

Portrayal of Women in Pakistan Television Dramas: A Quantitative Content Analyses and Comparison of ARY and HUM TV Dramas

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Abstract

The research examines the nature of coverage given to females in Pakistani television dramas and compares different channels from a framing perspective. Especially to evaluate the framing responsibilities of television channels in Pakistan by examining the content of TV drama from an Islamic perspective, as framing females in Television Dramas is very common in today's media. This content analysis uncovers the portrayal of females in the ARY Digital and Hum TV dramas. A simple random sampling technique has been used for the data collection. For analyzing content, two entertainment TV channels are selected. A criterion for selecting channels is according to the ranking of entertainment channels in October 2019, which shows ARY Digital and HUM TV at the top of the ranking. From the findings of this study, we can see the nature of coverage given to females. In most of the scenes, females are shown as helpless people. There were 38 scenes on both channels that showed females as an Absolute helpless, and 20 scenes showed females as normal Helpless. Overall, females are framed as helpless people who cannot do anything for themselves; even if she is right, they cannot prove themselves right. Sometimes, she sacrifices for her family and sometimes to save his marriage life.

Key Words: Portrayal of Women; TV Dramas; Framing and Agenda Setting

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INTRODUCTION

This is an age of electronic media. Since 2002, electronic media has had a huge space in Pakistani media. Plenty of private TV channels, including entertainment, news, current affairs, and sports channels. Entertainment channels produce dramas, telefilms, and other types of entertainment programs. Electronic media is one of the most important forms of communication in the modern world. It revolutionized the media landscape as it began to gain traction in the latter half of the 20th century. In contrast to print media, which has been around for centuries, electronic media has only just begun to garner significant attention and recognition. Electronic media, including radio, television, computers, etc., have proved to be a quicker and more useful means of mass communication. Because it takes time to write, edit, print, and then deliver newspapers to the public, print media cannot keep up with the speed at which events unfold; in contrast, electronic media can provide updates on events as they occur. The media has historically served as a watchdog to safeguard the public interest and end corruption, injustice, malpractices, and extremes by the government or anybody else. It operated with a missionary zeal with a holistic approach rather than as an industry. News is the soul food of modern society. These news articles from the media list people along with their borders, identities, and morality. The news, which naturally and freely confuses itself with its referent, displays its inherent character in the war, the exception that breaks the rule, in an insignificant and natural way. The media have significantly shaped global events. People's perceptions, attitudes, and viewpoints about global events have been shaped by the information they read, watch, and hear in the media.

In the modern world, the media's influence is undeniable. Along with the conventional three—the legislative, judicial, and executive branches—it is now recognized as the fourth organ of the state. Print media is the most efficient way to spread propaganda and information. As noted earlier, the media can mold public opinion. The basic aim of the media is to disseminate information and happenings without mixing/adding/deleting anything, which means reporting with full objectivity. Still, in the current age of media, it has been turned to purposes other than its real purpose. State interests, foreign agenda makers, and other individuals and powerful news organizations have occupied the basic principle of the provision of the news.

Media does not project the real face of society. Rather, it changes the social reality differently, particularly at different age stages. The media's stories and programs show society's various values twistedly, and these social values may be sustained by media programs, especially entertainment programs with particular agendas. There are different modes of portrayal of women and girls. The role of communication is to mirror the predominant attitudes and reinforce values towards women in a specific society and reproduce their character and prestige there.

When we have a look at discourses of the media sponsored by the state, we observe a lot of discrimination; gender-wise, such issues against women can be determined at two levels, i.e., the symbolic level and the physical. Especially in Pakistan, we can have plenty of Pakistani dramas projecting the female as an inferior creation. For example, the women of rural Sindh are being projected in a very crucial way. These women are portrayed as maids and domestic workers of feudal. The important assumption of media in Pakistan is to develop an explicit image of women as

instructed by the administration and the media ownership in the private media sector.

No doubt, media producers, particularly the drama producers of TV and other communication channels, try to project reality in the shape of TV dramas, features, and radio programs after some real experiences faced by themselves; still, these producers translate reality into stereotypes. This representation may result from centuries of theological and cultural instruction that views women as men's subordinates and presents them as symbols of honor, contributing to the growth of a national popular will. In the present trend of commercialization of media, the media production possessing a narrative favoring women, even in the feminist community, cannot be thrown on air without sponsorship, which affects the denigration of women. Since feminist texts are uncommon and commercials have become the standard, it's possible that the text's message is interpreted as abnormal, and the advertisement's message is reinforced.

Although there is a variation in TV dramas regarding the demonstration of women, gender representations are yet to be explored. Particularly, the dramas being broadcasted throughout prime time hours must be studied because of their impact on many audiences because TV dramas portray females in stereotypical ways. Numerous researches exist that have revealed that “in TV shows, women have been underrepresented and misrepresented; this stereotypical framing of females is everywhere around the Globe.”

According to Ingham (2007), “TV dramas have always been attractive for females, in particular for soap operas. However, TV dramas embody and uphold the prevailing ideologies of contemporary western culture, the patriarchal”.

Women's physical appearance in TV programs such as TV dramas, Films, and even newscasters is very important. The specific representation of women's body figures is considered as important as their intelligence level. "In a TV drama, a young single lady tends to fit the stereotypical "girl next door" mold, being tall, thin, and "conventionally beautiful." She should also be cheerful and sociable, not particularly intelligent, polite and attractive figures of women are essential for gauging the woman's value in TV dramas and other shows."

The professional lives of female characters are typically disregarded, or more frequently, they are portrayed as housewives who take care of the kids and household tasks daily but aren't at all aggressive in pursuing a job, regardless of their marital status. Even when women do work, they are frequently portrayed on television in roles that are traditionally associated with women, such as teachers, secretaries, and nurses, all of which call for kindness, patience, and compassion. According to Ingham (2007), women who attempt to advance in their careers are comparatively rare and "invariably seem to fail." For instance, Samantha from *Eastenders* unsuccessfully pursued a modeling career after divorcing her husband. "TV dramas may even be even more powerful than new programs, in terms of their impact on viewers; dramas also shape the public perception of some particular institutions, integrating with requiring plots and attractive characters that the audience cares about; TV dramas do change people's view of life to some extent," claim Turow and Gans (2002). The position of women is changing in the modern world, and TV dramas portraying women need to reflect the image of women in real life to accommodate their evolving function in the changing society. For instance, no one realizes how the

homemaker stereotype may be changed to reflect contemporary women such as Lynette or Gabrielle from *Desperate Housewives*.

Framing females in Television Dramas is a very common job in today's media; we can see stereotyping done by them, and they bombard us with so many ideas that force us to think the way we want. This research study investigates the nature of coverage given to females in ARY and HUM TV dramas from 8 pm to 9 pm. It also investigates whether it follows the Islamic code of conduct. And what is the difference between the framing of ARY TV and HUM TV? So, to investigate this problem, a content analysis of ARY and Hum TV dramas broadcast from 8 pm to 9 pm is done. This study has been designed to examine the nature of coverage given to females in Pakistani television dramas, and the comparison of different channels from a framing perspective.

This study would help future researchers recognize the position of females in our media, specifically in dramas at the prime time, which will help them do their further research. This study will help highlight the problems faced by females in our society and will make women aware of the issues women face that may persuade legislatures to make some laws that protect females and also to make laws for media to show the real picture of society that may help in creating a good image of society for our future generation. This study will also help people understand the real status of women in our lives as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. The sacrifices they have made in their life and to understand the mother as a role model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many Television programs, particularly Reality Shows, wherein women are portrayed differently. According to some

reality shows, women are represented most efficiently as winners and achieving consecutive success. For example, many TV programs show professional women as more competent and victorious in different fields of professional life, whereas the other types of women are also enjoying some opportunities. Similarly, Sheperd, I. (2006) discovered that "women were positively portrayed in prime-time reality TV shows in terms of roles, attitudes, behavior, and appearance." In these productions, they were also frequently portrayed as the winners or victors. Most female participants in the reality show under investigation were career professionals, and domestic responsibilities were not as common for them. Minority women were represented in these performances as having the same possibilities and advantages as Caucasian women, even though their representation in the population was still small.

When we study women's characters in old TV dramas, we observe different roles in different TV programs. There are so many female characters in society and TV dramas. Women have different characters, such as married, homemakers, and working women; in addition, many other characters are linked with females in TV dramas. According to Elasmr, Hasegawa, and Brain (1999) studied that "women were portrayed on prime time television network programs during the period 1992-1993 throughout that season the numbers of women's characters were increased and "females were less likely to be married, stay at home with children, be housewives, care for them, have darker hair colors, perpetrate or be the victim of violent crimes, be in romantic relationships, and be younger than 50. As a result, women on prime-time television in the early 1990s were probably youthful, single, self-sufficient, and unburdened by obligations to their families or jobs".

In various TV dramas, females are represented as working ladies, with their house business and lower status than males. This identity changes with time. The role of females in TV dramas varies in different regions. Many types of Pakistani dramas project different cultures and aspects of society. For example, dramas based on Sindhi culture are much different from those produced in Punjabi. Time is also the cause of this variation. Studies of gender roles on prime-time television show that women in the 1980s were represented as working people, according to Elasmr et al. (1999). In the 1990s, they continued to be underrepresented in prime-time programming and seemed to have lesser prestige than men. Women were portrayed as being more concerned with home matters during that decade. For women of color, these portrayals were even more prominent.

The role of females in various dramas is different in the current age of contemporary media; the female's role in TV dramas is important. Some TV dramas use females for glamorous and sexual aspects. The viewers also like the facial beauty of the actress; even for news programs, the beautiful female anchors are more effective for high ratings. Harrison and Marske (2005) concluded that "TV has portrayed women over the years by emphasizing their physical attributes, sexual allure, and romantic achievement, regardless of whether they are housewives, mothers, or objects of desire."

There are a lot of examples of TV dramas in the world giving less importance to women. No matter whether those women are playing any important roles or minor, they have been given roles with less social status. Neelam and Nasrene (1991) stated, "The digital media women are underrepresented in our media, whether in leading or supporting roles; they are consistently

portrayed as losers. The media uses gender stereotypes to entertain, educate, and market products. The roles assigned to women are inevitably constrained by the images that simultaneously portray and contain them within the well-known and comfortable boundaries of a particular culture”.

Women are given lower importance than men in TV dramas. Males are represented as a superior part of the dramas and doing some jobs with high potential and honor. Similarly, Buonanno (2014) states that women are underrepresented in fictional television content because they are portrayed in traditionally feminine occupations, even when employed, and men are shown in high-status fields. Women's problems, interactions, and activities primarily focus on their families and homes.

According to Plakoyiannaki et al. (2008), there is a shortage of studies on female stereotypes in TV dramas, making it difficult to determine whether or not women are portrayed negatively (stereotypically). The findings reinforce the idea that sexism is pervasive in dramas around the world by showing that women are typically portrayed stereotypically. The way women are portrayed on the internet varies greatly; websites catering to female audiences tend to feature "decorative" images of women; websites catering to male audiences tend to promote divisive images of women in "dependent" or "non-traditional" roles; and websites catering to general audiences tend to feature images of women as housewives or as equals to men.

Women are shown as inferior creations of the universe. In different dramas, the women are punished without any logic, and people humiliate the women in a very bad way. The role of the women in these dramas is very limited. They are not given equal rights as compared to men. Even in drama, women are assigned

typical roles and are seen as objects of entertainment for men. "There is a patronizing tone in every media feature, communicating a feeling of inferiority in women," write Kumari and Joshi (2015). They believe that women are portrayed in the media as weak, infantile, dependent, gullible, irrational, and cunning. Regardless of their goals and level of education, they play the ignorant homemaker role in society.

Even in the simplest Urdu short stories, women are described as handling everyday household tasks like cooking, cleaning, sewing, and caring for children. She views her spouse as a supernatural being to whom she owes duty. Most stories portray women as being extremely attentive to appearance and fashion. They don't give a damn about serious issues, and marriage is typically the subject of their primary concern". Women participate in Pakistani dramas as different characters; sometimes, women are depicted as good characters with some good characteristics, or sometimes, an evil side of women is shown. Women are portrayed as mothers, sisters, wives, and girlfriends with good moral characters. Parvez and Roshan (2010) mentioned that "the way women are portrayed in the media is generally limited; they are rarely shown as logical, proactive, or determined. A dualistic narrative that characterizes women as either totally good or completely evil mothers or whores, virgins or call girls, even traditional or modern, underlies almost all media portrayals.

As far as the sexual aspect of TV dramas is concerned, there is sexual violence of different types according to different societies and cultures. In some dramas, women are portrayed as sexual objects, such as in love romance and other facial expressions of females. This violence may affect society differently because, in every region of Pakistan, people have their

social values. Ramasubramanian, S. and Oliver, B, M. (2003) found that "moderate sexual assault is portrayed as entertaining, pleasurable, and a typical manifestation of passionate love. Women were more likely than males to become victims, and heroes were frequently portrayed as having perpetrated sexual violence, especially mild forms of it like harassing women that the heroes later fell in love with. Moderate sexual violence was presented as lighthearted and romantic, but severe sexual violence was criminalized and dealt with seriousness".

However, men were the most often recognized targets of aggressiveness and the second most often recognized aggressors of aggression. According to Kalis and Neueddorf (1989), women were marginally more likely to be classified as the aggressors of aggressiveness than as the victims of it. Gender stereotypes of both men and women are common in television advertisements. The precise type of gender stereotyping does appear to differ slightly throughout cultures despite the broad trends in gender depictions being similar. A 2011 UNESCO study on the status of women worldwide promotes the idea that women are portrayed in one of four ways: as serious business and political climbers, as deceitful witches, as seductive sex kittens, or as sainted mothers. According to Ling et al. (2019), the regular utilization of female role models and physical appeal in television dramas raises public awareness of women.

According to Mastro, Behm, and Kopacz (2008), "individuals adopt gender characteristics partly by monitoring the rewards and consequences associated with others' behavior." This means that female television characters only respond to society's expectations. As a result, it would be expected that how women are portrayed in the media will affect

how viewers perceive gender identity, which in turn might affect attitudes and ideas about proper gender roles. Expected gender norms appear to have an impact, in addition to the gender confusion between male and female television characters. Women are more likely to pay attention to how language is used in relationships because they are more concerned with intimacy, connection, and inclusiveness. Conversely, men will prioritize the informational function of language due to their emphasis on independence, status, and exclusion. Hu et al. (2021) note that men and women are shown as having completely different needs: males merely seek information, while women need relationships.

Agenda Setting Theory

According to McCombs and Shaw (2018), the Agenda Setting Theory of Mass Communication postulates that the media can affect the salience of items on the public agenda. In other words, if a news story is reported regularly and prominently, the public will perceive it as more significant. In a research on the 1968 presidential election, Drs. Max McCombs and Donald Shaw established the formal framework for agenda-setting theory. In the 1968 "Chapel Hill study," McCombs and Shaw showed a substantial correlation ($r >.9$) between the election's most important subject, as reported by the local and national news media, and what 100 inhabitants of Chapel Hill, North Carolina believed to be the most important problem. The agenda-setting theory in this study pertains to the representation of women in Pakistani television dramas and their inclusion in the genre.

The notion that people utilize expectations to make sense of their social environment and that media reinforces these expectations is known as framing theory, which McCombs (2001) has further developed (Baran & Davis, 2011, p. 297). "The central organizing

idea for news content, TV drama or film that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration" is what James Tankard refers to as a media frame.

News framing is generally implicit and unquestioning. They appear to be fundamental characteristics of occurrences that reporters only relay, not societal creations to audiences or journalists. The world seems more realistic with news frames. They choose what gets highlighted, what gets left out, and what gets picked out. To put it briefly, news provides a bundled world. The paper will answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of female coverage in Pakistani television dramas?
2. What is the difference between the coverage of different channels from a framing perspective?
3. What are the framing responsibilities of television channels in Pakistan?

METHODOLOGY

This research is a quantitative content analysis in nature. The research study examines the nature of coverage given to females in Pakistani television dramas and compares different channels from a framing perspective. In particular, to evaluate the framing responsibilities of television channels in Pakistan by examining the content of TV dramas from an Islamic perspective, framing females in television dramas is very common in today's media. This content analysis uncovers the portrayal of females in the ARY Digital and Hum TV dramas. A simple random sampling technique has been used for the data collection. For analyzing content, two entertainment TV channels are selected. A criterion for selecting

channels is according to the ranking of entertainment channels by media logic in October 2015, which shows ARY Digital and HUM TV at the top of the ranking.

The study's unit of analysis includes television dramas from two separate networks that run during prime time, from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and feature at least one female character. In prime-time television shows, their assigned role is closely scrutinized in terms of content. In this research, a time slot of 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Monday through Friday is chosen for prime time, defined as the broadcasting hours of 7:00 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Monday through Friday.

The population of this research is the episodes of dramas broadcasted by ARY Digital and HUM TV in March 2016 from Monday to Friday from 8 pm to 9 pm. The population is 23 episodes from each channel in March 2016, i.e., 23 episodes from ARY Digital and 23 episodes from HUM TV. Simple random technique is used in this research to get the sample of 15 episodes from each channel broadcasted in March 2016, Monday through Friday, from 8 pm to 9 pm, i.e., a sample of 15 episodes from ARY digital and 15 from HUM TV, so the total sample is 30 episodes from both the channels.

DISCUSSION

Researchers studying media and communication have been using the content analysis method. The most widely recognized definition of content analysis, according to Kaid (1996), is provided by Berelson, who characterizes it as a research method for the objective, systematic, and quantitative analysis of the apparent subject matter of communication.

Channels	ARY Digital and HUMTV
Absolute Helpless	A female who is unable to defend or prove herself right?
Normal Helpless	A female who is unable to defend herself, but somehow, she can.
Victim	Acts of home violence
Disrespectful	Insulting behavior of family
clever	Trouble and problem creator
Strong	Confident
Respectable	Showing female as a role model
Independent	Working women
UnIslamic dress code	wearing jeans with short shirts
Relationship with strange males	Love affairs with other men

This study aims to identify female role portrayal in Pakistani TV dramas broadcast over ARY Digital and HUM TV in prime time. This chapter discusses and answers the four research questions.

The data for the research was gathered from the dramas of ARY and HUMTV. Fifteen dramas from each channel were broadcasted from 8 pm to 9 pm from Monday to Friday.

Table: 01

Codes	ARY Digital	HUM TV	Total
Absolute Helpless	25	13	38
Normal Helpless	11	9	20
Victim	6	4	10
Disrespectful	11	13	24
Clever	31	16	47
Respectful	7	3	10

Strong	11	13	24
Independent	6	9	15

As shown in the Table: 01, we can see the nature of coverage given to females. It is clear from Table 01 that in most scenes, females were shown as helpless people. There were 38 scenes on both channels that showed females as Absolutely helpless, and 20 scenes showed females as normal Helpless. On the other hand, in 47 scenes, females are shown as clever creature who is always trouble creator. Twenty-four scenes portrayed females disrespectfully, which their husbands mostly did. Ten scenes showed females as a victim of home violence, whereas ten scenes showed women in respectable roles like loving mothers' wives, sisters, etc. 24 scenes showed women as strong individuals who can make decisions in their lives and are more vocal. Fifteen scenes showed women as independent individuals; the one who is working lady running their businesses, they work with men, and more confident than a woman stays home.

So, overall, in dramas, females are framed as helpless people, the ones who cannot do anything for themselves in their lives. Even if she is right, she can't prove herself right. Sometimes, she sacrifices for her family to save his marriage life. The dramas portray females as ones with no value. In one of the dramas of ARY, *Ab kr meri rafugiri* Taba, a leading role in the drama, is being victimized for a sin she hasn't done just because of a misunderstanding. The family is forcing her to marry his uneducated cousin, and she is helpless because, being a woman, she has no right to argue with her family. The second most framed role given to females was being clever, who is always a trouble creator. The portrays female as an individual who always tries to

interfere in everyone's family matters, take advantage of their situation, and create trouble, which always results in the breaking of family relations, and most of the time, this part was played by the Laws.

In addition, the framing of females in dramas is quite different. HUM TV frames women more positively than ARY digital dramas. ARY framed women as more helpless, more victim, less independent in relationships with males, and also in un-Islamic dresses. Although HUM TV also has these scenes, they are fewer in number than ARY, so the overall framing of ARY is more negative than HUM TV's. The most important thing is that in HUM TV dramas, there were very few scenes in which females were dressed in an un-Islamic dress code (jeans and shirts), and there were fewer scenes that showed females having love affairs with other men. This is very good for our future generation; media greatly affects our minds, so we should educate our people, our youth, about our culture by spreading information through dramas so that they can adopt it and help them in their future lives.

They are often perceived as wrong, and she doesn't have the guts to prove she is right. On the other end, the ones who created this problem are the other women. So, one woman is destroying the home of other women. This is how women are being framed in dramas. From the results, we can see that the women are either framed as weak personalities or negative people. In many dramas, women are being insulted and victimized by their husbands. Man is framed as strong, and he has the right to insult women whenever and wherever he wants. This is what these dramas are showing. Is this the real image of our Islamic society? Is there anyone responsible for this content in dramas? Or is this the responsibility of the media, which is considered the one that

has the greatest effect on our minds and thoughts that make up a society? Is there no one to ask what kind of mother, daughter, wife, and sister they are framing? Or we should understand that this is the real image of our society.

Media also had the power to shape our society. Media greatly influence our minds and should construct positivity in their dramas. Media should frame mothers as role models, loving sisters, and supporting wives, who will encourage society to value women. Drama should have constructive and successful stories encouraging broken families to start their new lives. Women should be portrayed as confident individuals whose families and roles are loving and respectable, so society knows how to respect every woman. The dramas should portray the real image of our society. The women in dramas should not be framed as one who is always being victimized and have no voice to speak.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research revealed that most of the scenes in dramas framed women as helpless, weak, and dependent people. Males were framed as strong and used to insult women and do physical violence, and in most of the dramas, men are shown beating their wives for no reason. In one of the dramas on HUM TV (PAKEEZA), the husband is psycho and beats his wife for no reason. his wife is framed as helpless, bearing everything because she wants to save his family's life, being framed as one who always compromises her life for her family and faces every problem. There were scenes that also showed men insulting women in very humiliating ways in front of others, which left no regret to men. The other aspect that was also mostly framed in dramas was that women are usually shown as clever people or trouble and problem creators in families. They are shown destroying other families by

doing family politics. One woman is destroying the other woman's home. This is what they are framing about women. On the other hand, there was very little framing of females as strong or independent working women. There were scenes in a few dramas that showed women as independent, strong, working women, but there were very few scenes of confident women. Women were also shown in illegal relationships with strange men, which is completely against our Islamic code of ethics. They were shown in un-Islamic dresses (jeans and shirts), but there were very few drama scenes that framed women in an un-Islamic way. Most importantly, the media should know their framing responsibilities; the media should frame the real women that Islam framed. Dramas should frame women as loving, role model mothers, loving sisters, and supporting wives, which will encourage women to be one. Dramas should give a respectable image to women so that society will get to know the real image of women and the image a woman deserves.

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