



## Representation of Psychological Violence against Women in TV Dramas: Perception of Young Females

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### Abstract

*In the current era, the strong impact of TV cannot be denied. Despite the cyber revolution, television is still an influential medium to update, educate, regale and create awareness. Among the most watched programs on television in Pakistan today are the 'dramas.' This meticulous genre has the ability and conviction to rear a question against the problems of society. In this context, the TV Channels of Pakistan has produced remarkable finest dramas which depicted a clear reflection of our society's evils and taboos in heart touching way. From the last decade there has been a shift in the theme, production and picturization of TV drama. Women are critical to almost each and every story of the dramas. Our majority dramas are focusing on the psychological violence against women either they are in the progressive characters or in repressive roles. TV Dramas advocate, whether subtly or forcefully, and it definitely affects how the audience thinks. Psychological violence in TV Dramas affect person's psychological strength like it affects behavior directly through the content shown in these dramas. Females are the main viewers of these dramas so they usually make their assumptions towards reality by watching these dramas. The research study is aimed at analyzing the perceptions of young females regarding psychological violence against women by watching in the TV dramas. For this purpose survey analysis has been conducted from the female drama viewers. The statistical test Chi Square has been used to analyze the data. The results of the study prove that females are watching these dramas with interest but influenced from the psychological violence against women in the form depression and fears for future life. Moreover, the study proves that the Pakistani dramas are losing dignity of women in their content.*

**Keywords:** *Dramas, Psychological Violence, Perception.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, the most watched TV programs are “Dramas” the dramas are broadcast in prime time hours and have huge viewership (Roy, S. 2016; Shantharaju, & Kumar, 2016; Aslam, et al 2015; Shabir, G., Safdar, G., & Imran, M. 2013; Zuberi, N.A. 1991). There is a wide variety of issues that are highlighted in this genre (Cetin, K. B. E. 2014). Most of these dramas focus on the family, particularly women who have been portrayed at different level of progress and most often as mothers, sisters and wives. Women are critical to almost each and every story and it is one of the more argumentative matters under discussion since the arrival of television not only in Pakistan but also at worldwide (Roy, S. 2016).

In modern-day Pakistani dramas, the contradictory messages behind numerous storylines have been observed. The dramas in Pakistan are mainly focus on women issues so they are shown in these dramas as being ill-treated by men. He slapped, beaten up, humiliated, abused (Smithey, M., & Straus, M. A. 2004) and conversely, men are showed as the decision-makers in women’s lives. These scenes in dramas depicting male supremacy in family and this situation raise similar negative behavior specifically among males. This type of portrayal becomes subject to this reinforcement of stereotypical descriptions of women (Asif, M. 2013; Awan, S. Z. 2012). However, in some dramas, the woman has been shown responsible for breaking up a man’s marriage and working women are portrayed as strong but also negatively presented as shrewd and vampire-like. Different genres of media outlets portrayed women as inferior, slut and offensive and have no right to enjoy the basic human rights (Khan, N. 2021).

It has been observed in many TV dramas that violence is shown against women. Its primary victims are women. They have been suppressed regarding access to education and employment progress. Morgon (1984) noted that the psychological violence is aimed at women’s self-esteem self-respect, mental & physical health Psychological violence exists in different forms like forced marriages, restriction on mobility, overwork and of verbal or physical abuse.

Women are maltreated by Men in dramas. Kalis and Neueddorf (1989) noted that, males were the most often recognized recipients of aggression and the second most often identified originators of violence. Female were rarely known as recipients of aggression and were somewhat more likely to be recognized as initiator of aggression. So, the representation of violence in the drama effects the attitudes & behavior of which leads to psychological violence against women that results in suffering to women including threats of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life and frequently in physical violence.

Another study revealed that issues of major cities are get more attention than rural areas women. Here the author point out the neglected areas of Pakistan and point out the dire need to address this issue (Abbas, Shafiq & Akhtar, 2021).

As the women are the majority among the viewers of drama. So it is the one reason that their issues and concerns are highlighted in the storylines. In the modern drama, the women have been represented in the suppressive characters. Some of them have been emphasized on different forms of psychological violence against women. Fernandez (1992) stated that the media usually undermine women's status and act to preserve in the leading standards of society. They have not given a position to take part in decision making. Television portrayed women in repressive characters and they are understated in it about 3:1.

TV dramas have always been the most famous and popular programs in overall transmission of television in Pakistan. Dramas broadcast in primetime not only serve the objective of gaining maximum profits for the channel, but also attains top slot in entertainment genre. Prime time is from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm and is taken as peak time regarding to viewership. In these hours, the people with different age group, and culture and watch television (Hassan, 2008).

In Pakistan, the dramas have taken direct effects from Indian soap and Turkish dramas. The satellite transmission established media imperialism so the local issues in the programs have been ignored. Khan & Arif, (2009) conducted a research on Americanization and cultural invasion and stated that developing country is affected from media imperialism due to the openness to the foreign content via cable transmission. As Pakistan is a developing country so the foreign content is affecting the minds of youth by influencing Pakistani channels.

Females of all ages are the main viewers of TV Dramas and they preferred those dramas where their issues have been highlighted. Mahsud, Yaser & Chaudhry (2010) stated in their study of the consumption pattern of 'Geo TV and Star Plus' that the women watched more star plus than Geo dramas. Although both channels portrayed the women in repressive roles than progressive roles but Star plus is following this practice more.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Mediated communication is mostly considered as the main cause of current modern/popular cultural trends in the society. It is the enculturated medium. Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). It has transformed our daily life. The T.V content holds a revolutionary thoughts and views which have been induced in viewers mind. (Islam, A. 2013; Azeez, F., Ali, M. M., Juni, M. M. S. A., Ashraf, C. A., Amin, S., Haider, I. ... & Kareem, J. 2014; Diefenbach, D. L., & West, M. D. 2007; Huesmann, L. R., Moise-Titus, J., Podolski, C. L., & Eron, L. D. (2003). It is very powerful medium to promote or demote any culture (Shabir, G., Safdar, G., & Imran, M. 2013). Impact of media content is ignored often in third world countries due to the lack of research (Katz, E., & Liebes, T.1990, p.47). In Pakistan, mental health of females is under consideration due to its social structure and fabricated content as depicted in media (Khalily, M. T. 2011).

According to the views of Awais, Ashraf and Shabir (2021), violent behavior against women in the society is the major cause of other issues in the society. They

identified the violence as hinder to attain the basic rights by the females. Majority of viewers, both male and female, considersu dramas pretending and portraying to real life cases.

Sultana, Latif and Noureen (2021) investigated about problems that occur due to forced marriages in Pakistani Dramas. According to study, majority of female viewers think that dramas showing forced marriages presenting reality. The parents also play their role in forcing females to marry. Faiz, Khalid and Mahmood (2020) expressed the intensified behaviors and use of foul language against women in Pakistani dramas. Majority of this audience think that women victimization in Pakistani dramas is more than male characters (Ibrahim, Amin and Rehman, (2009). Custers, K., & Van den Bulck, J. (2013); Morshed M (2012) stated that the dramas directly affect the mind of people. These dramas are instilling living approach in the society and that is hazardous trend. Due to the pressure group from our conventional standards, societies are facing many problems. The psychological violence against women is inculcating the culture to demoralize and suppress the women.

Lee, M. J., Hust, S., Zhang, L., & Zhang, Y. (2010); Galdi, S., Maass, A., & Cadinu, M. (2014) stated that the content of t.v dramas are promoting stereotypes, objectification, rape myth and physical violence against women. Edwards, K. M., Turchik, J. A., Dardis, C. M., Reynolds, N., & Gidycz, C. A. (2011) Physical and sexual violence against women is the most enjoyable part of that script for male viewers. Social learning theory is applied to verify the lasting effect of fabricated content on viewers mind. Such type of violence against women implants negative and fearful emotions among females (Custers & Bulck, 2013).

Television Theorist Gerbner identified that heavy viewers relate their emotions with the mediated characters (Glascock, J. 2008) and such attachment can generate social and psychological concerns (Hoffner, C., & Buchanan, M. 2005).

According to Ali, P. A., and Gavino, M. I. B. (2008) 70 to 90% Pakistani females are facing different types of violence including physical, psychological and emotional abuse in an intimate relations. Violence against women is popular theme on different media genre including TV dramas. Bandura's learning theory affirms this fact that acceptance of violence against females is a learned behavior.

Study of Serena Daalman, Mariska Kleemans, Anne Sadza (2017) is based in Dutch Society. According to them, women are underrepresented in men's TV channels. However, representation of women in women's channels showed opposite result. However, in this ratio viewership of young adult females was more than that of middle-aged to aged women. Most often women represented in these channels were unemployed.

In another study Diefenbach, D. L., and West, M. D. (2007) found that mass media content perpetuated different stereotypes relating gender roles, attitudes, behavior Gauntlett, D., & Hill, A. (1999, p.222) and mental health issues; television is the main source to disseminate the psychological concerns among human. Custers, K., & Van den Bulck, J. (2013) soap serials that based on violent content cultivate fear,

insecurities (Emery, R. E., & Laumann-Billings, L. 1998), strengthen the traditional gender roles and propagate the view that females are vulnerable subject/victims and this world is not safe for the females. Psychological theorist highlighted the violent media content as a threat for the viewers. Primed content instigates the consumers' behavior, attitude and emotion's node (Huesmann, L. R. 2007).

Glascock, J. (2008) differentiates the verbal violent content like taunting, name calling, humiliation, yelling, arguing, threatening, and sarcasm leave negative and may lasting impact on adult viewers. Indirect violence like gossiping, backbiting, rumors, ignoring or distorting someone personality is also included and may be learned by the media content.

### **Research Objectives**

- To explore the young female's perception regarding psychological violence depicted against women in the dramas of Pakistan.
- To measure the impacts of psychological violent content portrayed against women on young females.
- To get an estimate of the impairment and future effects of this Psychological violence against women.

### **Hypotheses**

- Psychological violence against women in TV dramas is creating desensitization among young females
- Psychological violence against women in TV dramas is creating insecurities regarding social rights among young females
- Psychological violence against women in TV dramas creating fears among young females regarding male dominance

### **Significance of the Study**

Any genre of mass media has strong impact on its audience. Among this TV dramas are the popular form that prove to be a mirror of society. In another aspect, dramas build the strong identity with script and characterization in society. Public watched TV dramas and get influence from its characterization. In Pakistan, prime time hours are allocated for dramas. People watched TV dramas with full interest. Pakistani dramas are famous in all over the world due to its strong script. This genre is the source of entertainment for audience but due to influence of foreign content it annoyed the audience. Although dramas are the source of social education by teaching moral values and inculcating positivity in the society but due to excessive focus on the injustice in society leads the nation towards negativity. In the modern age, all channels of Pakistan broadcast most of the dramas on women's issues by representing them in deprived characters and in repressive roles. These dramas are creating fears among females regarding their securities in the societies and hatred for males. This study focuses on the representation of psychological violence against women in the dramas of Pakistan. Responses have been taken from females regarding this issue. This study provides factual analysis regarding the perception

of young females on these dramas and highlights the concern of young females on these dramas. This will also help in the improvement of Dramas productions in future.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study is based on Cultivation theory given by George Garbener. It evaluated that the regular exposure to the violent content as represented in TV programs created excessive anxiety among heavy viewers than light viewers. The viewer's acquire from labeled content patterns on TV and draw interpretations from the content. They generalize the TV Representations to the real world and they presumed that TV mainly with its seemingly consistent depiction of violence can have strong cognitive influences on viewers' concerns regarding violence.

### Research Method

The basic objective of the study is to take verdict of the young females on the representation of psychological violence against women in the dramas of Pakistan and to measure their perception in taking a standards shift in the dramas. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed on Likert scale with questions focusing on the representation of psychological violence against women. Survey Analysis has been conducted in the universities of Lahore city by using convenience sampling and responses were collected from young females having minimum education of 12 to 16 years with the age of 18-24 years. Convenience sampling is inexpensive, accessible, and usually requires less time to collect data. It was presumed that educated class and young females are appropriate for the said purpose as they denoted an informed segment of population and have better ability to assess phenomena on logical basis. For data analysis purpose and Chi-test was applied.

### Results

The responses were collected through a survey. Out of total received reactions all respondents were females as per the research study requirements. The mean age of the respondents was (M=1.00). The respondents were students of the universities having graduation and Master's degree in different subjects.

#### *Table 01*

Cronbach Alpha of Questionnaires items on representation of psychological violence against women in the dramas of Pakistan

	<i>No. of Items</i>	<i>Alpha Coefficient</i>
Representation of psychological violence against women	28	.619

Cronbach Alpha of the Questionnaire of total items on representation of psychological violence against women was calculated and table presented that total item correlation is .619 which is reliable in social sciences (Field, 2009).

**Table 02**

Desensitization among young females regarding Psychological Violence in TV dramas

Construct Items	Chi-Square	D.F	P Value	Conclusion
Immunity of watching psychological violence against women in dramas	27.83	4	.000	Significant
Ethical values are being demolished	24.66	4	.000	Significant
Influence on Society from these dramas	9.86	4	.000	Significant
These dramas are affecting our living styles	25.16	4	.000	Significant
These dramas are raising voice of depressed women	14.00	4	.000	Significant
These dramas are promoting negativity in the society	17.16	4	.000	Significant

X<sup>2</sup> values in the Table 02 shows that H1 is accepted at 5% level of significance. So, a hypothesis of significant association between the psychological violence in TV dramas and the level of creating desensitization among young females is proved.



**Table 03**

Insecurities regarding social rights among young females due to Psychological Violence in TV dramas

Construct Items	Chi-Square	D.F	P Value	Conclusion
Notable character as the most victimized in female lead	19.83	4	.000	Significant
Provokes negativity regarding security rights of females in the society	13.33	4	.000	Significant
These dramas are promoting inequality and injustice system in the society	29.16	4	.000	Significant
These dramas are demolishing the respect of women among males and promoting insolence towards them	28.66	4	.000	Significant
Influence on society	9.86	4	.000	Significant
These dramas are the voice of suppressed women	11.33	4	.000	Significant
Promoting negativity in the society	17.16	4	.000	Significant

X<sup>2</sup> values in the Table 03 shows that H<sub>2</sub> is accepted at 5% level of significance. So, a hypothesis of significant association between the psychological violence in TV dramas and the level of generating insecurities regarding social rights among young females is proved.



**Table 04**

Promoting fears among young females regarding male dominance

Construct Items	Chi-Square	D.F	P Value	Conclusion
Dragging our society away from austerity and contented life style	17.33	4	.000	Significant
Corrupting our thoughts by popularizing the UN Islamic practices	38.66	4	.000	Significant
Change in thinking patterns for males	22.50	4	.000	Significant
Raised the voice of suppressed women	14.00	4	.000	Significant
Building doubts between males and females	8.83	4	.000	Significant
Effect on living styles	25.16	4	.000	Significant
Influence on female perception in society	9.86	4	.000	Significant
Ethical values are being demolished	24.66	4	.000	Significant
Promoting rudeness and insolence towards women	28.66	4	.000	Significant
Inequality and injustice in society	29.16	4	.000	Significant
Fears among young females regarding marriages	28.33	4	.000	Significant

X<sup>2</sup> values in the Table 04 shows that H3 is accepted at 5% level of significance. So, a hypothesis of significant association between the psychological violence in TV dramas and the level of dramas forming fears among young females regarding male dominance is proved.

## DISCUSSION

Since the television was launched, the TV dramas/programs have attained a strong position in a society. Depictions of family relations and behaviors with intimates have learned through its content (Pearl, D., Bouthilet, L., & Lazar, J. 1982, p. 264). Dramas are creating awareness about social issues and are raising the voice of suppressed population (Tuchman, G. 1979) in a lighter way to grasp the attention of viewers. The State owned channel PTV along with some private channels followed the same traditions and values while producing dramas. Due to globalization of media, the channels in Pakistan have changed their production content of programs. In this regard, popularity of Indian and Turkish dramas directly affected the dramas of local industry in characterization, script and glamour. Currently, most of the dramas are focusing on the women issues by showing psychological violence against them. All channels are following the same pattern in different dramas. The dramas are the source of entertainment, change agent and construct the social reality in the society (Ceulemans, M., & Fauconnier, G.2015, p. 5)but in the current era the psychological against women are representing in most of the dramas without focusing on the empowerment of women. Roshan, Parvez and Siraj (2009) stated that the psychological and verbal violence were represented against women in greater ratio than the symbolic and physical violence.

The first objective of the study was to measure the young female's perception regarding violence depicted in the dramas of Pakistan. The results showed that young females watched HUM TV dramas more for strong script and story line. 36% young females agreed that our society has been immune of watching these dramas and 5% disagree of it. Young females shared their feelings about the watching of these dramas in which 46% said that they are depressed and only 11% take it as a reality of society.

The second objective was to explore the impact of violent content that has been represented in dramas on young females. The results revealed that the dramas are dragging our society away from contended and austerity lifestyles. 41% respondents are strongly agreed about the negative influence of these dramas on society. The dramas are ruining the respect and dignity of women in our young generation and promoting rudeness and insolence towards women. Talking about the subjects of dramas, women characters are represented in depressive roles and their progressive characters are associated with their rude and corrupt representation. To name few of such dramas presented recently on TV channels are Saya-e Deewar b Nahi, Sang-e Mar Mar, Noor-e Zindagi, Naimat and Dash-te-Tanhai and list goes on.

The third objective of this research study was to get an estimate of the impairment and future effects of this psychological violence. The results indicated that these dramas are promoting insecurities and fears among young females regarding their social status. The dramas represented the males as brutal and selfish members of the society. Majority of the respondents with 49% agreed that the dramas are creating fears among them regarding their future life while 11% are disagreed from it. These dramas are building doubts between the relationships of males and females, majority of young females agreed on it with 49% and the rest fall in the category of

neutral and disagreed stances.

## **CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the findings of the study, it has been concluded that drama industry is promoting depression and ruining the dignity of women in the society. Dramas are the source to build public opinion on certain social issues, but in a positive way through powerful script. Currently, the influence of foreign content with the weak production and low quality script is diminishing the main purpose of dramas in our country. These dramas are spreading depression in the form of suppressed characterization of women which in return is bringing an incessant shift in our values. In order to evade this alarming situation and to preserve our ideological source, it is essential to provide awareness to the drama viewers and producers. Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) is required to implement code of conduct for the drama industry. There is also a dire need to take steps by drama producers to raise a voice of suppressed people and to educate the viewer's regarding moral values. This standard can be achieved by following ethical requirements of our society to cope up with social problems.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basis of findings of the research, it is an alarming situation that our drama industry is mainly focusing on the representation of psychological violence against women in most of the dramas. Women are being represented in central roles in majority of dramas, but their issues should be highlighted in a positive way to save their dignity. Some recommendations are given below in this regard:

1. There should be a production committee to review the dramas aired by TV channels.
2. Our drama industry is required to raise the voice of suppressed women and highlight their issues in an effective way that can influence our viewers both male and female in a positive way.
3. Awareness has to be raised among people about the long term impacts of the drama serials representing psychological violence against women on family relationships and social system.

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