



RESEARCH PAPER

Depiction of Liberalism in Pakistani Urdu Drama: A Cultivation and Feminist Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The present research deals with identification of liberalism, use of gendered language and portrayal of women in Pakistani Urdu drama content. Urdu dramas which were shown on Pakistani channels during prime time, from 1st January 2016 to 1st March 2018 were considered the population of the present research. Sampling frame was developed by making a list of the most popular drama as reported by the middle class of Multan and two of the most frequently reported dramas were selected for analysis. A quantitative content analysis of all the scenes of dramas BESHARAM and O' RANGREZA was conducted whereas feminist analysis was done to observe the gender representation in the title of selected dramas. The results indicated that content of Urdu dramas is showing liberal content in much abundance and mainly through women representation. Moreover gender discrimination has been high on agenda and gender biased language has frequently been used. The content developers of Pakistani Urdu drama must focus on the culture and norms of a Muslim society and must not follow the traditions set by the drama industry of the neighboring countries blindly.

Introduction

TV delivers education, information and entertainment so it has strongest impact on the lives of individuals of Pakistani society (Ali, Jan & Bukhari, 2013). According to Newcomb, Horac and Harish (1994) people are exposed to a variety of cultures; their social issues and problems through television. As confirmed by Holbert, Kwak and Shah (2003) in their research that the routine life of individuals is very much affected by TV viewing. Pakistani media is not only under the influence of western media but as described by Murtaza (2007) it is also severely

affected by the Hindu cultural values because of living with them for decades. Cable television channels add to this scenario due to the low cost and easy access its viewership is rapidly growing (Zia, 2003) and so are its effect.

Under the regime of General Pervaiz Musharraf the Pakistani media was liberalized in the year 2002 (Gul, Obaid& Ali, 2017). The present research is of vital importance because following the paradigm of powerful media effects we know that whatever viewers view on television they are affected by that content. So this paradigm leads us to assume that whatever entertainment content Pakistani Urdu channels are depicting especially in the form of drama must be affecting its viewers. The results of this study will determine the cultivation effects of the content shown on television on the mindset of the viewers. This research is helpful in determining the role of Urdu drama in spreading liberal thoughts among the viewers.

Literature Review

The power of media cannot be denied as it can influence the minds of the viewers as Baran (2004) said that our lives are impregnated by the media. Television has become an indispensable part of today's world as Sigman (2007). According to Besley (2008) social and financial patterns of the world have changed because of television. Spingel (1992) concluded that our views about religion, celebrity, politics and fashion have greatly influenced by television.

Ali (2001) concluded that foreign culture is changing the social and cultural values of the people of Lahore. Food, architect, fashion, social behavior, all are under the influence of foreign channels. Gulam (2006) proved that Pakistani female viewers are adopting Indian culture shown in their dramas Television has also influenced the religious thoughts of many people who watch foreign channels as Saleem (1994) concluded in his research that socio-cultural and religious views of Pakistani viewers are greatly influenced by dish antenna programs. Shahbaz (2004) proved in his research that Star plus dramas are portraying a mix culture, which is a combination of western and eastern culture; these dramas are responsible for the promotion of liberalism in Pakistani society and youth.

Tariq (2005) analyzed in their research that Pakistani culture is very well represented in Pakistan television content. Juni, Kareem and Alam (2014) conducted a survey research study and their study findings indicated that majority of the respondents prefer to watch prime time Pakistan television Urdu dramas for entertainment but the modern dressing style portrayed in dramas is affecting the native culture of the respondents.

Zia (2014) concluded that Pakistan television Urdu dramas are bringing a change in the attitude of youth through the cultivation of alien cultural norms. Qurat-ul-ain (1998) established in her research that traces of foreign culture have been observed in Pakistan television Urdu dramas which are affecting the

youth. Saleem (1994) discovered that the most popular foreign channel among the people of Pakistan is ZEE TV. This viewing habit is having an impact on their language.

The themes and production of Pakistani television Urdu dramas is getting badly affected due to the invasion of foreign culture. Shabir, Safdar and Imran (2013) concluded that GEO TV is not promoting Pakistani culture rather alien culture is usually presented in their drama content. Zaid bin Ismail (2004) suggested that by exposure to the television programs, the views of the students of the University of Punjab have changed to a greater degree about parental authorities, women's freedom, coeducation etc. Shah and Khurshid (2017) concluded that the way dramas, news and advertisements are presented on television, this is having a strong influence on the viewers and also this is bringing conflicting effects on Pakistani youth and social and religious values system of the society.

Ahtesham (1998) proved in his research that the depiction of marriage ceremonies in Pakistani Television Network dramas are under the influence of Indian and western culture. Television viewing has affected every sphere of life. According to Shaikh (2007) except the education approach, satellite television viewing has brought changes in every field of life like cuisine, culinary practices, dressing style, life style, social traditions, celebration of events, music traditions and comprehension of foreign language(s).

Karim and Shehzad (2016) conducted a research study to observe the social and psychological behavior of Pakistani youth after watching romantic scenes of Pakistani dramas and they concluded that in rural areas greater percentage of females are getting affected by it. Talking about the representation of women in media it is a common observation that media is objectifying women as Lin and Kulik (2002) argues that media representation of women is focusing on the looks and appearance of women rather than on their efficiency and performance. Mills (2005) refers to the theory of linguistic determinism to suggest that differences in the structures of languages actually determine the different views societies have of the world. Furthermore, it is suggested that the language of a culture shapes the way its speakers see the world (p.63). Therefore, frequent use of gendered biased language in Pakistani dramas is promoting gender discrimination and female subjugation.

Media has the tendency to personalize, sensationalize and demonize in their content to gain the attention of the viewers. (Tester, 1994, Thomson, 1998&Litosseliti, 2006). According to Fairclough (1995) Media sometimes use adversarial language to popularize their content. Media has the power to let the reader think in particular perspective by presenting femininities and masculinities in particular frames.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical support is taken from a core theory of media effects that is "Cultivation of social reality through TV", proposed by communication scholar George Gerbner in 1960s and Mills (1995) feminist critical discourse analysis. According to Gerbner one function of television is enculturation (Gerbner, et.al, 1986). With the help of television people start adopting new trends and thus form a new enriched culture. Cultivation theory further proposes that when an individual exposes himself to television content for longer periods of time they start living in a television reality, which is actually not based on facts but just television content (Tony, 2000). In fact this influence goes to such an extent that their views and perception about reality is based on what they repeatedly see and hear on television. According to McQuail (1993) Gerbner does not consider Television as window to the world or reflection of the world's reality, in fact he considered television as a world in itself.

Mainstreaming happens when similar kind of content is shown on different television channels. For viewers these television symbols and messages become more influential as compared to the other sources of information and thus they start think the way television is guiding them (Baron & Davis, 2003).

Resonance occurs when television depiction of reality is supported by the real world. So resonance is when, what we see on television is reinforced by the real world experiences. This gives the audience a "double dose" that results in an increase in the cultivation effects (Baron & Davis, 2003).

Through the present research the researchers intend to know how much liberal content and use of gendered language is being shown on Pakistani television so theoretical support is taken from two theories i.e. cultivation analysis and feministic analysis. This will open a new line of research, because whatever content Pakistani Urdu dramas are showing is having cultivation effects on the viewers and gender biasness is also present in the content or in the titles of dramas.

Methodology

The present research is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Data has been analyzed quantitatively to measure the variables and qualitatively to analyze the ideological representation of gendered text in dramas.

Liberalism

Liberalism is the key concept in the following research. Formally it is defined as "political doctrine" with "only one overriding aim: to secure the political conditions that are necessary for the exercise of personal freedom" (Shuklar, 1989). Keeping in mind the requirement of the present research

liberalism is operationalized as “anything contrary to the set and established rules, traditions and practices of the society in search of social and individual liberty.”

Content Analysis

The topic demanded analysis of Pakistani television Urdu drama content to measure the depiction of liberalism presented in it. To achieve the requirements of the study the researchers adopted content analysis as the data collection technique. The research design of content analysis is explained below. As defined by Berger (2005) content analysis is the research technique that is used to measure something from the random sampling of any form of communication. Content analysis helps the researcher to assume the effects of the message on the audience who are exposed to that message.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

This portion deals with the last research question that is related with feminist critical discourse analysis of the titles of selected drams. Mills’ (1995) model is deployed to critically analyze the ideological construction of the text. The researchers have looked for a number of considerations including presupposition and inference, semantic derogation of women in the choices of words to possibly unravel features that are gender-biased.

Population and Sampling

Urdu dramas which were shown on Pakistani channels during prime time, from 1st January 2016 to 1st March 2018 were considered the population of the present research. A pilot survey was conducted from one hundred females belonging from middle class families. They were asked about their most favorite Pakistani Urdu dramas. A list of all the responses indicated that the selected dramas were the most frequently reported popular Urdu dramas. Both of these dramas were selected for analysis to find out the potential existence of liberal content. 24 episodes of ‘Besharam’ and 31 episodes of ‘O Rungreza’ were downloaded by www.youtubecom and www.dramaguru.net.

Variables of the Study

Following variables were studied during the present research

1. Physical intimacy.
2. Modern Dressing style.
3. Luxurious Lifestyle.
4. Language.
5. Taboo norms.
6. Breaking stereotypes.
7. Gendered language

The operational definitions are available with the researchers and will be furnished on demand.

Findings of Content Analysis

To find out the answers of the research questions, 24 episodes of 'Besharam' and 31 episodes of 'O Rungreza' were analyzed. Every scene was considered as the unit of analysis for both the selected dramas.

Depiction of Physical Intimacy in 'Besharam' & 'O Rungreza'

As shown in Graph 4.1, 10.8% scenes of the drama 'Besharam' and 33.8% scenes of 'O Rungreza' are having the physical intimacy between the characters of opposite gender.

Depiction of Luxurious Life Style in 'Besharam' & 'O Rungreza'

The result of content analysis indicates that in 35.1% scenes of 'Besharam' and 12.7% scenes of 'O Rungreza' the Luxurious Life Style has been depicted.

Depiction of English Language in 'Besharam' & 'O Rungreza'

As shown in Graph 4.1, the use of English language in 'Besharam' is 10.8% and in 'O Rungreza' it is 15.6%.

Depiction of Modern Dressing Style in 'Besharam' & 'O Rungreza'

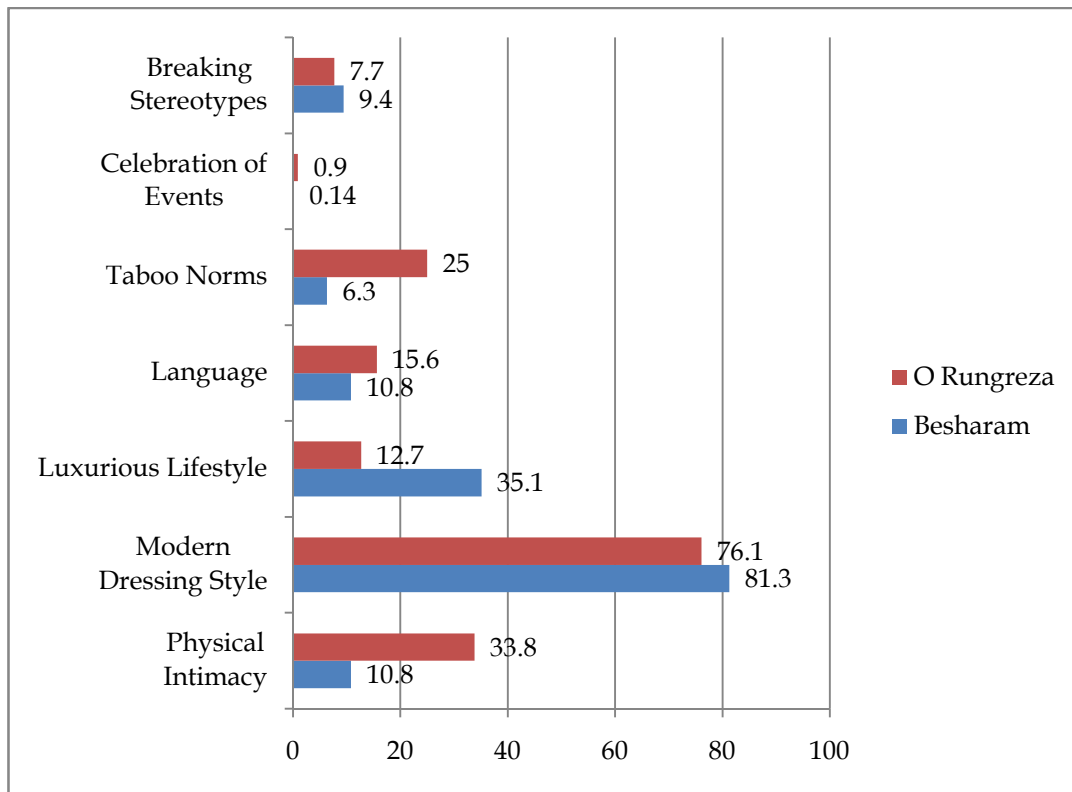
As shown in Graph 4.1, 81.26% scenes of the drama 'Besharam' and 76.15% scenes of the drama 'O Rungreza' were having the variable of Modern Dressing style.

Depiction of Taboo Norms in 'Besharam' & 'O Rungreza'

The Graph 4.1 shows that 6.3% scene of 'Besharam' where as 25% scenes of 'O Rungreza' were depicting the taboo norms.

Depiction of Breaking Stereotypes in 'Besharam' & 'O Rungreza'

Graph 4.1 illustrates that 36% scenes of 'Besharam' and 7.71% scenes 'O Rungreza' were depicting the variable of Breaking Stereotypes.



Depiction of liberalism in Pakistani Urdu dramas BESHARAM and O'RANGREZA

Discussion

After the liberalization of media by General Pervaiz Musharaf in 2002, Pakistani media was introduced to new thoughts, ideas and modernism (Gul, Obaid, & Ali, 2017). A mushroom growth had been witnessed in the private television networks all over the country. The intense literature review of the related content has made the researchers conclude that the content of the Pakistani television Urdu drama has certainly changed and it is also having some impacts on the viewers (Zia, 2014). Therefore, this research study probed whether or not Pakistani television drama's content has traces of liberalism use of gendered language.

The first research question of the present research was about the **physical intimacy in TV Urdu dramas?** The results of this research study showed that both the dramas were showing content having scenes of physically intimacy to some extent. Pakistani society has its own moral and religious values where such acts are considered seriously objectionable. But due to the repeated exposure of such content viewers do not find these acts offensive. If we look around us we can see a visible social change that was not there even a couple of decades ago (Happer &

Filo, 2013). Media is playing a very important role in cultivating the minds of viewers.

The second research question was about the promotion of **luxurious life style of elite class**. The results of the study have shown that there is promotion of luxurious life style in both the selected dramas. The percentage of depiction of luxurious life style is more in 'Besharam' as compared to 'O Rungreza'. The results of the present research are concurred to the results of the results of Huma (2015). But both the dramas are promoting the life style of elites. While majority of Pakistani population belongs to middle class (Nayab, 2011). Instead of giving coverage to the life style of middle class,

Another research question investigated **promotion of modern dressing style in the Pakistani dramas**. The results showed that the content of both dramas was promoting modern dressing style. Almost eighty percent scenes of both the dramas were portraying women with modern dressing style. Pakistan is an Islamic country and western attires are not a part of its culture. But characters of dramas are repeatedly viewed wearing tight shirts, tights, revealing cloths (Abbas, 2018). No doubt Pakistani females are adopting the dresses of other cultures (Ali et al., 2015) and acculturation is taking place.

The next research question was about the depiction of **taboo norms**. The depiction of taboo norms was observed in both the selected television dramas. But the scenes depicting taboo norms are four times greater in 'O Rungreza' as compared to 'Besharam'. This trend has given rise to the discussion of taboos in the society (Yalkin & Veer, 2018). As assumed by cultivation theory researchers media creates a reality that is not based on facts but make people to believe the situations that are shown on the media. This is one of the biggest reasons why the social norms in society are deteriorating.

Another research question of the present research was about **women shown breaking stereotypes**. The researcher dug out the answer to this question through the content analysis of the television dramas. According to the findings of this trend exists in the dramas but the percentage is very low as compared to the other variables which were designed to measure liberalism. The reason of the existence of this trend is that Pakistan is a traditional society (Huda & Ali, 2015). And this is a very big reason that media shows women in mostly suppressed roles (Abbas, 2018).

The sixth research question of this study focused on **the use of English words/sentences**. The results indicated that characters of both the dramas were using English language words quite often. This indicates that both the dramas are showing characters speaking English as a trend. It is a matter of grave concern that the Pakistani dramas are using unnecessary English words. Viewers adopt English words when they see characters on television using them (Khan & Arif, 2009). This is how enculturation is taking place in the domain of language.

The last question was about the use of gendered language in Pakistani Urdu dramas' titles. The findings of the study show that the titles of the drama are mostly using gendered language which is cultivating negative female images in the minds of viewers as well as degrading and disrespecting women at large.

Feminist Analysis of Dramas' Titles

O' Rangreza'

Literally speaking, the vocabulary item 'Rangreza' refers to the person who dyes object/s and dying of object/s results in conversion of physical and somehow inner change of the entity, be it animate or inanimate. The major character in the drama is (Qasim) who plays the role of 'dye wala' in the drama 'O Rangreza' and has been remained the one who saves the lives of family. The title presents Qasim the one who fetches colors in females' lives in the drama. Here the male supremacy is shown by depicting his role as a family savior. He is the one who has been projected as the protector of the honor of the family women. Moreover, he is empowered to bring color and happiness in women's life. He sacrifices his own happiness for the sake of family calm and peace and this depicts his traditional role being the male in the society. The ideology of male as head of the family is being emphasized through his actions. He even apparently is being shown submissive in the drama but leads all the females' characters who are portrayed bold in the drama. So females' characters are bold but lack decency, maturity and character. He is depicted as sober, calm and decent whereas female characters are depicted immature and stubborn. He wins the heart of the family with all these qualities. The ideology of male being the wise, intelligent and role model is silently being incorporated in the viewers' mind. Women are shown immature and lack all the wisdom necessary to run a family or to deal with family affairs. Wood (1994: p. 231) says that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible. Doyle (1989) expressed that media portray and reinforce the long-standing cultural ideas of masculinity and femininity. So in nutshell 'O Rangreza' is another traditional drama that marginalizes females' positive role in the society and projects only male as being wise and intelligent.

Be-Shram

Mills (1995) says 'background knowledge' as an essential element in process of interpreting phrases. The lexical item consists of a root word 'shram' and a prefix 'Be'. The prefix 'Be' negates the meaning of abasement as 'shram is something usually attributed to women only in the male chauvinist society. Be-Shram title is used for Mishal who is a top model in Pakistan by profession in the play. This profession is not considered decent for females in Pakistan therefore she has been labeled as a bad and corrupt woman regardless of her personal conduct and character. She is being judged in the drama only on the basis of her profession. So characters are positioned by attaching specific ideologies with them in media (Hermes, 1995) Being in the modeling profession brings humiliation and shame to her, as shown in the play that her husband calls her characterless lady in

a live show and claims that he gives her respect by marrying her. It is the male who decides the parameter for women to be shameful or shameless. Faludi (1991) points out that a woman is considered strong and successful only if she exemplifies traditional stereotypes of femininity-subservience. Therefore, it has been analyzed that women are presented by media in an andocentric way. Male characters are portrayed in terms of having power. The title of the drama is clearly a semantic derogation of a woman, who is educated, decent and sensible. Mills (1995) says that 'an expression is considered as sexist expression when it supports oppression of women. It promotes an unfair distinction between the sexes' (p. 65).

Conclusion

Cultivation theory of George Gerbner states that "more you watch television; the more you are likely to obtain distorted views on life". The present research also supports the results of the study of Bauer (1964) that despite of the fact that people know content shown on television is fiction but still they believe it and it is having a great impact on their minds.

The results of the content and feminist analyses show that the content shown on the Pakistani television through Urdu dramas is having the traces of liberalism in it. But unfortunately liberalism is being portrayed only through negative presentation of females' characters. They have been labeled as be-sharm and deviation from the norm. Males' portrayal is positive and they are being judged through their work. So media is projecting and presenting derogatory terms for women to belittle their role in society. Almost every scene of each drama is depicting liberalism and put down females characters. All the variable i.e. physical intimacy, luxurious life style, modern dressing style, English language, taboo norms, celebration of events, breaking stereotypes and gendered language were found in both the dramas. But pathetically women have mainly been responsible for all the negativity and moral bankruptcy. It was found that both dramas are depicting a very high ratio of modern dressing style of women just to demean them and reducing their characters to exhibit fashion and glamour in dramas. This is a matter of serious concern for Pakistani dramas as they influence the viewers and especially youth. The content producers must keep in mind the values and culture of Pakistan. Moreover government should take strict action in implementing the relevant laws. Only by adopting these measures we would be able to safe guard Pakistani culture.

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