Vol. 25(2), 2025, pp.65-85, ISSN: 2072-0394(Print), ISSN: 2663-8886(Online)

Is The Woman Fragile? A Comparative Study of Pakistani Primetime Dramas: Khalil Ur-Rehman's *Meray Pass Tum Ho* and *Sinf-e-Aahan*

Bushra Nadeem

&

Usama Javed Iqbal
Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
Bahria University, Islamabad

Abstract

This research comparatively examines the portrayal of women in two Pakistani primetime dramas, *Mere Pass Tum Ho* and *Sinf-e-Aahan,* to explore the diverse representation of Pakistani women in digital media. It also discusses the role of gender within the two dramas and their evaluation of sociopolitical structures and intersectional identities of women in contemporary Pakistan. Expanding on intersectional feminism's focus on various dimensions of identity, this research elaborates on the layers of the characters' experiences in both dramas. Mehwish in *Meray Pass Tum Ho* aims to acquire wealth and prestige by marrying a wealthy man, whereas *Sinf-e-Aahan* reveals the lives of five female cadets from diverse backgrounds as they join the Pakistan Army. It is a drama that portrays the strength of women and diversity and speaks of women's ability to come out of stereotypical roles and succeed in male-dominated professional fields. Employing intersectional gender theory, this paper analyses how the TV drama *Sinf-e-Aahan* subverts clichéd imagery, portraying empowered women. The analysis reveals that male writers tend to portray women as materialistic and emotional, whereas female writers portray them as strong and decisive. This juxtaposition offers a perspective on the shift in Pakistani dramas and gender identity construction.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Intersectional Feminism, Pakistani Dramas, Media Discourse, Women Empowerment.

Introduction

Materialistic Womanhood in *Meray Pass Tum Ho*

The story about Danish and Mehwish is depicted as a happy family of three who are living a humble life with a small kid named Rumi. Danish is a government officer, and even though he does not have much money in his pocket, he has no problem with that and has great affection for his wife. While getting married to Danish, Mehwish aspires to buy a better car and a fancy house, things that Danish cannot offer. Mehwish's dreams compel her to accept the party invitation, which is thrown by

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Mehar Bano, shown as Anoushey. At the party, she gets acquainted with Shehwar Ahmed, a handsome, extremely wealthy, and extremely self-possessed businessman. He starts being affectionate and buying her expensive gifts. While Danish initially believed in his wife, he noticed the coldness between them. Mehwish gets trapped by the beauty of Shehwar and then starts having improper relations with him. Shehwar agrees to provide her with the lavish lifestyle she longs for, and after much deliberation, Mehwish decides to dump both Danish and Rumi for Shehwar. Naturally, this is the final straw that completely breaks Danish, as not only is his wife and family no longer with him, but the entirety of his previous life is turned upside down. Danish's failure in love leads him to find a purpose in life and embark on the quest for self-enhancement and financial gains. He then quits his job at the governmental organization and begins a new career as a share trader, becoming an overnight millionaire. From a man who is hardworking and honest, to a ruthless businessman who had tricked his way to becoming a multimillionaire, Danish is a changed man, yet he is devastated by Mehwish's betrayal.

On the other hand, problems start emerging for Mehwish, who is in a relationship with Shehwar. Maham (Savera Nadeem), Shehwar's wife, comes back home after she has been living abroad and steps into Shehwar's business sector. Danish's rejection of Mehwish is very realistic, genuine, and touching. He continues to be adamant, especially on the issue of the broken trust that they had and the pain he endured because of her. Mehwish is then left alone to suffer for her sins, which she now sees as her mistake. Shehwar gets arrested for fraud and mismanagement of funds, and Maham kicks Mehwish out of the house. Not having anyone in her life now after Shehwar left her alone, Mehwish goes back to Danish, only to be turned away by him. The last episodes reveal Danish in a bad condition because of health issues largely related to stress. But as far as the plot development and character depiction are concerned, one sadistically notices the effect that Mehwish's betrayal had on him: Even after becoming a wealthy, successful man, the torments of the heart have rendered him a severe emotional wreck. The entire drama ends with Danish's tragic death, and Rumi and Hania are left heartbroken to mourn his loss.

Revisiting Gender Roles in Sinf-e-Aahan (Women of Steel)

"Sinf-e-Aahan" depicts the story of multiple daughters of different families with no similarity and completely different backgrounds, all joining the Pakistan Military Academy to undergo a course of training. It familiarizes the audience with their backgrounds and hardships, how they survive in a military that is predominantly male, and how they evolve as people and as soldiers. Every character has his or her story that is an accurate depiction of the wide range of people inhabiting Pakistan.

Rabia Safeer (played by Sajal Aly): Rabia is from a well-off background in Islamabad, Pakistan. She has a father who is an officer in the security forces, while her mother is a homemaker. Rabia has had a privileged upbringing, but does not want

to be confined solely by the expectations that others set for her. She goes to fight for her brother, who was killed while serving in the military.

Mahjabeen Mastaan (played by Kubra Khan): The story is about Mahjabeen, who is a modern Pakistani woman residing in Karachi and passionate about pursuing her career independently. He is well-educated and has a liberal background. Her decision to move on and join the army is met with some disappointment by her mother, who believes the military is not a place for her daughter. The plot of Mahjabeen's story comprises her fight and determination to show her capacity for endurance.

Pariwesh Jamal (played by Ramsha Khan): Pariwesh was born, raised, and belongs to Balochistan, a province of Pakistan that is known for being politically unstable and conservative. She also experiences many forms of discrimination, and her economic status is far from ideal. These prompt her to join the military out of a desire to free herself from the constraints placed on her by her ethnic heritage, as well as to honor her family's name.

Shaista Khanzada (played by Yumna Zaidi): Shaista is from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where cultural practices about women are very rigorous. This is specifically seen when she decides to join the army, which goes against the traditional roles expected from women within that setting. Through Shaista's character, the show depicts the external and internal struggles of women seeking individual freedom amidst highly patriarchal societies.

Arzoo Daniel (played by Syra Yousuf): Arzoo is shown as a part of the Christian minority in the drama. She not only complains about the racism she faces, but also about the religious persecution and prejudice she tries to cope with. However, she remains determined to serve her country.

Nathmy Perrera (played by Yehali Tashiya): Nathmy is a Sri Lankan cadet who joins the army in the drama through an exchange program. Her character brings a sense of interdisciplinary unity, focusing on the fraternity of women discriminated against across national territories. The show also addresses the ethnic, religious, and socio-economic diversity of the country by representing characters of different origins. This attitude of inclusion speaks volumes about the drama's message of solidarity through embracing differences.

Theoretical Framework

Gender theory addresses how literature informs, encodes, and subverts cultural paradigms of gender. Gender focuses on the parts of individuals, their actions, undertakings, and characteristics, which a certain society expects from men and women. Thus, gender theory, as one of the methods of analyzing literary texts, is aimed at finding out how gender roles are constructed and represented in literature or

how they could be changed with the help of literature as one of the important aspects of studying gender identity and the relationship between genders. In gender theory, analysis involves studying how a given literature depicts the dominant patriarchal culture, especially in violating the rights of women. Gender theory deals with whether these various characters, especially women, are given the power of speech and decision-making within the story. They seek to know whether they are performing the roles of the characters in the story or are depicted as mere objects on which the actions and glances of the males are focused. The theory raises questions about how literary works support or subverts the dominant beliefs, for example, that women are weak and should be obedient to men, or that men are powerful and rational by nature. It also seeks to establish the way characters act by violating the projections made of them.

Intersectional Feminism is a theoretical perspective of how women interact with feminism, taking into consideration how they are privileged or disadvantaged depending on the social categories they come from and the social categorizations they experience. The term, used for the first time by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a specific concept in 1989, evolved from the contributions of black women who demonstrated the shortcomings of both feminist and anti-racism movements in their capacity to fully account for the experiences of women of colour. Intersectional feminism understands that people have a range of identities that vary in race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, and nationality. This intersection of identity means that some people experience oppression and privilege in specific ways. Intersectional feminism aims at seeking all forms of equality for women regardless of their race, colour, ethnicity, ability, or any other features that make them minorities (Mohsin, Iqbal & Ishfaq, 2021). This emphasizes the policies and programs that should be undertaken to help those categorized under these groups gain equal consideration or support as other women. By incorporating intersectionality at the core of its activism and policy work, it ensures that those with marginalized status have their needs met, acknowledged, and supported. Although a lot of work has been done on intersectional feminism in India and Western parts of the world, Pakistani dramas discussing intersectional feminism have not received sufficient discussion by the authors regarding the double marginalization of women (DeFelice & Diller, (2019).

Menon (2015) opposes the Western intersectionality frameworks, as these do not address the experiences of marginalized Dalit women and their complex caste-class-gender oppressions. She also describes the high level of plight and discrimination against Dalit women in Indian society. She points out that Dalit feminism is generally not aligned with mainstream Indian feminism due to perceived upper-caste bias. In an article Gökarıksel (2017) describes how Trump vilified immigrants, Muslim people, women, African Americans, Native Americans, and transgender people. As a result, women and civil rights supporters staged one of the most massive protests in the history of the United States, “raising their voices against the walls, hatred, and

deportations embedded in the global turn to the right and attempting to embrace an intersectional feminism that recognizes racial, ethnic, religious, class, and other differences". Keeping in view the work of Indian and Western authors, this article aims to highlight intersectional feminism prevalent in Pakistan and highlighted in Pakistani primetime dramas. Murtza (2023), Her paper highlights the intersectionality of the caste system, gender hierarchy, colourism, and racism, particularly in the context of Pakistan. She discusses intersectionality in Pakistani culture through the voices of the victims, whereas my paper discusses this issue through the voices of actors. Another author Anwer & Chaudhary (2024), in her paper, unveils "The purpose of this research is to investigate the various struggles, self-determination, and fortitude demonstrated by rural women in the novel Beyond the Fields". She has discussed the intersectionality faced by rural women in a novel, but my paper covers two prominent dramas of the Pakistani media industry that influence people's minds. Novels, however, may not be read by many people, but dramas have reached millions of audiences in Pakistan.

Nasir et al. (2023) discussed one of the famous dramas in her paper. She has used Liberal feminist theory as the theoretical framework for her study, whereas my paper is based on intersectional feminism in Pakistani dramas. Although her drama under discussion, Ghisi Piti Mohabbat, also explores double marginalization faced by the protagonist due to her ethnicity and social background, the author only explored women's empowerment in the drama, whereas my paper has explored the same drama as an example of intersectional feminism. Another Pakistani author, Noor (2024) conducted a comparative analysis of two Pakistani dramas that my paper discusses. In her paper, she has employed Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis and Beauvoir's notion of feminism as the framework of the study, unlike my paper, which explains the ideology of both dramas through intersectional feminism. Her paper focuses mainly on gender stereotypes, whereas my paper discusses intersectional feminism along with the representation of gender in both dramas. Future recommendations in her paper include "It will provide the ground for researchers to find out how intersectionality is reflected through the writings of male and female writers," which is depicted in my paper.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze how women are portrayed in the Pakistani dramas *Meray Pass Tum Ho* and *Sinf-e-Aahan* through the lens of intersectional feminism.

2. To examine the impact of male versus female scriptwriters on the narrative construction of female characters in Pakistani primetime dramas.

3. To explore how factors such as class, ethnicity, religion, and cultural expectations intersect with gender to shape the representation of women in these two dramas.

Research Hypotheses

This paper hypothesizes that:

1. Characters developed by female authors are more empowering, diverse, and multidimensional compared to those by male writers, who seem to portray female characters as emotionally dependent, materialistic, or morally flawed.

2. An additional hypothesis is that the dramas that portray the values of intersectional feminism, such as Sinf-e-Aahan, have more chances to critique the stereotypical gender roles and provide an inclusive representation of women representing different cultures, ethnicities, and social groups.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it adds insight into how Pakistani media, especially TV dramas, help shape how society views women. Through the interpretation of the women in a drama by a male author (*Meray Pass Tum Ho*) and a female author (*Sinf-e-Aahan*), it can be seen which pattern is followed in exploring how gender bias, stereotypes, and hierarchies are either reinforced or challenged in mainstream media. This will contribute to the knowledge of future media producers, writers, and scholars, telling them about the significance of inclusive storytelling that can capture the dynamic reality of Pakistani women in various identities and contexts.

Rationale of the Study

Pakistani television dramas have a far-reaching influence on societal attitudes toward gender roles and expectations. The pattern of gender roles and expectations is widely spread due to the influence of Pakistani television drama. Although there are numerous studies relating to the empowerment of women in the media, not many studies have addressed the intersectionality in depicting female characters (Rabi, Ahmad, Hussain & Ullah, 2025). This paper focuses on addressing that gap through the application of intersectional feminism in critically analyzing two dramas that are quite popular with two different authorial views. The reasoning behind this is to have an idea of how media images can either normalize patriarchal values or opt to challenge those, and how the writer's gender and worldview influence these portrayals.

Limitations of Research

This study is limited to the analysis of only two Pakistani dramas, which may not represent the entire spectrum of female portrayal in the country’s television industry. Moreover, the research is based on textual and thematic analysis but not the audience

reception or empirical data, which may serve to assess the perceptions of such portrayals on a deeper level. Further, due to the subjective nature of qualitative analysis, there is a possibility of interpretation bias, and only primetime dramas in the Urdu language are analyzed, leaving out regional or other newer digital media.

Review of the Literature

Mere Paas Tum Ho, despite provoking a lot of controversy amongst the conservative group of Pakistani society, received a significant number of viewers during the period that the play was aired. “As we stepped into 2020, a television phenomenon had gripped the nation. With over 325 million views on YouTube and the finale screened in cinemas, Mere Paas Tum Ho has set new records in Pakistani television drama” (Mustafa, 2020). However, such a huge response from the audience does not ensure that the writer was aware of the culture and traditions of Pakistani society. The drama depicted an extramarital affair between two characters, which faced huge backlash from the critics. “Many others claimed this type of controversial drama misguides our generation, and they tried to eradicate the western culture in Pakistani society" (Shakir, 2020)**.** This controversy also reached the courts of Pakistan when “Sindh High Court summons Humayun Saeed over Meray Paas Tum Ho's offensive dialogues” in January 2020, and “another petition had been filed in a Lahore civil court earlier this month to halt the release of *MPTH's* double finale” (Baloch, 2020). Similarly, Ali (2015) sought to establish the nature and extent of representation of female characters in two study areas belonging to the media: print media and audio-visual media. Therefore, in the results section, the researchers have argued that the media has focused on portraying women as morally corrupt to smudge their image in the real world. Another study has been done Ahmed (2019) regarding the portrayal of woman protagonists in Pakistani feature films.

The research study designed in this case was qualitative, in which the researcher adopted the textual analysis approach as well as the feminist framework. The study further showed that the female characters were properly categorized respectively as the protagonist, the antagonist, and the prostitutes. The main female protagonist of the film is Mehwish, who is portrayed as an unchaste, selfish, and adulterous wife who deserts her good-tempered and earnest husband for financial comfort. It is especially apparent in the portrayal of women of interest as vengeful and materialistic, motivated solely by greed and infidelity, leaving the audience with a very reductive view of women, even though women are far more multi-dimensional (Khan & Khan, 2022). The drama’s narrative is quite masculine and has a bias toward a male figure, where female characters or issues are sidelined. Such an imbalance helps perpetuate the patriarchal mechanisms that provide dignity and value to women based on their subservience to their male counterparts, hence encouraging regressive and gender-biased views. “Most of the time, women have been misrepresented and are even labelled as 'contested”. They are often represented as negative, rebellious, and evil,

which makes women appear as negative characters who have overcome their real image in society. The real strength of women's character and personality is often subsided or ignored" (Mazhar, Kashif & Fatima, 2023).

Another research study titled 'Mere Paas Tum Ho: A Comparative Analysis of Pakistani Drama Screenplay' (2022) examined the screenplay by comparing this drama to two other drama screenplays of Pakistan named "Dil Ruba" and "Mohabbat Tujhe Alvida" p. 1211). They have also categorized MPTH with many other Pakistani dramas, which "show women's negative image and project them as greedy and materialistic" (Rasool, Matloob & Tariq, 2022). In other words, "when objectified, women are treated as bodies-and in particular, as bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)**.** Most of the dialogues by male protagonists, especially in MPTH, not only point towards the objectification of the females but also come under slurred speech, which not only damages the character of women but also denies them the dignity that they deserve as sensitive human beings. Some critics question the content of MPTH by saying, "We question the making of certain dramas that got famous on star power and only God knows what! With content THAT questionable and storylines so loopy – we are unsure how the actors agreed to do them, even if the directors and TV channels forgot what a good story should portray" (Hussain, 2022). He even questioned the intent of the writer, saying, "it concerns us if it was even made for just entertainment purposes." In another article, Sharda (2014) says, "In television serials, an ambitious career woman is often portrayed as 'greedy' while men tend to be portrayed as 'go-getters.' With a few exceptions, the mainstream media usually perpetuates these stereotypical gender divisions." According to (Rasool, Matloob & Tariq, 2022), women in Pakistani dramas like MPTH are depicted as

- "Women as ungrateful, ostentatious, and talkative
- Women as a rehabilitation center for badly raised, ill-mannered men
- Projecting the 'ideal' wife material
- Women are portrayed as frail and gold diggers.
- An infidel man is worthy of redemption, but women are damned to eternal damnation" (Ullah, 2024).

Talking about the writer of MPTH, Isani writes, "KRQ has time and time again proven himself to be a bitter misogynist with little to no respect for women and zero tolerance for an opposing opinion. As a writer and someone who has the window to influence the masses through television, the man's mindset is his real problem." Since Qamar is already an influential social figure in the entertainment industry, it can be inferred that his opinions and shares have a certain impact on the public. Continuing

to paint women in an unfavourable light and belittle the problems that female advocates address, he participates in fostering such a patriarchal mindset. Qamar has posted and shared several obscene thoughts about women on social media and at speaking engagements. For instance, he has directly targeted some of the feminist movements, such as the Aurat March in Pakistan, and has insulted most women activists and feminists. His spiteful remarks tend to be directed toward women, specifically those who are striving to be equal to men and demanding changes to unfair gender roles. From the incident, one could deduce that he had a lot of hatred for women, given the language he used to address Marvi Sarmad, “Your body, your choice? Look at your body. No man would even spit on it.” He then proceeded to call her a bitch and asked her to shut up, repeatedly (Isani, 2020).

"Traditional gender stereotypes can be reversed with the change in the mindset of nations of the world, and the media can play an important role in portraying such a change in society and inculcating the ideology of reverse gender roles in the minds of people" (Ward & Grower, 2020). Sinf-e-Aahan is an example of such an ideology (Noor, 2025). "In the Pakistani context, after a long war of hatred on the topic of male oppression of females. The drama Sinf-e-Aahan is just like a breath of fresh air" (Chaudhary, Khan & Baqar, 2024). The drama depicts the transformation of traditional domesticated women to the new women with the reverse gender roles positively and in a balanced manner. The key feature of this drama is its positive tone, recalling the cooperation of males and females to erase the aspects regarding Pakistani subcultures, such as Pakhtoon or Balochi cultures, which were unsympathetic to women. The effect of this drama is to paint a relatively positive picture when it comes to the advancement of the nation. This drama from the first episode to the last has truly depicted Pakistan women’s realistic situation and provides a balanced message that through determination and teamwork of both sexes, all kinds of problems can be resolved without bringing animosity and aggression in Pakistani society. That is why this drama has been presenting a favourable view of Pakistan and its people internationally. “Now, as time is passing, the gender roles are reversing. Women are performing different roles in every field. Women have started working, going to offices, driving cars, and have even become pilots, and managers of international 128 firms, thus reversing the traditional male role.” (Razzaq & Hasmi, 2022). “These women are headstrong in their respective manners, and they also come from different cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, a facet of the drama that I appreciate very much. It is so important that our dramas, and even films, have representation that reflects the very real diversity within our people.” Mubashir (2021) in her news article appreciates the diversity of cultures shown in the drama and how each character has her reasons to join the army, and she stands for it. In another news article, the author says that the drama challenged the notion that only men can join forces or that women are physically incapable of adopting such professions, saying, “While there’s nothing wrong with the desire itself, it becomes problematic when it’s gendered. Parents rarely wish the same for their daughters.

They can either be doctors or engineers, or choose teaching, and this school of thought emerges from the ill-perceived conception of women being the 'weaker sex'. It internalizes that young girls and women cannot be part of professions that require physical and mental strength, hard work, courage, and perseverance" (Iqbal, Bukhari & Khalid, 2023). Nadeem Baig, the director of Sinf-e-Aahan, then added, "After this drama, the girls will think, 'Why can't we join the army? We should join" which shows his intention to dispel the stereotype of only boys joining the army", as stated in the article. While many of the authors appreciated this drama for showing the brilliance in women, some criticized the stereotypes prevalent in the drama. "Sinf-e-Aahan" showcases the Pakistani military as a beacon of hope for women escaping the shackles of a patriarchal society (Baig, 2024). It is portrayed as a fair meritocracy, where discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and religion is non-existent. But lying in the crevices are the grim realities of this haven.", says Afreen (2023) in her article. The grim realities she discusses applying militarism are, "the incompatibility of femininity with the military and de-individualization that a recruit goes through in the military.", evident in the dialogue of Pariwesh where she says "I'm not your daughter anymore, I'm an army officer now". She also discusses some examples of sexism and misogyny in the dialogues of male cadets as trainers. She says that "the drama shows military training will transform the fairer, weaker sex, into women of steel. Why this implication is problematic needs deliberation. Of course, it demonstrates the sexist view that women are "Nazuk" or fragile, but it also suggests that it is after military training that women become empowered, which is a very skewed representation of empowerment." She further adds, "This dismissal of work done by women in the kitchen, and around the house, as unimportant is a very strong patriarchal tactic that aids the subjugation of women". Another author criticizes Umera Ahmed's "Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan" saying, "The author might be portraying the real picture here, but she is affirming women that they are destined to be a speck. They are part of this patriarchy to bear injustice, inequity, and tyranny of the demons of the society" (Khan & Dar, 2018).

However, this drama not only depicts female empowerment but also discusses how female subjugation is dependent on other factors like class, ethnicity, culture, race, etc. By exposing how socio-economic status determines opportunities and response in the academy, Pariwesh Jamal embodies the challenges of 'having it all' with inadequate resources and social acceptance as a working-class woman. Shaista Khanzada can overcome the cultural barriers because the traditional part of the Patriarchal culture is still dominating in her region, showing extra challenges for women from patriarchal societies. Lastly, Arzoo Daniel faces a problem of religious discrimination; gender and religious identity influence their experiences. Still protected by the privilege of her socio-economic status, Rabia Safeer struggles with internal pressures that stem from being expected to live up to her family's military standards. She has had different hurdles, but they are not much less, talking about her hardships: Privilege does not mean no difficulties, only different ones. It gets each

character's narrative across, allowing for diversity representation in the series, giving exposure to ethnic minorities and persons of lower economic capabilities. The daily life of the cadets shows that community discriminations manifest itself differently regarding each subject's race, gender, and sexual orientation. Contrary to Khalil ur Rehman Qamar, one of the prominent features of Umera Ahmed's female characters is that she gives them depth and dimension, making her characters multi-dimensional (Habib & Anwar, 2025). They are not depicted merely as female characters with male partners, but they are individuals with their own goals, abilities, and vices. For instance, the characters of Kashaf, from "Zindagi Gulzar Hai" and Umama from "Pir-e-Kamil" are represented as hardworking, strong-willed women who have a lot to undergo and achieve despite all the odds. Concerning the themes, most of Ahmed's works are focused on the need for women's education. Her characters focus on the goals related to education and career as a way to gain the status of a successful, independent woman. In the novel Shehr-e-Zaat, Falak, the protagonist, comes across a journey of finding her self-identity and learns that true spirit and education are way more important than beauty and expensive possessions. "There is no hero in #SinfeAahan" was an Instagram caption by Umera Ahmed showing her pride in the absence of male protagonists in her drama Sinf-e-Aahan.

Research Methodology

This research is based on the qualitative method, and therefore, the rationale for opting for this specific paradigm is that the paradigm permits the researcher to gain a vast understanding of the phenomenon under research. It proceeds with the textual analysis approach to study the thematic development and character depiction in two Pakistani dramas. The research examines conversations, plot design, and character development in Meray Paas Tum Ho and Sinf-e-Aahan and interprets them through an intersectional feminist perspective. The reason behind the application of qualitative textual analysis is to gain a deeper understanding of how gender roles and intersectionality are constructed and challenged in media texts. This approach reveals ideologies and cultural discourses behind the dramas.

Findings

The comparison of the dramas "Mere Paas Tum Ho" and "Sinf-e-Aahan" concerning the representation of women and the use of the intersectional feminism approach presents a set of differences. Therefore, it can be concluded that the representation of women in ''Mere Paas Tum Ho'' (MPTH) is negative as the drama portrays the women in the show as materialistic, cheaters, and weak. On the other hand, "Sinf-e-Aahan" does portray women progressively and liberally; women in the drama hail from different backgrounds and are depicted as strong, capable, and tough in a completely male domain, like an army. The fact that the story's climax revolves around Mehwish's betrayal and the consequent downfall of her family serves as an

example of how the Pakistani drama reinforces the patriarchal norm of women as unfaithful and disobedient. Not only does this representation deceive the viewers, but it also reinforces gender stereotyping, which is highly degrading to women and their potential in society.

On the other hand, "Sinf-e-Aahan", about the typical stereotypical portrayal of women in Pakistani films, breaks off as it portrays a group of women who are a part of the Pakistan Army. These characters are from different socio-economic, ethnic, and religious groups, and the challenges that they meet and the cultural barriers they encounter differ. From Rabia Safeer, endeavouring to win justice for her martyred brother, Mahjabeen Mastaan, demanding the right to work, to Arzoo Daniel standing up to religious bigotry, the depiction of women is complex and diverse. These dialogues and storylines show how gender and other social identifications, such as ethnicity, class, and religion, are composed, thus providing a complete and rich explication of women's excellence.

Like Sinf-e-Aahan, "Hidden Figures" is a biographical drama film of 2016 that portrays how the characters grapple with racism as well as sexism, like the women of 'Sinf-e-Aahan' who struggle with cultural and socio-economic constraints. Some Indian movies like "Darlings", "Thappad", and Hollywood movies like "Wonder Woman" depict women's empowerment through their characters. Another famous Pakistani author, Bapsi Sidhwa, discusses the cultural degradation and marginalization of Hindu widows in India in her novel 'Water'. Khan (2020) has also shed light on this novel in her paper, "An Intersectional Feminist Reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's Water". Audre Lorde's "Sister Outsider" is a vital contribution to intersectional feminism, consisting of essays as well as speeches that have touched upon race, gender, sexual orientation, and the issues of class. She also notes that the current mainstream feminism movement does not have a structure or incorporate the experiences of all women, like women of colour and marginalized groups. Another Pakistani drama, "Ghisi Piti Mohabbat", depicts characters from various ethnic backgrounds and gender conflicts, coupled with ethnicity and class differences. The socio-political drama "Sang e Mar Mar" analyses ethnic and class barriers as well as gender through the narration of a Pashtun woman's life. This shows us how, within this ethnic group, men use tradition and class matters to cage women, thus depriving them of their freedom.

Discussion

Mere Paas Tum Ho:

Qamar has portrayed Mehwish, the female protagonist of MPTH, as a materialistic and greedy woman depicted in the dialogues of the male characters.

> “And you try to remember! How badly you were chasing me, talking about big dreams, and after marriage, you put me in this small flat. (Mehwish from the drama "Mere Pass Tum Ho" episode 2)

The above dialogue shows how Mehwish tries to belittle her husband and criticize the flat they are living in, and does not provide the luxuries he promised her before marriage. Her language portrayed the image of weak women who are likely to be lured by men who promise them good lives and rich futures. Women's image is projected as ungrateful by uttering these dialogues.

> “I have dealt with the anti-corruption department as well, and I don’t fear them either. Besides the necklace, I’m also thinking about purchasing Monti’s car.”

These lines represent women; a kind of gender whose happiness is equivalent to the material possessions they own. To meet social responsibilities as well as to fulfill the needs and wants of women, men need to adopt unethical ways. Through the character of Mehwish, all the lady characters are portrayed as emotionally greedy and incite their husbands to do immoral things to get what they want. In this scene, where Mehwish tells her husband that she wants a necklace and a car to get a better status in society, Danish is willing to earn quick money even if it means doing wrong things and even if he risks being arrested. It is depicted in such a way that there are always women who are behind men’s crimes.

> “She is an ill-mannered woman; she doubts a lot! If she were here, she might have caught him with his collar. She would be mad if she had seen him with Maria, then she might have started shouting that you are flirting with your secretary.” (Dialogue from MPTH)

Married women are depicted as overly critical and have a feeling of mistrust of their husbands. Some of the stereotypical behaviours and characteristics that are attributed to them include being judgmental and emotional. Women are expected not to express any hostility or anger when they find out that the males are cheating on them, and if they do, they are social misfits. Shehwar Ahmad’s wife is said to be mannerless for insulting him when she found him flirting with a secretary. She does not meet the cultural norms where a woman is expected to be submissive, patient, tolerant, and just a spectator observing whatever the husband does.

> "A girl feels overjoyed when she is heavily priced by a trader/dealer like you."

(Digital. TV, 14:49, Epi11). In the subject of gender objectification, this portrayal of a woman implies Fredrickson & Roberts' (1995) assertion that Women's Bodies Are Looked at, Evaluated, and Always Potentially Objectified, p. 175). Endorsement of such abusive remarks by Shahwar and Danish continues throughout, thus reinforcing females' status as mere objects in the context of the Pakistani traditional domain.

> **Shahwar:** I can offer you 50 million."
>
> **Danish:** For what?
>
> **Shahwar:** For divorcing Mehwish. [15:08, Epi 11]

The above exchange between two main male characters in the play MPTH shows that the playwright is very sure that the people of Pakistan will not ban him from writing further plays for national television networks, although Qamar has received much criticism from some sections of Pakistani society that are pro-feminist.

> "You seem to be an intelligent businessman. However, you have shocked me here while pricing her. You were offering 50 million (PKR) to purchase this worthless girl." (35:24, Epi 12)

These words are probably the most illustrative example of how Qamar substitutes a woman with a saleable object. While Qamar makes use of male characters to objectify and commodify women, Umera Ahmed comes across as relatively more empowering and articulate for a female protagonist. Danish directly addresses Shahwar at different places, which means that Mehwish occupies the position of a free woman at a very low standard.

> "Did you spend unpaid time with him? How stupid of you! I, though his wife, did not live with him without payment. He pays me five million per month even when I live in America" (03:54, Epi 20).

The conversation raises the issue of how Maham links her values and the connection with the salary and other material benefits. This is a commentary on the societal notion that materialism brings about the degeneration of interpersonal relations and the general moral fabric. By saying that she did not live with her husband without payment, Maham simply turns marriage into a business transaction with no regard for the bond shared between the couple or morality. This representation may lead to the continuation of demeaning attitudes toward females as being motivated solely by money in relations. This statement erodes the sanctity of marriage and relations.

> "Ask him if God can forgive, why can't he forgive? There have been several such cases where a person remarried the one, he divorced; why can't he?"

“Divorce happens in marriage, not in love, and marriage, infidelity is enough to change a man. And if there were forgiveness for infidelity, then wouldn’t men become God?” (Mere Pass Tum Ho, Episode 22, 25:25-26:20)

This line, “Then wouldn’t men become God?” makes the men look more imposing than needed and degrades women as helpless in front of the men. This speech and linguistic feature see men as God, which contributes to an unbelievably ordained altar of chauvinism. This utterance provides a clear and amplified message to the infidel women that they cannot achieve redemption by any man. However, this text does not say much when it comes to punishment for the same sin committed by men. This absence of male figures and constant explicit portrayal of only women’s sins portrays the domination of males over females in this discourse. Much like MPTH, another Pakistani drama, "Humsafar", "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and "Mad Men" (American TV Series), all these promote women as good, pure, self-sacrificing women or as the source of evil and family breakdown. These narratives still retain and continue the patriarchal norms and do not much portray the real and diverse aspects of womanhood and their potentialities, like Mehwish depicted in "Mere Paas Tum Ho."

Sinf-e-Aahan

On the contrary, Sinf-e-Aahan represents that women are not only oppressed by men but also by class, race, ethnicity, and culture, which causes hindrances in the way of their success. This drama shows different challenges faced by women of different backgrounds and how they cope with them. By applying the theory of Intersectional feminism, we will analyze the drama and its dialogues.

> “We’ll have to change our stories and their names at least for my daughter, I can’t have marriage as a final prize because marriage isn’t the ending of a story.”

As a result of the stories from magazines and other forms of mass media, women are put into a position to believe that their main purpose and goal in life is to find a husband and be settled in life. Contrary to this perception, this dialogue discards this conventional notion fully and makes us believe that there are many things to do for us in life, rather than just marriage. It is necessary to raise powerful narratives and reconsider the female characters and the norms and practices of what has been taking place. In such ways, their minds could be transformed, and future generations made to be fully independent.

> "I want to create my own identity, not just be known by my brother's name."

Rabia is a high-class woman from a rich family, and her brother, being a soldier in the army, gives her another status. She's unable to make for herself an independent life away from her family, which strongly depicts gender issues and roles within societies. This dialogue highlights her struggle to escape the figure of her brother and be an individual, to be recognized for her accomplishments.

> "Being a Pukhtun girl, it's not easy to join the army, but I can't give up on my dream".

Shaista's character brings out the intersection of gender and cultural identity. She had social barriers too, due to her strict Pukhtun culture of conservatism. This is evident in her dialogue as she struggles to conquer cultural norms to chase her dreams, a reality that cements her double oppression since she is a woman of colour.

> "The hardships at home have made me strong; I will make my place in the army".

> "In Balochistan, girls are taught household chores more than education, but I want to build my future".

Pariwesh also signifies the intersection of class, gender, and culture. Socio-economic factors also play a role in her life; she comes from a less fortunate background in Baluchistan, and her struggle to succeed despite limited resources economically is a result of her desire to succeed as a woman and a Pakistani.

> "I am proud to be a Christian, and I will prove that we are also a part of this country".

Gender and religious identity are introduced through the captivated character Arzoo. Besides this, she is a Christian who lives in a country where the majority of the population follows the Islamic religion, which also contributes to her suffering. The dialogue shows off her strong religious beliefs and her fight for her place in society and in the nation.

> "The friendship between Pakistan and Sri Lanka is also evident in the army".

As an international cadet from Sri Lanka, Nathmy contributes to the dimension of internationality and revitalizes the values of nationality in harmony with gender. They also show the barriers and sisterhood that cross national borders and the multiplicity of struggles that are associated with being a woman in the exchange program.

> “My mother says that girls shouldn't be so free that they forget their limits, but I want to understand the true meaning of freedom”.

For instance, Mahjabeen, from a liberal background in Karachi, still experiences traditional culture pressure from her mother, who thinks there are certain barriers when it comes to the freedom of a girl. The conflict in Mahjabeen’s military experience is about asserting her independence and fighting the cultural oppression one sometimes receives from their loved ones.

Conclusion

The critical examination of the dramas “Mere Paas Tum Ho” and “Sinf-e-Aahan” within the framework of intersectional feminism shows the extent to which media portrayals affect how people perceive women and men within society. Specifically, Intersectional feminism, which asserts that women are more than just their gender and that gender intersects with numerous other aspects of identity, is imperative in capturing the heterogeneity of women and how they experience their worlds differently. Unfortunately for many, 'Mere Paas Tum Ho' sends out regressive messages and paints a highly prejudicial picture that is reminiscent of toxic masculinity and consists of demeaning depictions of women. On the other hand, "Sinf-e-Aahan" is about a woman's tribe and represents a beautiful message of women's power, variety, and spirit.

Lastly, through an analysis of these interactive dramas through the lens of intersectional feminism, it becomes clear that the media should evolve from presenting women in such ill-minded ways. When media integrate intersectionality, more realistic and positive images of women are portrayed, as the experiences of women are not homogeneous. This shift has not only empowered women and proven women's rights, but also opened and changed the commonly held perceptions of society about gender issues. Examples such as comparing the drama "Mere Paas Tum Ho" to "Sinf-e-Aahan" reveal that although the stereotypical representation of women is still present, we see the emergence of change towards depicting women better in the media. It is necessary to create more media content that encourages gender equality strengthening, which carefully describes the experiences of women and their roles today, and contributes to the development of an equal society. By depicting a variety of characters and a multilayered narrative, Sinf-e-Aahan makes viewers reevaluate the traditional concept of gender roles and recognize the power of inclusivity. It challenges patriarchal systems not through rebellion, but by highlighting resilience, discipline, and empowerment. The media influences change in society, and when based on true stories of suffering and victory, the media becomes an instrument of learning and reform. After this comparative analysis, it is clear that

responsible storytelling is necessary, which takes into account the multiplicity of women and can be used to promote social development (Ahmad, Sultan Abbasi, 2019).

Recommendations

It is suggested that future researchers could widen the scope of this study by examining an increased number of Pakistani dramas over long durations of time, different languages, and geographical locations as a means of having a more detailed overview of the female image in media. These differences and similarities between the cultures of gender representation could be found through a summative examination of Pakistani and international dramas. Also, it is likely that studying audience reception (by such means as surveys or interviews) would be helpful in determining how these portrayals are interpreted and shaped by viewers. The authors of different genders and social backgrounds can also write things about male and female characters, and researchers can investigate the presence of biases. A further in-depth analysis could be provided by the application of other theoretical perspectives to the problem of gender roles and their intersection in televised products, such as postcolonial feminism, critical discourse analysis, or media framing theory.

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Bushra Nadeem, Student - BS (English), Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad.

Usama Javed Iqbal, Lecturer, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad.