complex emotional and moral male characters. This shift is a product of a changing society, characterized, among other things, by a broader awareness of gender equality and the evolution of definitions of masculinity (Sulatan, 2020).

Gender Roles are reinforced through the depiction of how males influence our understanding or misinterpretation of what constitutes gender roles. Male protagonists who embody emotion and depth drive towards progressive attitudes on gender equity (Adil & Malik 2022). On the contrary, hyper-masculine characters reinforce toxic masculinity and maintain power imbalances. In the majority of Pakistani dramas, men are shown as the decision-makers and women as passive followers (Iftikhar et al., 2020). This narrative normalizes male authority at the expense of femininity (Britton, 2019).

Media represents women's lives as a series of choices controlled by men, for men, parents especially. Gender inequalities and limiting women's empowerment are these depictions. Some common male archetypes in Pakistani dramas are authoritarian fathers, protective husbands, and ambitious businesspeople. These characters are typically controlling, which reinforces gender hierarchy and prevents deviation from traditional characters' roles (Maqsood & Hashmat 2024).

The media is important in the shaping of the young men's perception of the masculinity and the gender roles. Based on this, Pakistani television dramas influence how young men perceive and how they are supposed to play such roles. Television is an enormous source of entertainment and information, so it normalizes specific behaviors and attitudinal assemblages that seem acceptable and desirable. In Pakistan, how men are portrayed is how young men see men; therefore, it reinforces the idea that to be a real man is to be a dominant, controlling, emotionally detached young man (Britton, 2019).

However, over recent years, changes in storytelling have begun to bring emotional depth to characters and even challenge traditional masculinity (Shah & Sahito, 2023). Numerous dramas, such as *Mere Paas Tum Ho* and *Ehd-e-Wafa*, have portrayed male characters with vulnerabilities, dilemmas, and emotional struggles, thereby slightly changing the ideal of masculinity among the young generations (Aslam et al., 2022). A conditioned young audience watches the repeated portrayal of dominant male figures in Pakistani media,

which conditions their views of masculinity in association with authority and aggression (Seidler, 2006). Gerbner (1998) states that cultivation theory suggests that repeated exposure to media representations causes people to think that these representations are reality. For young men, having a rigid gender-based framework to express feelings is discouraged (Miedzian, 1991).

In contrast, social learning theory states that young men mimic the actions they see in media, most of which are rewarded (Bandura, 1977). Young viewers may switch to imitating the behavior shown in the dominant masculine character if a dominant male character is portrayed as successful and respected. As television is an intense mode of entertainment and education in Pakistan, this impact is most felt (Malik & Malik, 2021). Television in Pakistan usually showcases masculinity as power, wealth, and career success, which subtly shapes the aspirations of young men. Business people, politicians, and high-status men are the popular male characters in television dramas and are depicted as role models of society. Therefore, young men may accept that no association exists between success and beta, resulting in stress and false enterprise goals (Adil & Malik 2022).

Additionally, the romantic relationships presented in Pakistani dramas may seek to convince young men to behave in a controlling way in relationships (Sulatan, 2020). There is (real-life) reinforcement from this reinforcement, and it can influence how young men treat women and how they envision themselves in gender dynamics (Khan, 2020).

Pakistani media advertising not only reinforces masculine identity but also associates male identity with consumerist symbols of power and dominance. Equating masculinity with control, ambition, and aggression, luxury cars and the corresponding male grooming products and designer clothing markets often market themselves to men using imagery (Britton, 2019). An example would be television commercial ads of men driving expensive cars across rugged landscapes, showing that men must be strong and independent (Maqsood & Hashmat 2024). Similar to men's grooming product advertisements, advertisements for men's romantic relationships also emphasize attractiveness, confidence, and dominance, indicating that masculinity is associated with physical appearance and material success (Khaleeli & Iqbal, 2024).



As media commercializes masculinity, the reinforcement of hyper-masculine ideals, namely, physical appearance, status, and power, takes place. Men are encouraged (by others) to conform to a picture-perfect image of men who are strong, independent, and wealthy, which can put pressure on men and feed an already toxic masculinity (Kimmel, 2017). Increasingly, Pakistani media is taking an approach that reflects globalization's use of Western notions of 'alpha male' masculinity (Khan, 2020). While this is undoubtedly true, it is unlikely to represent a wide variety of ways to be a man, many of which include emotional intelligence and caregiving (Morrell, 1998).

Feminist and sociological critiques claim that the consumerist masculinity in which men channel their lives allows men to withdraw from genuine experience of emotion and to be merely a man because he is successful (Hooks, 2004). Besides, due to the economic realities of Pakistan, the hyper-masculinity promoted in media is not always in line with the truth. Thinking of the struggle to obtain a job, many of these men are unemployed and financially insecure, so their encounters do not align with mainstream media tropes (Aslam et al., 2022). Under such pressures, mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression (Seidler, 2006) are possible.

This literature review, however, has investigated how masculinity is represented in media, starring in Pakistani television dramas and their overall impact. While analyzing the role of masculinity in Pakistani media, the discussion focused on the omnipresence of the global influences molding masculinity in Pakistani media, the strengthening of patriarchy's role in gender roles, and how nationalism works to depict the identity of a man. The review further discussed the challenges to the hegemonic masculinity and capitalist aspirations young men face through television dramas.

Future research must be centered on social media, streaming services, and other online content to explore how masculinity has come to be constructed on such emerging platforms. The traditional television format, which has been the sole medium for the shaping of gender roles, is no longer the only relevant one, and younger [audiences] are more and more influenced by YouTube, Instagram, or TikTok, where alternative masculinities may be more present (Khan, 2020).

Further, research should be conducted on how these portrayals affect the health and well-being of males across cultures where hegemonic masculinity is widely entrenched (Sulatan, 2020). Examining media literacy programs that question traditional gender roles could enlighten how to change perceptions of masculinity in Pakistan (Iftikhar et al., 2020).

As Pakistani dramas change, it is time to analyze how gender portrayals mirror the ongoing augmentation of men's attitudes toward masculinity and gender equality. Further studies could center around how feminist movements, global cultural exchanges, and policy changes shape media narratives and audience reception (Shah & Sahito, 2023).

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The following concepts will be regarded as the theoretical foundation of the investigation

### **2.2.1 Connell's Theory of Hegemonic Masculinity**

Connell's Theory of Hegemonic Masculinity is the most important in the masculine and men's stream of thought; it is also rooted in the concept of hegemonic masculinity and helps to give the full framework to deal with how men are portrayed in Pakistani dramas. The cultural norms and power structures in establishing hegemonic male ideals are (Connell, 1996; Connell, 2000) highlighted in Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. This theory aims to probe into how Pakistani television dramas improve or undermine such masculine norms or how male characters mimic the conduct of masculine characteristics to acquire a social depiction of gender roles. The study takes Connell's Theory of Hegemonic Masculinity to uncover the complex link between pictorial and the resistance or facilitation of conventional masculine notions in Pakistani society and culture.

Biology is not Cartesian; it is not defined as being separate from the material and constructed only along linear typologies. Instead, it is better understood as social, constructed by its interpretation of the masculine body (Stets & Burke, 2000; Connell, 2000; Connell, 1996). This masculinity is portrayed in individuals in a specific culture and civilization (Srivastava & Roy, 2011). Masculinity, not an innate physical aspect of a man, is manufactured and sustained by social, cultural, and cultural organizations (Connell, 1996; Connell, 2000). Additionally, before the appearance of society, gender was unknown (Connell, 1996; Srivastava & Roy, 2011).

For Connell (2000), masculinity is fundamentally a social position, not in any essentialist sense. However, as a collection of behaviors with institutional and global power effects, individuals have input but do not have control over them. Although hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1993) is the norm of the male gender, not many men have any such features (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985; Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hadi, 2017). Hegemonic masculinity is a normative image; thus, its actants should conform to a shared picture of what such a masculine is. Ultimately, despite some criticism (Moller, 2007) of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, it has lasted over time.

Connell (1995) designates this as the patriarchal dividend, asserting that the advantages encompass honor, position, and decision-making power. Despite not all benefiting from them, men have been seen to be interested in maintaining and safeguarding these power structures. The allocation of dividend shares is influenced by various criteria, such as colour, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, and status; any male receiving a more significant share is not deemed elite.

Connell (1993) identified four characteristics—authority, aggression, advanced technological expertise, and the oppression of women—as the principal markers of masculinity. Masculinity is portrayed in media as very profoundly rooted in cultural and filed societal norms, and there is a significant variance from Western to non-Western society. In Western cultures, masculinity is usually linked to physical strength, dominance, emotional restraint, and assertiveness (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The degree to which men are overemphasized on external forms of validation only constantly pressures them to prove their masculinity through wealth and social status (Connell, 2005).

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As these portrayals uphold and go against the dominant male ideal, Connell's (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity remains relevant to understanding them and how they depict

men's masculinity. However, more recent shifts in media representations tend to a growing reception to alternative masculinities, for male characters' feature vulnerability, empathy, and emotional intelligence (Malik & Malik 2021).

### **2.2.2 Framing Theory**

The aspect of framing is related to the agenda-setting tradition. However, going further, it complicates the inquiry by focusing on the fundamental nature of the issue over the specific subject. According to framing theory, the media selects certain occurrences and provides them with a framework of importance. Given its significant influence, the framing constitutes a significant subject that entails extending the idea to the organizations. Goffman's theory on this, which was first called Frame Analysis, was originally Goffman (1974). According to him, people perceive the world through their first framework. It is considered fundamental since the user will believe in it. However, it is independent from other frameworks in terms of its utility.

Framing theory suggests that presenters (framers) frame information that they present to an audience so that an audience will select the information to process it. Agenda-setting theory is closely related to framing. Both stress that the media decides what is of concern to the public and sets an Agenda. This concept is advanced through framing, where news presentation is formed, and a contextually based framework for the information is determined. On the other hand, this term refers to how journalists deliberately arrange and present the ideas, events, and subjects under consideration (Scheufele, 1999; this is typically a deliberate decision). The framing theory shall be applied to Pakistani television dramas to explore its depictions of male characters. First, the framing theory (mainly from media studies and sociology) says that media information is a constructed representation of the reality behind which the viewer perceives it, not a depiction of reality. An analysis of how masculinity is constructed and laid out in Pakistani television dramas will be conducted with the help of framing theory. The implicit messages and concepts associated with the representation of masculinity in Pakistani television dramas are studied in this research using the concepts of framing theory to explain the conception it has for society and also to gain a cogent understanding of how Pakistani media speaks of gender.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The deliberate use of instruments by researchers to gather data in order to achieve a particular objective is known as the method of research. In this study, observations were represented using a quantitative approach, and analysis was conducted by examining numerical data. Research aimed to examine how hegemonic masculinity was portrayed in prime-time television dramas. In order to accomplish this, data was consistently gathered using a systematic coding sheet, which made it possible to guarantee that related content was consistently arranged and analyzed in the same manner.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This content analysis was conducted using a quantitative approach. By counting particular details in each episode, researchers can use this method to review drama serials. You start by developing specific research questions, such as examining recurring themes, character interactions, or the manner in which a particular subject is constantly displayed. In order to reliably categorize significant themes throughout data collection, a coding framework was created. I listened to sporadic episodes and noted when specific categories were mentioned. Numerical data analyses showed the themes that were emphasized, the plot of each drama, and how the story was presented.

### **3.2 Population**

The population of the study was all the Prime time (7:00 pm- 10:00 pm) Pakistani television drama serials of local origin which aired from 2019-2023. All drama series, tele films, sit-coms etc.; were not be made part of the sample. Although there are already around 20 channels that provide entertainment programming in Urdu and other regional languages. The analysis focused on prime-time drama serials in Urdu that aired on any of the top 12 TV networks monitored by the rating organization Media Logic.

### **3.3 Sample**

Considering the time constraints and the necessity for precise results, it was difficult for the researcher to examine the complete population; hence the current study employed a purposive sample strategy. According to the study's objectives, a purposive sample was chosen between 2019 and 2023. The highest aired drama series for each year was chosen using the independent rating company Media Logic's monthly and annual data. The tentative

list included: Mere Paas Tum Ho (2019), Raqs-e-Bismil (2020), Parizad (2021), Kaisi Tere Khudgharzi (2022), and Tere Bin (2023).

### **3.4 Operational Definitions**

#### **3.4.1 Display of Hegemonic Masculinity**

In gender studies, "display of hegemonic masculine" refers to men's control over women. These characteristics usually involve elements such as strength, independence, assertiveness, and competition. However, it is vital to note that perceptions of masculinity vary by country and historical period. For this study, display of hegemonic masculinity is operationalized as a persistent behaviour and representation pattern by which male characters show dominance, perpetuate traditional gender norms, and uphold superiority over others, particularly women and less dominant males.

#### **3.4.2 Display of Aggression**

The concept of "display of aggression" refers the male character's anger, power, control through physical, verbal and emotional outbursts. Pakistani prime-time television shows have been studied to evaluate the level and importance of violence as a form of masculine dominance. It is operationalized by observing behaviors such as physical attacks alongside verbal insults or threatening and emotionally manipulated domination aimed especially towards silence women or other subservient individuals. This characteristic is analyzed for its frequency along with the narrative importance associated with reinforcing patriarchy in traditional masculinity associated dominance within that plot.

#### **3.4.3 Display of Authority**

The notion of "display of authority" refers to the representation of authority in Pakistani prime-time television dramas, with emphasis on how masculine characters exert control, influence, and decision-making power over others, exhibiting dominance and leadership. Men are usually depicted as authoritative figures who preside over households and workplaces and significantly dictate people's opinions and actions. Such individuals are almost always depicted as supreme decision makers whose judgment is paramount, particularly when it involves women and younger or frail men. The objective of this study is to record these actions for analysis in order to explore such representation of authority masculine domination embedded in hegemonic patriarchy.

#### **3.4.4 Display of Technology Capability**

The term “display of technology capability” as referenced in this study’s operational framework pertains to the depiction of technology literacy within Pakistani television dramas, particularly focusing on males’ proficiency, attitudinal familiarity, and ease with modern technological tools. This topic of research further operationalizes technological capability as a tacit yet significant dimension of display of hegemonic masculinity which highlights male supremacy in private and public life through the lens of digital skills by analyzing these images.

#### **3.4.5 Display of Subordination of Women**

The term "display of subordination of women “as operationalized in this study refers to the portrayal of women in Pakistani prime-time television dramas with consideration to how male characters place women in subordinate roles, minimize their participation, and depict them as inferior, dominion over display of hegemonic masculinity. The study focusses on female submissive and male dominant characterizations where men restricting freedom, making choices on behalf of women, doubting their skills or abilities and treating them as peripheral figures both in public sphere and private household domain. This emphasizes watching television dramas can strengthen and perpetuate existing social structures that stratifying genders within an unequal system, marked by clear hierarchical arrangements crafted through layers upon layers of cultural traditions specific to the culture from which they originate, thus play a developmental role.

#### **3.5 Instruments**

A coding sheet and a set of coding guidelines were employed as the study instrument. Connell's (1995) typologies will be used to generate the coding sheet and guidelines.

#### **3.6 Pilot Testing**

To assess the instrument's believability, it was used in the pilot testing of telefilm Ruposh. It was ensured that the data acquired from this telefilm was not included in the final sample.

#### **3.7 Procedure (Data Collection)**

The top-rated drama serials of the last five years (2019-2023), one from each year, were chosen. The data was collected by studying Media Logic's monthly rating reports. The tentative list was as follows: Mere Pass Tum Ho (2019), Raqs-e Bismil (2020), Parizad

(2021), Kaisi Tere Khudgharzi (2022), and Tere Bin (2023). All of these drama serials are available on YouTube. They were downloaded and saved on the coder's personal computer so that they could be viewed in a quiet environment. The coder was trained in five sessions to understand methodology for interpreting the play, practice coding, and become acquainted with the codebook.

### **3.8 Unit of Analysis**

The study's goal was to look at how male characters are portrayed in television, with a focus on lead and supporting parts, as well as their physical appearance, representation, personality qualities, occupations, and interpersonal relationships. The research focused on the subtle creation of male characters in media portrayal.

### **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

The researcher was just collecting accurate information; any useless material without authentic sources was not included of the research. All sources used in the study were properly credited to ensure academic honesty and avoid plagiarism.



## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Following statistical results address the study titled “Exploring Hegemonic Masculinity, Portrayal of Male Characters in Pakistani Television Dramas”. This research follows Quantitative Methodology based on the coding sheet designed accordingly with Prime-time dramas from 2019 to 2023.

### 4.1 Metadata of Sampled Data

**Table 1:**

*Metadata of Sampled Data*

| <b>Drama Name</b>     | <b>Writer</b>          | <b>Director</b>  | <b>Year</b> | <b>Total Episodes</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Mere Pass Tum Ho      | Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar | Nadeem Baig      | 2019        | 23                    |
| Raqs-e-Bismil         | Hashim Nadeem          | Wajahat Rauf     | 2020        | 28                    |
| Parizaad              | Hashim Nadeem          | Shahzad Kashmiri | 2021        | 29                    |
| Kaisi Tere Khudgharzi | Radain Shah            | Ahmed Bhatti     | 2022        | 34                    |
| Tere Bin              | Nooran Makhdoom        | Siraj ul Haq     | 2023        | 58                    |

Table 1 presents key information about the Pakistani television dramas selected for analysis in this study. It includes the title of each drama, the year it aired, the total number of episodes, as well as the writer and director. These dramas were selected based on their popularity, prime-time airing, and relevance to the study's research objectives.

### 4.2 Demographics Statistics

The demographic variables used in the coding sheet—including age, marital status, education, and occupation of male lead characters—were analyzed using SPSS, and the results are recorded in Table 2.

**Table 2:***Demographic Characteristics of Male Lead male lead characters*

| <b>Age</b>                                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Teen   | 3                | 0.1%              |
| Young  | 1907             | 74.2%             |
| Mature                                       | 560              | 21.8%             |
| Elder  | 100              | 3.9%              |
| <b>Marital Status</b>                        | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Single                                       | 997              | 38.8%             |
| Married                                      | 1443             | 56.1%             |
| Separated                                    | 6                | 0.2%              |
| Widowed                                      | 124              | 4.8%              |
| <b>Education</b>                             | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Illiterate                                   | 224              | 8.7%              |
| Semi-literate                                | 294              | 11.4%             |
| Literate                                     | 2052             | 79.8%             |
| <b>Occupation</b>                            | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Student                                      | 497              | 19.3%             |
| Power and Authority-Based Occupations        | 1037             | 40.4%             |
| White-Collar and Middle-Class Professions    | 422              | 16.4%             |
| Working-Class and Skilled Labor Occupations  | 158              | 6.1%              |
| Religious and Spiritual Roles                | 392              | 15.3%             |
| Jobless (Fired or Actively Looking for Work) | 64               | 2.5%              |
| <b>Socio-eco Class</b>                       | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b>    |
| Elite  | 1644             | 64.0%             |
| Middle Class                                 | 617              | 24.0%             |
| Working Class                                | 309              | 12.0%             |

Table 2 displays the age distribution of male lead characters featured in the analyzed scenes. The findings reveal a significant overrepresentation of young male characters, who constitute 74.2% (n = 1,907) of the total. This suggests that the majority of scenes focus on male characters in the young adult age group, ranging from late adolescence to early

adulthood. Mature male character account for 21.8% (n = 560), indicating a secondary presence, while elder male leads appear in only 3.9% (n = 100) of scenes. Teenage male leads are the least represented, comprising just 0.1% (n = 3) of the total.

This distribution implies that Pakistani dramas tend to prioritize narratives centered around young adults, potentially reflecting market demands or societal interests in youth-oriented content. The limited portrayal of elder and teenage character points to a lack of age diversity and suggests missed opportunities to explore intergenerational themes or issues related to adolescence and aging. The data also highlight the marital status of male lead characters in the selected dramas. A majority—56.1% (n = 1,443)—are depicted as married, indicating a strong narrative emphasis on marital relationships, which often reflect broader social dynamics.

Single male characters represent 38.8% (n = 997), suggesting a significant focus on pre-marital relationships and youth identity, with singlehood emerging as a recurring theme in storylines. In contrast, widowed male characters constitute 4.8% (n = 124), and separated characters are portrayed in only 0.2% (n = 6) of cases. The minimal presence of separated and widowed individuals may reflect cultural reluctance to center storylines around such statuses, possibly due to social stigma or limited audience appeal.

According to Table 2, a large majority—79.8% (n = 2,052)—of male lead characters are portrayed as literate, suggesting a strong association between education and the depiction of respectability, competence, and social status. Semi-literate characters make up 11.4% (n = 294), while illiterate male characters represent only 8.7% (n = 224). The relatively low representation of less-educated individuals may reflect a tendency to marginalize or stereotype these groups, often assigning them subservient, comedic, or antagonistic roles.

The occupational distribution of male lead characters indicates that the most common roles fall under power and authority-based professions—such as politicians, business owners, and police officers—representing 40.4% (n = 1,037). This trend suggests a strong narrative focus on male characters in leadership or influential positions, which often align with dominant ideals of masculinity, including authority and decision-making power.

Students comprise the second-largest group at 19.3% (n = 497), reflecting themes of aspiration, identity formation, and the transition to adulthood. Male leads in white-collar and middle-class occupations (e.g., teachers, doctors, office workers) account for 16.4% (n = 422), while religious and spiritual figures (e.g., clerics, spiritual healers) represent 15.3% (n =

392). In contrast, working-class and skilled labor roles—such as drivers, tailors, and electricians—are underrepresented, appearing in only 6.1% (n = 158) of cases. Unemployed characters, including those who are jobless or actively seeking work, make up just 2.5% (n = 64).

Table 2 also details the socio-economic status of male lead characters. Of the 2,570 characters analyzed, 64% (n = 1,644) were portrayed as belonging to the elite class. Middle-class characters accounted for 24% (n = 617), while working-class male leads comprised only 12% (n = 309). Together, elite and middle-class characters make up 88% of the total, suggesting a strong preference for depicting male leads from higher socio-economic backgrounds. This trend reflects both aspirational storytelling and a market inclination toward characters perceived as socially and economically successful. The findings also suggest that actors often prefer roles portraying elite or affluent characters.

### 4.3 Character Analysis

Variables related to the type of role, character, and personality of male leads were analyzed using SPSS, with results presented in Table 3

**Table 3:**

*Character Role, Type, and Personality Traits*

| <b>Type of Role</b>        | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Major                      | 2241             | 87.2%             |
| Minor                      | 329              | 12.8%             |
| <b>Type of Character</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Antagonist                 | 571              | 22.2%             |
| Protagonist                | 1358             | 52.8%             |
| Other                      | 641              | 42.9%             |
| <b>Type of Personality</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Negative                   | 475              | 18.5%             |
| Positive                   | 1297             | 50.5%             |
| Neutral                    | 798              | 31.1%             |

The analysis shows that 87.2% (n = 2,241) of male lead characters played major roles, while 12.8% (n = 329) were assigned minor roles. This suggests that Pakistani dramas tend to concentrate on a few central characters who drive the plot, dominate screen time, and significantly influence narrative outcomes. Further, 52.8% (n = 1,358) of male leads were depicted as protagonists. These characters typically embody the moral and social values upheld by the narrative and are central to the progression of the story. This focus highlights the importance placed on the development of heroic male figures in drama narratives.

Antagonists accounted for 22.2% (n = 571) of the male lead characters, highlighting a strong focus on conflict, tension, and moral struggles within the narratives. In terms of masculinity, these antagonist roles often reflect negative or harmful forms of power and control. Another 24.9% (n = 641) of male leads were grouped under the category of “Other,” which includes characters that do not clearly fit into the roles of protagonist or antagonist. This group may include supporting figures, comedic characters, or those who help move the story forward by adding complexity to relationships and central conflicts.

Table 3 shows how male leads are distributed based on their personality traits. More than half—50.5% (n = 1,297)—are shown with positive qualities such as kindness, honesty, bravery, and integrity. This suggests a strong tendency in storytelling to present male leads as admirable and morally upright individuals. Characters with neutral traits make up 31.1% (n = 798), representing those who show a mix of good and bad behavior. These characters help making the storylines more realistic and layered by moving beyond clear labels of hero or villain. Finally, 18.5% (n = 475) of male leads are portrayed with negative traits such as dishonesty, aggression, manipulation, or selfishness. Although these characters are less common, they play a key role in creating tension and keeping the plot engaging.

#### **4.4 Research Questions and Hypothesis**

##### **4.4.1 H1: Lead Male Lead male lead characters frequently demonstrate aggression on prime-time television drama in Pakistan**

**Table 4:***Display of Aggression*

| <b>Aggression</b>          | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Not Present                | 1912             | 74.4           |
| Low Display of Aggression  | 640              | 24.9           |
| High Display of Aggression | 18               | 0.7            |

To support a clearer and more complete analysis, the variable “Aggression” was created by computing four key variables Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Psychological/Emotional Aggression, and Sexual Aggression. Bringing these categories together into one variable allowed the study to present a more unified and meaningful view of how aggression is shown, especially in connection to hegemonic masculinity in Pakistani television dramas.

Table 4 presents the frequency of aggression displayed by male lead characters. The findings show that in the majority of cases—74.4% (n = 1,912)—male leads are portrayed as non-aggressive, indicating a dominant narrative preference for characters who do not engage in overt acts of aggression. A moderate display of aggression is observed in 24.9% (n = 640) of male lead characters. These portrayals typically involve verbal disputes or psychological and emotional aggression, which are generally controlled and limited. Such depictions may be used to introduce dramatic tension while avoiding excessive or graphic violence. Only 0.7% (n = 18) of male lead characters display extreme forms of aggression, involving highly violent or intense behavior. This small number suggests that storytellers may be intentionally avoiding the normalization or glorification of violence, which aligns with the family-friendly focus of most Pakistani television content. It may also reflect cultural values, where strong expressions of anger or physical violence are generally not encouraged in mainstream media.

#### 4.4.2 H2: Lead male characters frequently demonstrate authority on prime-time television drama in Pakistan

**Table 5:**

*Display of Authority*

| Authority                 | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Not Present               | 2520      | 98.1    |
| Low Display of Authority  | 42        | 1.6     |
| High Display of Authority | 8         | 0.3     |

To support meaningful analysis, the variable “Authority” was created by computing five important categories: Familial Authority, Societal Authority, Relational Authority, Legal Authority, and Cultural/Religious Authority. Merging these categories into one allowed for a broader and more complete view of how male authority is shown in Pakistani television dramas. This is especially important when examining how such portrayals may reinforce ideas linked to hegemonic masculinity.

Table 5 shows how authority is represented among male lead characters in the dramas studied. The results indicate that in 98.1% of cases ( $n = 2,520$ ), male characters were not shown in clear positions of authority. This indicates that most male leads were not shown as dominant or controlling figures within the story. A small portion—1.6% ( $n = 42$ )—exhibited limited authority, often reflected through subtle forms of leadership or influence. Only 0.3% ( $n = 8$ ) of male characters displayed strong authority, involving clear control, decision-making power, or enforcement.

These findings indicate that overt demonstrations of power and control are relatively unknown in the depiction of male protagonist figures. It might be a storytelling preference to represent male authority in terms of more socially sanctioned attributes, e.g., moral character, empathy, and emotional intelligence. When authority is invoked, it tends to be presented in culturally valued positions—e.g., heads of the household, community leaders, or legal practitioners. The conventional construction of masculinity as responsible and respectful rather than coercive or violent is supported by such representations.

#### 4.4.3 H3: Lead Male Characters frequently demonstrate Subordination of Women on prime-time television drama in Pakistan.

**Table 6:**

*Display of Subordination of Women*

| <b>Subordination of Women</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Not Present                           | 2324             | 90.4           |
| Low display Subordination's of Women  | 242              | 9.4            |
| High display Subordination's of Women | 4                | 0.2            |

To ensure a more organized and focused analysis, the study computing five related categories into a single variable called “Subordination of Women.” These categories included Emotional Subordination, Physical Subordination, Economic and Financial Subordination, Gender Role Expectations, and Control over Social Networks. Grouping them together helped provide a fuller picture of how female subordination is represented in Pakistani television dramas. This approach not only made the analysis more cohesive but also offered insight into how such portrayals might continue to reflect or reinforce dominant masculine norms within the storyline.

Table 6 displays the degree to which women's Subordination is depicted in the sampled Pakistani television dramas. Subordination of women was absent in 90.4% of cases (n = 2324), indicating that the majority of female characters were portrayed in the story with some degree of autonomy, agency, or voice. In 9.4% (n = 242) of the cases, women were depicted in somewhat subordinate or dependent roles, such as submitting to male's judgments or dealing with social constraints, which was a less obvious manifestation of subordination. Extreme subordination was shown in just 0.2% (n = 4) of the examples, suggesting that overt depictions of gender oppression or control are extremely uncommon.

This trend points to a significant change in how women are portrayed on television, with more female characters being shown outside of conventional submissive positions. The fact that over 10% of the sample exhibits mild subordination, however, suggests that gender



inequalities are nonetheless implicitly upheld in some tales, supporting traditional masculinity through male dominance or leadership in particular relational dynamics.

#### **4.4.4 H4: Lead Male Characters frequently demonstrate advanced capability in dealing with technology on prime-time television drama in Pakistan.**

**Table 7:**

*Display of technology Capability*

| <b>Technology Capability</b>          | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Not Present                           | 2292             | 89.2           |
| Low Display of Technology Capability  | 7                | 0.2            |
| High Display of Technology Capability | 271              | 10.5           |

To maintain clarity and consistency in the analysis, the variable “Technology Capability” was computing by combining three subcategories: Level of Technological Proficiency, Type of Technology Used, and Domains of Expertise. By merging these elements into a single variable, the study provides a more organized and detailed understanding of how the use of technology is portrayed in Pakistani television dramas.

Table 7 illustrates the extent to which male lead characters demonstrate technological capability. The findings indicate that a large majority—89.2% (n = 2,292)—did not exhibit any use of or proficiency in technology. This suggests that digital literacy, gadget interaction, or technological expertise is largely absent in the characterization of male leads. Only 0.2% (n = 7) of characters displayed a lesser degree of technological capability, while 10.5% (n = 271) exhibited a prominent or defining use of technology, where digital tools or skills were central to their role or identity within the narrative.

This pattern suggests that while traditional portrayals of masculinity continue to dominate, a small yet notable portion of male lead characters—often associated with elite or urban settings—are depicted with basic technological engagement. These portrayals may reflect evolving masculine ideals linked to information control, professionalism, and modernity. However, the overall lack of technological representation underscores the continued preference for conventional masculinities centered around emotional, physical, or

social authority, rather than digital competence.

#### 4.4.5 RQ.1: How frequently does Hegemonic Masculinity occur on prime-time television drama in Pakistan?

**Table 8:**

*Display of Hegemonic Masculinity*

| Hegemonic Masculinity                 | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Not Present                           | 1665      | 64.8    |
| Low display of Hegemonic Masculinity  | 875       | 34.0    |
| High display of Hegemonic Masculinity | 30        | 1.2     |

To produce clear and cohesive findings, the variable “Hegemonic Masculinity” was computed by combining four key factors: Aggression, Authority, Subordination of Women, and Technology Capability. Bringing these dimensions together into a single measure offers a more complete picture of how dominant masculine traits are portrayed in Pakistani television dramas. This approach helps to better understand the ways in which certain ideals of masculinity are shaped and reinforced through media narratives.

Table 8 shows how frequently hegemonic masculinity appears in the dramas analyzed. In 64.8% of cases ( $n = 1,665$ ), it was not present—meaning most male characters were not shown exhibiting dominant traits like aggression, control, emotional distance, or superiority over others. However, in 34.0% of cases ( $n = 875$ ), there were moderate displays of hegemonic masculinity. These portrayals often involved subtler forms of dominance or authority, suggesting that traditional ideas about male power are still embedded in many storylines. Only 1.2% of male characters ( $n = 30$ ) showed extreme forms of hegemonic masculinity. These cases featured overt dominance, strict control, suppression of others—particularly women—or highly aggressive behavior. Though rare, such portrayals highlight the presence of more rigid and forceful models of masculinity, even in narratives that generally lean toward more restrained depictions.

These findings reveal a more layered portrayal of masculinity in contemporary Pakistani dramas, where traditional hegemonic ideals are neither fully dominant nor completely absent. Instead, there seems to be a gradual shift toward more balanced or redefined expressions of masculinity—ones that blend authority with emotional depth. While overtly extreme forms of masculinity appear rarely, subtler versions continue to surface, indicating that hegemonic masculinity is not disappearing but rather adapting to new contexts. This evolving dynamic reflects an ongoing negotiation between long-standing cultural expectations and shifting gender roles within media storytelling.

#### 4.4.6 RQ.2: To What extent do demographic indicators influence the display of Hegemonic Masculinity?

##### 4.4.6 Age of Male Lead Characters

**Table 9:**

*ANOVA test on age in Pakistani dramas and display of Hegemonic Masculinity*

| Age     | N    | Mean   | Std.<br>Deviation | df     | F      | Sig. |
|---------|------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|------|
| Teen    | 3    | .0000  | .00000            |        |        |      |
| Young   | 1907 | 1.3094 | 2.88167           |        |        |      |
| Mature  | 560  | 1.2482 | 2.35814           | 3/2566 | 11.002 | .000 |
| Elderly | 100  | 2.9300 | 3.99559           |        |        |      |
| Total   | 2570 | 1.3576 | 2.84410           |        |        |      |

To explore how demographic factors affects the expression of hegemonic masculinity, a one-way ANOVA was carried out using age as the independent variable and hegemonic masculinity as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in levels of hegemonic masculinity across four age groups—Teen, Young, Mature, and Elderly— $F(3, 2566) = 11.002, p < .001$ . This means that age has a meaningful impact on how hegemonic masculinity is shown or perceived within the sample.

When looking at the average scores, the Teen group had the lowest mean ( $M = 0.00$ ,  $SD = 0.00$ ), indicating either no expression or no reporting of hegemonic masculinity in this group. The Young and Mature groups had similar average scores ( $M = 1.31$  and  $M = 1.25$ ,

respectively), pointing to a moderate presence of hegemonic masculinity. Interestingly, the Elderly group had the highest average score ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 3.99$ ), which suggests a stronger display or perception of hegemonic masculinity in older individuals. This may be linked to generational values and more traditional views on gender roles that tend to be more common among older people. It is also possible that elderly characters in media are more often shown in roles of power or authority, which could reinforce dominant masculine traits.

#### 4.4.6 Marital Status of Male Lead Characters

**Table 10:**

*ANOVA test on Marital Status in Pakistani dramas and display of Hegemonic Masculinity*

| Marital Status | N    | Mean   | Std. Deviation | df     | F     | Sig. |
|----------------|------|--------|----------------|--------|-------|------|
| Single         | 997  | 1.1214 | 2.76276        |        |       |      |
| Married        | 1443 | 1.5274 | 2.92671        |        |       |      |
| Separated      | 6    | 4.5000 | 2.94958        | 3/2566 | 6.760 | .000 |
| Widowed        | 124  | 1.1290 | 2.24502        |        |       |      |
| Total          | 2570 | 1.3576 | 2.84410        |        |       |      |

To better understand how demographic factors influence the expression of hegemonic masculinity, a one-way ANOVA was performed with marital status as the independent variable and hegemonic masculinity as the dependent variable. The findings showed a statistically significant difference among the four marital status groups—Single, Married, Separated, and Widowed— $F(3, 2566) = 6.760$ ,  $p < .001$ . This suggests that marital status has a meaningful effect on how hegemonic masculinity is expressed or perceived.

Among these groups, participants in the Separated category reported the highest average score ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 2.95$ ). However, this group had a very small sample size ( $N = 6$ ), which may limit the reliability of this result. Married individuals showed a relatively high level of hegemonic masculinity ( $M = 1.53$ ), while the Single ( $M = 1.12$ ) and Widowed ( $M = 1.13$ ) groups reported similar, lower levels. These results indicate that the expectations and roles within marriage may contribute to stronger displays of traditional masculine traits, such as authority, control, and dominance. On the other hand, single and widowed individuals may

experience or show less of these traits due to the lack of those relational dynamics.

#### 4.4.6 Education of Male Lead Character

**Table 11:**

*ANOVA test on Education in Pakistani dramas and display of Hegemonic Masculinity*

| Education     | N    | Mean   | Std.<br>Deviation | df     | F      | Sig. |
|---------------|------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|------|
| Illiterate    | 224  | 2.3348 | 3.43543           | 2/2567 | 17.857 | .000 |
| Semi-literate | 294  | 1.6531 | 2.98952           |        |        |      |
| Literate      | 2052 | 1.2086 | 2.72632           |        |        |      |
| Total         | 2570 | 1.3576 | 2.84410           |        |        |      |

To explore the relationship between education and the expression of hegemonic masculinity, a one-way ANOVA was conducted using education level as the independent variable and hegemonic masculinity as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference among the three education groups—Illiterate, Semi-literate, and Literate— $F(2, 2567) = 17.857, p < .001$ . This result suggests that education plays a meaningful role in shaping how individuals display or connect with traits commonly associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as authority, control, and dominance within gender dynamics.

The average scores show a clear trend: individuals in the Illiterate group reported the highest levels of hegemonic masculinity ( $M = 2.33, SD = 3.43$ ), followed by Semi-literate participants ( $M = 1.65, SD = 2.99$ ). Literate individuals had the lowest average ( $M = 1.21, SD = 2.73$ ). Apparently, these findings are due to education broadening people's minds to new ideas and teaching them to think critically, which allows them to question traditional gender norms. Those with limited formal education may maintain traditional notions about masculinity since they might not discover as much about gender equality as those who attend college or acquire a higher level of education. All of this demonstrates how important education is in changing men's attitudes and promoting more equal gender roles.

#### 4.4.6 Occupation of Male Lead Characters

**Table 12:**

*ANOVA test on Occupation of Male Lead Characters in Pakistani dramas and display of Hegemonic Masculinity*

| Occupation                                   | N    | Mean   | Std. Deviation | df     | F     | Sig. |
|--|------|--------|----------------|--------|-------|------|
| Student                                      | 497  | 1.5433 | 3.17225        |        |       |      |
| Power and Authority-Based Occupations        | 1037 | 1.4224 | 2.64119        |        |       |      |
| White-Collar and Middle-Class Professions    | 422  | .9668  | 2.03621        |        |       |      |
| Working-Class and Skilled Labor Occupations  | 158  | .9620  | 2.45179        | 5/2564 | 5.069 | .000 |
| Religious and Spiritual Roles                | 392  | 1.6786 | 3.75581        |        |       |      |
| Jobless (Fired or Actively Looking for Work) | 64   | .4531  | 1.56276        |        |       |      |
| Total  | 2570 | 1.3576 | 2.84410        |        |       |      |

To understand how different types of jobs influence the expression of hegemonic masculinity, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with occupation as the independent variable and hegemonic masculinity as the dependent variable. The analysis showed a statistically significant difference across six occupational groups—Student, Power and Authority-Based Occupations, White-Collar and Middle-Class Professions, Working-Class and Skilled Labor Occupations, Religious and Spiritual Roles, and Jobless— $F(5, 2564) = 5.069, p < .001$ . This result indicates that a person's occupation plays an important role in shaping how hegemonic masculinity is expressed or perceived.

Looking at the average scores, individuals in religious and spiritual roles reported the highest level of hegemonic masculinity ( $M = 1.68, SD = 3.76$ ), followed by students ( $M = 1.54$ ), and those in power and authority-based positions ( $M = 1.42$ ). These roles may encourage traditional gender norms by promoting control, leadership, or strict hierarchies—values that often align with dominant masculine behavior. In contrast, people in white-collar professions ( $M = 0.97$ ), working-class jobs ( $M = 0.96$ ), and especially those without jobs ( $M = 0.45$ ) showed lower levels of hegemonic masculinity. This suggests that when individuals lack access to power or influence—whether due to job type or unemployment—they may be less likely to adopt or express traditional masculine traits. These findings imply that work environments not only reflect social norms but may also contribute to shaping and reinforcing

gendered expectations, especially those linked to masculinity.

#### 4.4.6 Socio-economic class of Male Lead Characters

**Table 13:**

*ANOVA test on Socio-Economic Class of Male Lead Characters in Pakistani dramas and display of Hegemonic Masculinity*

| Socio-Eco Class | N    | Mean   | Std.<br>Deviation | df     | F      | Sig. |
|-----------------|------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|------|
| Elite           | 1644 | 1.6740 | 3.19628           | 2/2567 | 30.166 | .000 |
| Middle Class    | 617  | .9011  | 1.96023           |        |        |      |
| Working Class   | 309  | .5858  | 1.93312           |        |        |      |
| Total           | 2570 | 1.3576 | 2.84410           |        |        |      |

To explore how socio-economic status influences the expression of hegemonic masculinity, a one-way ANOVA was conducted using socio-economic class—Elite, Middle Class, and Working Class—as the independent variable and hegemonic masculinity as the dependent variable. The analysis showed a statistically significant result,  $F(2, 2567) = 30.166$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the socio-economic background of male lead characters plays a strong role in shaping how much hegemonic masculinity is portrayed.

The average scores indicate that male characters from the elite class displayed the highest levels of hegemonic masculinity ( $M = 1.67$ ,  $SD = 3.19$ ), followed by those from the middle class ( $M = 0.90$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ). Characters from the working class showed the lowest average level of hegemonic masculinity ( $M = 0.58$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ). These varying statistical trends predicts that higher socio-economic backgrounds have strong and direct relationship with traits of hegemonic masculinity like authority, confidence, and social influence. Hegemonic masculinity, which flourishes in environments of privilege and power, is closely associated with these characteristics. Working-class characters, on the other hand, could be depicted as having less power or influence because of their more vulnerable or inferior social station. According to the findings, socioeconomic position has a significant impact on the types of masculine ideals that are promoted in media narratives as well as the behaviors of male leads.

#### 4.4.7 RQ.3: Is there a significance annual difference in a display of Hegemonic Masculinity?

**Table 14:** *ANOVA test on annual difference in Display of Hegemonic Masculinity*

| Years | N   | Mean   | Std. Deviation | df      | F     | Sig. |
|-------|-----|--------|----------------|---------|-------|------|
| 2019  | 337 | 1.2344 | 2.39200        | 4/ 2565 | 9.531 | .000 |
| 2020  | 504 | 1.7103 | 3.66969        |         |       |      |
| 2021  | 680 | 1.3441 | 2.79477        |         |       |      |
| 2022  | 376 | .6223  | 1.90044        |         |       |      |
| 2023  | 673 | 1.5795 | 2.76080        |         |       |      |

In order to examine the research question of whether the portrayal of hegemonic masculinity in Pakistani dramas has changed substantially over the years, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with the year of release (2019-2023) as the independent variable and hegemonic masculinity as the dependent variable. The statistics showed that the difference was statistically significant,  $F(4, 2565) = 9.531$ ,  $p < .001$  indicating that there is a statistically significant difference in the depiction of hegemonic masculinity between different years. The mean scores indicate that in 2020 hegemonic masculinity was the strongest ( $M = 1.71$ ,  $SD = 3.66$ ), then 2023 ( $M = 1.58$ ,  $SD = 2.76$ ), then 2021 ( $M = 1.34$ ,  $SD = 2.79$ ). Conversely, the levels of hegemonic masculinity in 2019 ( $M = 1.23$ ,  $SD = 2.39$ ) were relatively lower, and in 2022 ( $M = 0.62$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ), the average description of hegemonic masculinity was the lowest. These patterns indicate that the Pakistani dramas are not always represented through the same pattern of hegemonic masculinity. Other years like 2020 and 2023 were more vivid in the depiction of features such as aggression, authority, subordination of women and technology capability, perhaps the craze to support the patriarchal principles in the narratives of that time. On the other hand, the steep fall in 2022 hints that dramas of 2022 might have been more inclined towards the representation of more complex or less dominant male roles, perhaps with more room to accommodate other masculinities or female agency. On the whole, the results prove that the differences in a year can give rise to the difference in the framing of masculinity used in dramas, and that the socio-cultural environment of a certain



year can have an influence on accentuating or minimizing the hegemonic masculine features in Pakistani TV dramas.

#### 4.4.8 RQ.4 Is there a significance difference in the display of hegemonic masculinity b/w the different TV channels?

**Table 14:** *ANOVA test on display of hegemonic masculinity between the different Tv channels*

| Channels | N    | Mean   | SD      | df     | F     | Sig.  |
|----------|------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| GEO      | 673  | 1.5795 | 2.76080 | 2/2567 | 2.893 | 0.056 |
| HUM      | 880  | 1.2455 | 3.08820 |        |       |       |
| ARY      | 1017 | 1.3078 | 2.66736 |        |       |       |
| Total    | 2570 | 1.3576 | 2.84410 |        |       |       |

In order to test the research question of whether the depiction of hegemonic masculinity varies among Pakistani television channels, a one-way ANOVA was used, whereby channel (GEO, HUM, and ARY) is the independent variable and hegemonic masculinity is the dependent variable. The outcome revealed that the difference was not significant,  $F(2, 2567) = 2.893$ ,  $p = .056$ . The p-value exceeds the typical significance level of .05, and so, this shows that there is no significant difference between the extent of hegemonic masculinity in dramas about these major TV channels. Descriptive statistics indicate that there were slight deviations in the average scores: the GEO dramas ( $M = 1.58$ ,  $SD = 2.76$ ) indicated some slight variation towards the hegemonic masculinity more than both ARY ( $M = 1.30$ ,  $SD = 2.66$ ) and HUM ( $M = 1.24$ ,  $SD = 3.08$ ). These differences were however not great enough to be statistically significant. This indicates that the hegemonic masculinity image is relatively uniform among GEO, HUM, and ARY, which means that the process of strengthening male dominance, authority, and patriarchal principles is not confined to a certain channel but rather a common characteristic of the Pakistani drama industry. Concerning RQ.4, the results reveal that there is no significant difference in the amount of TV channels that induce the exhibition of hegemonic masculinity, which implicates the influence of shaping masculine ideals as more of an industry-wide trend than the programming on individual channels.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Discussion

This study investigated how hegemonic masculinity is portrayed in Pakistani prime-time television dramas, with a specific focus on aggression, authority, technological capability, and the subordination of women. The findings, analyzed quantitatively, are consistent with the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings discussed in the literature review. Drawing from Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity and the framing theory by Goffman (1974), the study reveals that while overt hegemonic traits are not dominant across all dramas, their subtle forms remain prevalent and culturally reinforced through narrative framing.

The findings show that hegemonic masculinity is present in 35.2% of the sampled content, with both low and high displays, indicating that prime-time dramas continue to act as a vehicle for maintaining established gender norms. According to Connell (1995), masculinity is not only biological, but also socially produced and maintained by institutions such as the media. The portrayal of male characters that impose control, exhibit dominance, and frequently undermine female agency is consistent with Connell's concept of the patriarchal dividend, in which men gain honor and status by adhering to culturally sanctioned masculine norms.

One of the primary findings supporting Hypothesis 1 is a frequent but mostly modest expression of aggression. Although only 0.7% of the characters exhibited extreme hostility, over 25% indicated verbal or psychological aggression. These findings confirm Moura's (2005) definition of "militarized masculinity," as well as Courtenay's (2000) claim that aggression is frequently associated with strength and resilience. The Aurat Foundation (2016) also stated that aggression and control are important to the Pakistani notion of masculinity, which this study reinforces. However, the decreasing incidence of extreme aggressiveness shows that producers are actively avoiding glamorized violence, presumably in order to comply with family-friendly viewing guidelines. According to Goffman (1974), strategic framing allows media artists to shape how masculinity is viewed by stressing strength while downplaying brutality.

Contrary to Hypothesis 2, authority was not a prominent characteristic, occurring in only 1.9% of characters. This finding differs with previous research, particularly that of Greig, Kimmel, and Lang (2000), who correlate masculinity with leadership and decision-making roles. However, when it comes to finer types of control, such as emotional manipulation or indirect domination, narratives may contain more implicit authority. This is consistent with the framing theory, which holds that prevailing ideologies are communicated through narrative emphasis, character development, and camera focus, as well as overt action. The prominence of male characters in positions such as legislators, business owners, and law enforcement officers (40.4%) promotes the

concept of the "provider and protector" male, supporting Connell's assertion that masculinity is institutionalized rather than incidental.

In terms of Hypothesis 3, technological capability was significantly low (10.5% high, 0.2% low), indicating that modern, tech-savvy masculinity is not yet the prevailing cultural script in Pakistani dramas. This is consistent with Khan's (2020) results, which emphasized hybrid masculinity in Pakistani media, where traditional attributes outweigh new representations such as digital proficiency. This also reflects the influence of global media, where Western masculinity frequently incorporates technological supremacy (e.g., James Bond, Tony Stark), but Pakistani tales are based on relational and emotional authority. As a result, the media portrays masculinity as more about interpersonal authority than technological ability.

Hypothesis 4, which holds that male characters subordinate the women, found minimal but significant support, with 9.6% of the content demonstrating low or high levels of subordination. This is consistent with Donaldson's (1993) and Ali and Batool's (2015) explanations of the gendered character of control, in which masculinity frequently implies limiting female autonomy. However, the comparatively low frequency of strong subordination may indicate a changing narrative realm in which female characters are increasingly depicted with agency. However, as Rivadeneyra and Ward (2005) point out, even minimal representations of male dominance can perpetuate stereotypes, particularly when displayed frequently throughout episodes and seasons.

The demographic analysis enriches our knowledge of hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell's paradigm, older, less-educated, and elite-class male characters exhibited higher degrees of hegemonic behavior. This lends credence to the notion that hegemonic masculinity is context-dependent, flourishing wherever institutional or cultural power is allowed (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Male characters from wealthy origins, for example, were more likely to take control and appear authoritative, which corresponded to the idea that masculinity is associated with socioeconomic advantage. Working-class and unemployed characters, on the other hand, exhibited the lowest levels of hegemonic behavior, most likely due to their marginalized social location.

The study offers new perspectives on the study of hegemonic masculinity, even though its conclusions are consistent with those of recent research. Although men often displayed few overt hegemonic tendencies, there were frequent allusions to stereotypically masculine conduct in the stories. Connell's theory is consistent with what we observe, which is that hegemonic masculinity is upheld primarily by everyday behaviors and symbols rather than always by coercive or overt bullying. This research provided a clearer picture of male characters in movies by demonstrating how violence, status, technical expertise, and the suppression of women affect masculinity. We discover that although the media is shifting toward greater gender equality, women are still depicted in traditional ways.

At first glance, the lack of excessive violence, authority, and dependence on women appears to be a departure from traditional masculinity. However, even a modest occurrence of these points to a deeper pattern. Drawing on Goffman's work, it is evident that the media shapes viewers' perceptions of scenarios, which is why Pakistani plays continue to feature men in a way that makes them seem in control—albeit in more moderate or acceptable ways. Softer portrayals of males may maintain masculine supremacy while also responding to the opinions and reactions of growing audiences. According to Srivastava and Roy, the regular display of influence as well as the more covert methods influence is utilized to benefit men are two reasons why patriarchal systems continue to exist.

The findings become more significant when considering non-Western cultures. As if to maintain modernity apart from being male in Pakistan, there aren't many examples of high-tech tools among the male heroes. Rather, this occurs in a different way in many Western media outlets, which frequently imply that technology specialists are highly respected and experienced. Khan and others claim that rather than being based on what makes a good worker, masculinity in Pakistan is a product of long-standing family customs and certain external influences, particularly when it comes to values like reputation, family authority, and financial management. Even if Pakistani media also incorporates worldwide concepts about what it means to be a man, sometimes in a localized fashion, it indicates that local men's expected behavior is influenced by their environment.

It is clear from demographics that characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity vary depending on an individual's age, socioeconomic status, occupation, and level of education. Remarks regarding the novels' primary male characters lend credence to Donaldson's claim that hegemonic masculinity perpetuates privilege. Similar to practice managers, the relationship between authority and positions that focus on power is consistent with other earlier research that found a connection between power and masculinity in businesses. They contend that by demonstrating the widespread belief that wealthy, successful men are more valuable as leaders than other members of society, the media not only perpetuates gender disparity but also contributes to its development.

These characters seem to be created by authors to deviate from the stereotypical notion of dominant masculinity. Ullah and Mirza claim that because of this seeming exclusion, the media frequently emphasizes men who already enjoy privilege while downplaying other forms of masculinity. As a result, working-class men are less likely to be perceived as exhibiting the characteristics that the media defines as "manly" and are more likely to be unemployed. This emphasis makes it simple for society to keep linking men's riches and influence to what it means to be the perfect guy.

Feminist theorists have observed that media supports typical gender hierarchies in a variety of ways, which is comparable to how gender norms are subtly reinforced in filmmaking by things that

aren't as obvious as by instances that are evident. What Donaldson and Ali & Batool discovered concerning society's role in positioning women is supported by the way women are commonly portrayed as silent, reliant, or standing back. Even while overt power isn't displayed, these shows reinforce traditional ideas of gender roles by portraying men as the primary performers, leaders, and moral role models. Because authority is taken for granted, masculinity is therefore viewed as the primary factor in a leader's admiration.

Annual trend analysis and a comparison of differences by channel indicate that although the representation of hegemonic masculinity in Pakistani dramas varies considerably across years, there is no significant difference between the representation of hegemonic masculinity by major television channels. The large yearly changes with powerful manifestations in 2020 and 2023 and the weakest in 2022 indicate that the focus on male dominance, authority, and patriarchal features could be highlighted or muted by the socio-cultural context and preference of the given year. Nevertheless, the non-significant differences between GEO, HUM and ARY suggest that hegemonic masculinity is a stable and industry-wide effect as opposed to a channel-specific agenda. Collectively, these results point to the fact that the strength of hegemonic masculinity in Pakistani dramas is more open to temporal and cultural processes rather than to institutional differences in broadcasting.

Although the obvious manifestations of hegemonic masculinity appear to be decreasing, its fundamental concepts remain closely linked to the conventional ideals of society. Even when presented in a contemporary and romantic manner, men are frequently shown as essential and authoritative in Pakistani television dramas. According to this study, when societal norms change, the media is portrayed as both reflecting and influencing hegemonic masculinity.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Through a systematic examination of five popular dramas that aired during the same time period, this thesis critically examined the ways in which the ideal of hegemonic masculinity is constructed and upheld in popular Pakistani TV series. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and Goffman's framing concepts were used to analyze the actions of male lead characters in Pakistani dramas. Researchers discovered that societal power, which is held by individuals with elite, older, or authoritative roles, frequently manifests itself in covert ways, despite the rarity of forceful manifestations. As a result, Pakistani media portrayals of masculinity are still dominated by conventional notions about men.

The findings imply that portrayal masculinity was significantly influenced by how an individual's age, education, occupation, and socio-economic status were portrayed. This demonstrates that there are multiple variations of hegemonic masculinity, depending on power and authority in the upper echelons of society. Nevertheless, despite the more emotional complex male characters in many of the stories' characters remained strong and morally upright, in Pakistani cultural and media. Even

though there were various representations, the capacity to exert control, make snap judgments, and rule with authority were still typically presented as the primary characteristics of masculinity. This thesis highlights the media's role in upholding hegemonic masculinity in contemporary society by showing how Pakistani television still plays a significant role in promoting and defending established gender norms.

### **5.3 Recommendation**

It is recommended that media producers, screenwriters, and officials take a closer look at the representation of masculinity in TV dramas in light of these findings. Content creators are urged to go beyond the typical depictions of powerful male characters and incorporate instances of masculinity that are also compassionate, collaborative, and emotionally invested. In order to prevent popular learning applications from propagating rigid beliefs about gender roles and to work toward a more equitable representation of men and women, authorities must establish new rules that address gender issues. Considering how quickly digital media is altering these representations, more research may examine how individuals interpret them. By including gender studies and media literacy into their curricula, educational institutions can play a significant role. Students would be inspired to critically examine how rigid gender norms are outlined in popular media as a result.

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## APPENDIX 1: CODEBOOK

**Filing Date:** Coding sheet completion date will be filled in, according to the following format: Day/month/year (e.g., 15/01/2025)

**Drama:** Name of the drama which includes the observed character

**Year:** The year in which the program was first aired.

**Channel:** 1= GEO entertainment, 2=HUM TV, 3=ARY Digital

**Episode Number:** The hour-long unit of a play which is aired on a single day.

**Scene Number:** The single unit of an episode where the character is present. If either the location or time of day changes, it will be considered as a new scene. (A flashback within one scene will be counted as a new scene.

**Character ID:** Each character will be given a unique ID, starting from 01 and proceeding to upwards without duplication. These IDs will be given according to the first appearance of the character. The first codable character will be given 01, the second codable character will be given 02, and so on.

**Name of character:** Name/Nick Name of the character being analyzed

**Age:** 1=infant, 2=child (2-12), 3=teen (13-18), 4=young (19-34), 5=mature (34-49), 6=elderly (50+)

**Marital status:** 1=Single, 2=married, 3=divorced, 4=separated, 5=widowed, 0=not sure

**Education:** 1= illiterate, 2=Semi-literate, 3= literate

**Occupation:** 0=None, 1= Student,

2= Power and Authority-Based Occupations such as Industrialist, large business owner, managing director, Land lord

3= White-Collar and Middle-Class Professions such as Doctors or other medical professions, Engineers, IT professionals, Bankers, Academics, Farm Manager

4=Entrepreneurs on a smaller scale such as small business owner/shop keeper,

5= Law Enforcement and Military Professions such as Police, Army, Navy, Air Force, Intelligence,

6= Working-Class and Skilled Labor Occupations such as manual laborers, construction

workers, mechanics, farmers, Electricians, plumbers, carpenters, auto-repair workers, Truck/bus/taxi drivers, chauffeurs, domestic workers, guards.

7= Criminal and Illicit Occupations such as Gang member, fraudster, scammer, Contract Killer

8= Creative and Entertainment Industries such as writer, poet, actor, director, musicians, model, singer etc.

9= Religious and Spiritual Roles such as Pir or Moulvi

10= Retired

11= Jobless, somebody who has been fired or is actively looking for a job

**Socio-eco class:** 1=elite, 2= middle class, 3=working class, 4=destitute

**Type of role:** 1= Major, 2= Minor

**Type of Character:** 1= Antagonist, 2= Protagonist, 3=Other

**Type of Personality:** 1= Negative, 2= Positive, 3=Neutral

### **DISPLAY OF AGGRESSION**

**Display of Physical Aggression:** 0=Not Present, 1= Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, 2=Destroying objects (e.g., breaking furniture, throwing things), 3=Use of weapons (e.g., guns, knives, sticks, 4= Physical intimidation (e.g., standing too close, gripping someone's arm forcefully), 5=More than 1.

**Display of Verbal Aggression:** 0=Not Present, 1= Yelling, shouting, or using a harsh tone, 2=Threatening violence or harm, 3=Insulting, belittling, or humiliating others/ Using derogatory language or slurs, 4=More than 1.

**Display of Psychological/Emotional Aggression:** 0=Not Present, 1= Manipulating or gaslighting others, 2=Controlling behavior (e.g., restricting a woman's freedom), 3=Intimidation through silent treatment or passive-aggressive remarks, 4=More than 1.

**Display of Sexual Aggression:** 0=Not Present, 1= Non-consensual physical contact or sexual harassment/ Pressuring for intimacy, 2=Objectifying women through speech or behavior, 3=More than 1.

**Targets of Aggression:** 0 =Not Applicable, 1= Women (e.g., wife, sister, love interest,

mother), 2= Other Men (e.g., rivals, friends, subordinates), 3= Elderly/Authority Figures (e.g., father, boss, teacher), 4=Vulnerable Individuals (e.g., children, servants, lower-class characters), 5=Objects/Inanimate Targets (e.g., throwing things, breaking items), 6=More than 1.

### **AUTHORITY**

**Display of Familial Authority:** 0=Not Present, 1=Decision-Making Authority, 2=Financial Authority, 3=Behavioral Authority, 4=Conflict Resolution Authority, 5=More than 1

**Display of Societal Authority:** 0=Not Present, 1=Economic Authority, 2=Political Authority, 3= Reputation-Based Authority, 4=More than 1

**Display of Relational Authority:** 0=Not Present, 1= Friendship-Based Authority, 2=Mentorship-Based Authority, 3= Partnership-Based Authority, 4= Romantic Relational Authority, 5=More than 1

**Display of Legal Authority:** 0=Not Present, 1=Law Enforcement Authority, 2=Corporate Authority, 3=Judicial Authority, 4=Academic/Institutional Authority, 5=More than 1

**Display of Cultural/ Religious Authority:** 0=Not Present, 1= Religious Authority, 2=Cultural Authority, 3= Patriarchal Religious Authority, 5=More than 1

### **SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN**

**Emotional Subordination** 0=Not Present, 1=Emotional Manipulation, 2=Belittling or Dismissing Feelings/ Gaslighting, 3=Dominating Conversations, 4=Silent Treatment or Emotional Withholding, 5=More than 1

**Physical Subordination** 0=Not Present, 1=Physical Violence or Force, 2=Physical Restraint/ Confinement, 3=Threatening Physical Harm, 4=Dominating Through Sexual Intimidation, 5=More than 1

**Economic and Financial Subordination:** 0=Not Present, 1=Not allowing a woman to work, 2= Not allowing a woman to study/learn skills, 3= Forcing a woman to give up her earnings to a male family member, 4= Controlling how a woman spends money, 5= Denying a woman access to family wealth, property, or inheritance., 6=Manipulating financial support to exert control (e.g., Stopping or threatening to stop financial assistance), 7=Forcing or pressuring a woman into marriage for financial benefits (e.g., dowry, social status), 8=More than 1

**Gender Role Expectations** 0=Not Present, 1= Enforcing Domestic Roles, 2=Imposing Modesty and Dress Codes, 3= Defining Marriage as a Priority, 5=More than 1

**Control over Social Networks** 0=Not Present, 1= Enforcing Gender-Segregated Interaction / Friendships, 2=Monitoring Communication, 3=Prohibiting Public Family Presence, 4=More than 1

**Targets of Subordination:** 0=Not Present, 1=Wife, 2=Sister, 3=Daughter, 4=Mother, 5=Love Interest, 6=Female Employees/Subordinates, 7=More than 1

**TECHNOLOGY CAPABILITY**

**Level of Technological Proficiency:** 0=Not Present, 1=Novice, 2=Intermediate, 3=Advanced, 4=Expert.

**Type of Technology Used:** 0=Not Present, 1=Computers, 2=Mobile devices, 3=Specialized equipment, AI etc.

**Domains of Expertise:** 0=Not Present, 1=Basic usage, 2=Advanced Usage such as software development, hardware engineering, cybersecurity, etc.

**Context of Use:** 0=Not Present, 1=Professional (e.g., IT specialist, engineer), 2=Everyday (e.g., social media, online shopping),



## APPENDIX 2 CODING SHEET

Sheet No.: \_\_\_\_ Filing Date: \_\_ Drama: \_\_  
 Year: \_\_\_\_ Channel: \_\_\_\_ Character ID: \_\_  
 Name of Character: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_

| #   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1.  | Episode Total<br>Scenes<br>Number         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.  | Total Scenes<br>Number                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3.  | Age                                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.  | Marital status                            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5.  | Education                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6.  | Occupation                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7.  | Socio-eco<br>Class                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8.  | Type of Role                              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9.  | Type of<br>Character                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10. | Type of<br>Personality                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11. | Display of<br>Physical<br>Aggression      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12. | Display of<br>Verbal<br>Aggression        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13. | Display of<br>Psy/Emotional<br>Aggression |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14. | Display of<br>Sexual<br>Aggression        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15. | Targets of<br>Aggression                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16. | Display of<br>Familial<br>Authority       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17. | Display of<br>Societal                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|     | Authority                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18. | Display of Relational Authority          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19. | Display of Legal Authority               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20. | Display of Cultural/ Religious Authority |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21. | Emotional Subordination                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22. | Physical Subordination                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23. | Economic and Financial Subordination     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24. | Gender Role Expectations                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 25. | Control over Social Networks             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 26. | Targets of Subordination                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 27. | Level of Technological Proficiency       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 28. | Type of Technology Used                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 29. | Domains of Expertise                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 30. | Context of Use                           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |