



Derogatory Portrayal of Female Characters in Pakistani Urdu TV Dramas

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Abstract:

Mass media have acquired an overriding place in the lives of their audience to mold their thoughts. The present research investigates the derogatory portrayal of female characters in Pakistani Urdu TV dramas through a comprehensive analysis of their storyline. Ten top-hit dramas have been taken as the sample. The derogated portrayal of female characters is explored. It is revealed that, in the selected Pakistani TV dramas, men treat women as their personal property. The researchers view that the ethnic-societal structure of the country is based on gender roles which were assigned to both genders during the evolution of norms therefore such phenomena has intruded into media presentations e.g. TV dramas. Since media has the power to influence public opinion, the possible implications of these presentations are prodigious. Further research can be conducted on 'media framing', 'agenda setting theory' and the media's role related to direct, structural, and cultural influences on gender issues.

Keywords: Pakistani media, Urdu dramas, female derogation, power dominance, derogatory portrayal, gender inequality

INTRODUCTION

Mass media play a significant role in the lives of present day human beings of every age and gender: children, boys, girls, men, women and old people. The most prevailing media include newspapers, magazines, books, television, radio and films whereas electronic media influence people more owing to its being more glamorous and entertaining (Shahid, 1999). Media have a crafty impact on us, especially on how we see men and women and their societal roles. Mass media shape and reinforce our positive or negative impressions about genders and their stereotypical roles. For

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decades, mass media were either controlled or dominated by men, though a slightly positive change can be seen through the emerging meagre contribution of women. Women's contribution is raising further issues through their gender-discriminated portrayal both in electronic and print media.

Mass media are not only meant to entertain the people, create awareness and provide information but also throw light on social stereotypes, values and beliefs. In general, a woman is mostly shown as an outranked, submissive and downgraded being made up to perform limited and less valued tasks related to her sexuality and her domesticity which is itself a sign of gender inequality. Feminism challenges the gender-based downgrade of women and urges to shatter the silence on uneven relationship between men and women and wants to revolutionize and create a gender balance. Feminists strongly condemn the shackles of gender inequality and advocate that both men and women should not be restrained by stereotypical gender scripts (Turtle, 1987). Raja (2000) views that "the image of women projected through media intends to reinforce the traditional attitudes and often presents a degrading and humiliating picture of women", and therefore feminists raise their voices for women's rights to value women as humans and not to be treated and degraded as inferior creatures.

Mass media has got the power to modify our thoughts, decision making and understanding of life and the world. Stereotypes created through media are influential tools of socialization, shaping and reinforcing both positive and negative behaviours in human beings (Rider, 2000). Mass media play three major roles in society: a custodian which provides information about what is going on around the world, a contributor in decision making through providing substantial information for a specific matter, and a transformer which brings changes in human attitude (Pervez, 1984). Mass media conveys values by applying social standards (Dominick, 1993). Psychologists consider media as a cultural strength which not only mirrors societal actualities but also molds them (Pervez, 1986). Since TV dramas are considered both leisure and entertainment for their viewers, the representation of women through assigned characters needs to be investigated.

The present research aims to explore; the derogated aspects of women's lives through female characters in the selected Urdu TV dramas. The gender biased roles assigned to the female characters in the selected Urdu TV dramas. The derogated aspects of the assigned domestic roles of female characters in the selected Urdu TV dramas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social constructs of a patriarchal society damage the weaker women. Gee (1999) views a strong link between 'socially-situated identities' and 'socially-situated activities' which contribute to the miseries of marginalized women. These phenomena allow powerful people in a community to commit crimes and violence against the power-deprived individuals. Women in deprivation are mostly among the sufferers being marginalized and weakest creatures, wherein mostly their wealth and earnings are in the hands of their male family members (McPherson, 2012). In such cases, women are more victimized for what they do whereas males are spared from the stigma and discrimination (Bianco & Hunter, 2000).

TV dramas are popular among Pakistani viewers and specifically of housewives. Stereotypical assignment of roles affects our socialized process and has an intense impact on our consciousness (Raja, 2000). Many TV dramas portray premarital and post-marital conditions of both domestic and

working women, wherein women are shown as victims of violence and hardships (Wood, 1994). The media portrays women as weak, submissive and, sometimes, treacherous humans. There seems a patronizing role of mass media in communicating a feeling of inferiority among women (Raja, 2000), since they are shown as a subject to domestication and underrepresentation and their negative representation defaces their image in society.

Society is influenced by the depiction of women in mainstream entertainment e.g. TV dramas. Stereotypical representation of male and female roles and images in media also exposes the psychology of society. Women's portrayal in Urdu TV dramas has not been found investigated in extant literature. The present research endeavours to contribute to the literature by investigating the derogatory portrayal of female characters in Pakistani Urdu TV dramas through an examination of their storylines.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is qualitative-descriptive in nature. The researchers have reviewed the storyline, characters and nature of the derogation of female characters in the selected dramas.

Sampling

Ten Pakistani Urdu TV dramas have been chosen, from popular Pakistani TV channels, for their popularity since the majority of these dramas were on-aired during 'prime-time' i.e. between 8 pm to 10 pm. The following dramas have been chosen as the sample:

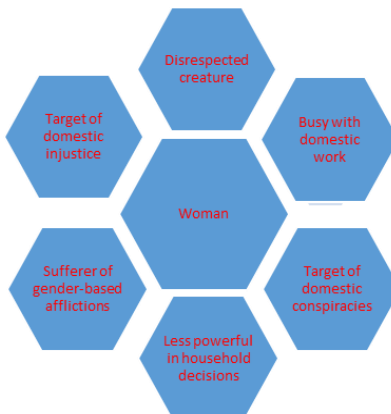
1. Kaneez
2. Adoohri Aurat
3. Daagh
4. Digest Writer
5. Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan
6. Ek Tamanna La Hasil Si
7. Kankar
8. Chup Raho
9. Bheegi Palkein
10. Hamsafar

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Galtung's (1996) proposition of 'negative peace' vs. 'positive peace' and therein mass media's escalatory role have been opted as a base of the theoretical framework to examine the existence and frequency of portrayed issues in the storylines of the selected dramas. Galtung (1996) advocates the proposition to promote peace through balanced reporting to avoid conflict at all levels in different human societies all over the world. In line with Galtung's (1996) propositions, this study explores such phenomena by including the reality, public opinion and solution oriented approach to electronic media by studying the genre of TV dramas in Pakistan.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

All the episodes of selected TV dramas have been reviewed to get a glimpse of their storyline. The researchers have designed the following framework to analyze the representation of women in Pakistani Urdu TV dramas to explore the following aspects of women's lives:



The derogation of women, by other characters irrespective of their gender, portrayed in these dramas has been investigated through female characters.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section comprises a brief overview of the storyline of each of the selected dramas, followed by categories of the characters into protagonist, antagonist, supporting characters, prominent minor characters, derogated characters and derogating characters in tabular form. The derogated characters have been discussed in each drama. At the end of each sub-section, a brief analysis is presented.

Drama 'Kaneez' (A-Plus TV)

The Storyline. The story revolves around a woman, Malkan, who secretly marries Peer Bukht Subhan, a well-known Peer of Lakhi Mahal and sacrifices her desires for the customs of his feudal family. After spending 20 years showing herself as a widow, she faces a very difficult situation when her nephew Kabir wants to marry her daughter Noor Afroz who is the bloodline of Peer Bukht Subhan. At this stage, Malkan decides to break the promise she made with Peer Bukht Subhan years ago that she would never meet him. When Peer Bukht Subhan comes to know that Noor Afroz is his daughter, he becomes confused as he can neither admit his love for Malkan and Noor Afroz nor can own them.

Table 1

Characters Description in Drama 'Kaneez'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Minor Characters	Derogated Characters	Derogatory Characters
Malkan	Bibi Murshad/ Shehbano	Peer Ahram	Mehrbano	Malkan	Peer Bukht Subhan
Noor Afroz	Peer Saleh	Rabail		Noor Afroz	Peer Bukht

				Subhan's mother
Peer Bukht Subhan	Kabir	Amma Kaali	Rabail	Bibi Murshad/ Shehbano
	Banafshe			Peer Saleh Kabir

Derogated Characters. Malkan is a 'kamzat mureedni' who falls in love with a religious-feudal lord Peer Bukht Subhan. After their secret marriage, her degradation starts. She is blackmailed by Peer Bukht Subhan's dying mother to divorce her son. For 20 years, Malkan spends her life showing herself a widow. Later, Malkan along with her daughter Noor Afroz come to stay as maids at Peer Bukht Subhan's palace "Lakhi Mahal". These two ladies stay there as maids to hide their real relationship with Peer Bukht Subhan, and they are often insulted by his wife Bibi Murshad.

Noor Afroz is also an ill-fate character. Peer Bukht Subhan's nephew Peer Saleh is an adulterer who is habitual of abusing housemaids. He catches sight of Noor Afroz and has his evil desires on her. He gets the opportunity when Noor Afroz is sent by Bibi Murshad to Mehrbano's house, a sister-in-law of Peer Bukht Subhan, to provide Rabail, a niece of Peer Bukht Subhan, a good company. Peer Saleh locks her in a storeroom and threatens her that if she does not cooperate with him, he will kill her. He takes Noor Afroz to an uninhabited farmhouse and makes her run so that he can chase her for a fun. Luckily, Rabail informs Peer Subhan who rescues Noor Afroz in the nick of time and renounces his relations with Peer Saleh to avoid any social stigma.

Rabail is also among the degraded characters. She is degraded by Kabir who is her university fellow and also Noor Afroz's maternal cousin. Rabail likes Kabir. When Kabir comes to know that Rabail is from the family of Peer Bukht Subhan, he marries Rabail secretly and does not disclose her as his wife publically.

Brief Analysis. All these female characters have been derogated irrespective of their social status e.g. as a Mureedni (Kaneez/Noor Afroz) or a Peerzadi (Rabail). Peer Bukht Subhan is not ready to disclose his relationship with Malkan publically because of the prestige of his Peeri and the fear of society. Peer Saleh plays with women for pleasure. Rabail becomes a victim of Kabir's revenge.

Drama 'Adhoori Aurat' (Geo TV)

The Storyline. Maryam, an innocent and educated girl, lives happily with her parents and siblings Sultan and Amina. She prefers eastern traditions and cultural values in her life. Her parents arrange her engagement with a medical doctor Umair. Her fantasy is shattered when she and her sister catch Umair red-handed having an affair with another woman. Maryam loses her trust in men and starts thinking that all men are characterless. Later, she gets married to another man Zayan. Her married life takes a new turn when Afshan, Zayan's sister, is sent back to her parents' home by her in-laws with a demand that Zayan would marry Faiza, Afshan's sister-in-law (nand), who has a liking for Zayan. Maryam, who believes in the power of love, sacrifices everything to save her marital life but Zayan divorces her to save his sister's marital life. Maryam has a daughter by then and has to bring up her daughter Arshiya alone. On the other side, Faiza gives birth to an abnormal baby boy and gets divorced from Zayan as she is fed up with her life with him. Now Zayan repents and goes to Maryam for forgiveness and reconciliation. She forgives him and starts living a compromised life with him.

Table 2

Characters Description in Drama 'Adhoori Aurat'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Minor Characters	Derogated Characters	Derogatory Characters
Maryam	Faiza, Zayn's second wife	Maryam's Father	Umair, Maryam's ex fiancé	Maryam	Zayan
	Zayan	Maryam's Mother	Maryam's Aunt	Arshiya	Faiza
	Afshan	Maryam's Brother, Sultan		Afshan	Afshan
	Zayan's Mother	Maryam's Sister, Amina			Zayan's Mother
		Arshiyah, Maryam's daughter			Faiza's Brother
					Faiza's Mother Umair

Derogated Characters. Maryam's married life proves to be a bed of thorns for her. She faces sufferings while raising her daughter Arshiya as a single parent. She loses her father and brother in an accident. Zayan is not with Maryam when she is fighting against cancer after the birth of Arshiya rather he has relations with Arshiya's babysitter and with Faiza. Later he marries Faiza when Maryam is hospitalized. The whole drama shows Maryam as a degraded creature.

Afshan is another distressed character. Although she does not suffer as much as Maryam does, she is also degraded by her in-laws. She is forced by her in-laws to get her brother Zayan to marry Faiza. On refusal, she is sent back to her parents and is not allowed to meet her minor son.

Brief Analysis. The drama shows that a vicious woman in a patriarchal society never feels the pain of another woman but tries to grab happiness for herself at any cost. This is what Faiza does with Afshan. Later, Faiza, after getting married to Zayan, throws Maryam out of Zayan's house and life.

Drama 'Daagh' (ARY Digital)

The Storyline. The story of "Daagh" revolves around the life of a housewife, Umama. She is from a middle-class family and lives with her parents and two sisters. Her father is conservative in his thoughts about daughters. Umama marries Murad who is also from a middle-class family. He lives with his mother and two sisters. Murad's cousin Deeba likes him and wants to marry him. But, he chooses her class fellow Umama as his life partner and marries her. Umama gives birth to four daughters. On this, her mother-in-law taunts her and demands a baby boy as an heir. She pressurises her son to marry Deeba. After Murad's marriage with Deeba, Deeba forces him to divorce Umama and kick out her and her daughters from both his life and the house. Deeba gives birth to twin baby boys but they are found abnormal. Now Murad feels sorry and goes to see Umama for reconciliation. Whereas, after the divorce, she gets a good job and starts living peacefully with her daughters in her father's house.

Table 3

Characters Description in Drama 'Daagh'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Derogated Character	Derogatory Characters
Umama	Murad Deeba Murad's Mother	Umama's sisters Umama' Paternal Cousin Murad's Elder Sister	Umama	Umama's Father Umama's Paternal Aunt Murad Deeba Murad's Mother Murad's Younger Sister

Derogated Character. Throughout the drama, Umama is derogated. Her father dislikes having daughters and considers them less worthy creatures. Her paternal aunt disapproves of her being chosen as a daughter-in-law. After her marriage, she is degraded by her in-laws especially by her mother-in-law for giving birth to four daughters and for not having a son. Her younger sister-in-law (nand) also insults her when Umama shows her concerns about the man she wants to marry. All the while, Deeba never misses a chance to spoil Umama's image before her mother-in-law and Murad and finally succeeds in getting married with Murad ousting Umama and her daughters from the house.

Brief Analysis. The drama highlights the typical notion that a daughter does not bring happiness to the parents but a son does. It is considered the fault of a woman if she does not give birth to a son, the heir of the family. The lyrics of the title song of the drama highlight this bitter reality: "Yeh Tamam Zindgi Ek Daagh Hai" (All life is a scar).

Drama 'Digest Writer' (Hum TV)

The Storyline. The central figure Farida belongs to a lower middle class family. Farida, being a daughter is considered inferior to her brother Farhan by the parents since they want him to be a doctor for the family's better future. Her family is facing financially tough times, and to support the family, she decides to become a digest writer with the pen name of "Rashk-e-Hina". Her family is strictly against her writing stories. Despite their opposition, she continues writing for digests. She starts liking Shahryar Ahmed who admires her writing skills, but several problems arise in their relationship. Farida's parents intend an arrange-marriage of hers but fail to find any suitable match. Finally, they marry her to a paternal cousin Shoukat who is barely educated. After her marriage, she is insulted, tormented and degraded by her in-laws for her writings. In the end, all realize their cruelties and admit that Farida is right. Shoukat also has a great appreciation for Farida for managing the house and children.

Table 4

Characters Description in Drama 'Digest Writer'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Minor Characters	Derogated Character	Derogatory Characters
Farida	Shoukat	Shahryar	Skiandar	Farida	Shoukat

(Rashk-e-Hina)

Rida Anmol, a writer	Farida's Mother	Bint-e-Hawa	Shoukat's Mother
Mazhar Hayat, a writer	Farida's Sisters		Shoukat's Younger Sister
	Shoukat's Elder Sister		Mazhar Hayat Farida's Father

Derogated Characters. Farida is forced by her father to marry her paternal cousin Shoukat. Later, it is revealed that this marriage is a wrong decision since Shoukat and his mother dislike Farida for her writing. Shoukat does not allow Farida to touch pen and paper. She is degraded for giving birth to a daughter by her mother-in-law. Once, Farida suspects that Shoukat has relations with other women. Rather than amending his ways, he expresses his hatred for her and her writings. On this, Farida leaves Shoukat's house and starts living with her parents. After many years, she decides to make a choice: either continue her marriage with Shoukat or marry Shahryar Ahmed. She finds out that her children will choose to live with their father instead of a stepfather.

Two other characters, Rida Anmol and Mazhar Hayat, also derogate her. Rida deceives Farida when she signs an agreement to write a drama. Later, Farida finds that Rida has got the credit for being the writer of that drama. This deception is a great shock for her. Mazhar Hayat, a drama writer, scorns Farida and says that it is the downfall of drama as women have started writing. He disapproves of her being a digest writer.

Brief Analysis. The drama questions the conception that a woman's job is to look after her house, and if she is a writer she would not manage her domestic responsibilities. Writing for magazines and television has been considered a men's profession. Farida proves it wrong when she wins the Pride of Performance Award. During the ceremony, she is declared the first Pakistani woman to win this award for her writing services for TV.

Drama 'Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan' (Geo TV)

The Storyline. The central figure, Saba, is married to her paternal cousin Arfeen. Saba's other cousin, Adil also likes her. Arfeen's mother does not like Saba. She plots a conspiracy against Saba as she locks her and Adil in one room and blames them for adultery. Arfeen asks his mother and Saba to swear upon Quran and speak the truth. His mother, at once, takes the swear showing she is right. While Saba does not say anything to prove herself innocent. Arfeen divorces her. After this, her father marries her to a driver and disowns her. Saba's second husband is a cruel person and often tortures her badly. He also divorces and throws her out of his house in the middle of the night accusing her of infidelity. Arfeen settles in America, marries another woman there, and realizes that he has married a 'modern' woman who cannot be either a good wife or a mother, and finally he divorces her. Now the consequences of his actions have started. Arfeen's one sister is divorced from her husband, and the other is widowed. When Arfeen's mother knows that she is dying from cancer, she confesses her sin. She admits that she locked Saba and Adil in a room and that she lied placing her hand on the Holy Quran. Everyone is in great shock. They all go to Saba for forgiveness who is working as a maid in a home. She forgives them all but she cannot trust them again. After many

years, after the death of Saba, her daughter from the second husband, Sara who does not know the bitter reality, comes to stay with Arfeen following Saba's last wish. Later Sara's marriage is arranged with Arfeen's son, Haider. When she finds the cruelties afflicted on her mother, she feels that she would betray her mother by marrying Haider, a member of the family who tormented her mother. She leaves that place silently on the day of her marriage leaving everyone in shock. In the end, Haider finds her and tells the truth and convinces her to come back home. She returns, and they live happily. The last scene of the drama shows Arfeen sitting near Saba's grave and repenting over his wrongs.

Table 5

Characters Description in Drama 'Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Minor Characters	Derogated Characters	Derogatory Characters
Saba Kareem	Arfeen's Father, Qasim Abbas	Adil, Saba's cousin	Saba's Sister, Aqsa	Saba Kareem	Arfeen's Father, Qasim Abbas
Arfeen Abbas	Arfeen's Mother, Shakeela Abbas Adil's father	Saba's Mother, Safia Saba's Father, Karim	Adil's Mother	Adil	Arfeen's Mother, Shakeela Abbas Adil's father
	Saba's Second Husband, Amin	Arfeen's Son, Haider Abbas			Saba's Second Husband, Amin
	Arfeen's elder sisters	Saba's Daughter, Sara			Arfeen's elder sisters
	Arfeen's Second Wife, Mahroosh				Saba's Mother, Safia Saba's Father Karim

Derogated Characters. The story shows how Saba is derogated by her parental family and both of her husbands, first by Arfeen and later by Amin. Cunningly, Arfeen's mother shows her hatred against her by accusing her of adultery and swearing on the Holy Quran. Saba refuses to swear on her turn to defend herself, thinking that no one will believe in her. Arfeen immediately divorces her in front of all the family to show his distrust in her. Everyone hates her believing in Arfeen's mother's words and her swear on the Holy Quran. Saba's life becomes difficult though later the guilty ones suffer because of their wrongs to her.

Brief Analysis. This is a story of regrets and betrayal, with a woman protagonist (Saba) who is put in difficult circumstances but has a strong belief. The drama highlights that if a woman (i.e. Arfeen's mother, Saba's ex mother-in-law) covers her head, holds a rosary and offers prayers, she is considered righteous and pious compared to the others. Many people who look pious do prove

themselves horrible and vicious e.g. Arfeen's mother. The drama also tries to highlight the importance of trust in the relationship between husband and wife. Trust is important to make a marriage successful. Likewise, trust is also necessary between parents and their children otherwise parents may lose their children forever because of their distrust.

Drama 'Ek Tamanna Lahasil Si' (Hum TV)

The Storyline. Nadia is an innocent teenage girl who comes to attend the wedding of her cousin Hira with her mother. Her cousin Mohsin (Hira's brother) asks for her hand and they get married. After the marriage, Nadia sees the real dark side of Mohsin's character. Mohsin follows the instructions of his mother Ruqaiya and sister Hira. His father and younger brother reproach him for his misbehaviour with Nadia. They try to make him realise to respect and love her but he pays no heed to their advice. Hira, who misbehaves with her in-laws and thus does not get settled there, also comes to her parents' house and keeps insulting Nadia. Many times, Mohsin's mother and sister accuse Nadia of immoral behaviour. Once she is accused of adultery with a milkman. Mohsin's father, his younger brother and his wife support Nadia in this critical time since they are sure of Nadia's noble character. Nadia does not let her mother know of her situation with her in-laws. Nadia goes mad when her mother-in-law does not allow her to leave the house along with her father-in-law to attend her mother's funeral. When she gets pregnant, her husband, because of the fear of his mother, does not own the in-womb baby. Mohsin is also short-tempered and an underperformer at his workplace. He kills his boss when he dismisses him from the job. Mohsin is arrested and given death punishment. Before the death punishment, he confesses that the baby is his and apologizes for whatever he has done with Nadia. After Mohsin's death, Nadia's mother-in-law loses her sanity. Her younger son also leaves her and starts living separately with his wife. Hira is divorced by her husband and then she repents for her wrongs with her in-laws and Nadia. Nadia gives birth to a baby boy. Later, she marries a cousin, Shehzad. Shehzad proves to be a good husband and also encourages her to complete her education after the marriage.

Table 6

Characters Description in Drama 'Ek Tamanna Lahasil Si'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Minor Characters	Derogated Characters	Derogatory Characters
Nadia	Mohsin	Mohsin's Father	Neighbour Aunty	Nadia	Mohsin
	Ruqaiya, Mohsin's Mother	Ahsen, Mohsin's Younger Brother			Ruqaiya, Mohsin's Mother
	Hira, Mohsin's Sister	Ramla, Ahsen's Wife			Hira Mohsin's Sister
	Ali, Hira's Husband	Shehzad, Nadia's Second Husband			Ali, Hira's Husband

Derogated Characters. Nadia is treated like a maid by her mother-in-law after her marriage. She is not allowed to spend time with her husband who follows his mother and sister blindly. Once Nadia wears makeup, her mother-in-law taunts her badly. Nadia teaches her neighbored children, wherein her mother-in-law takes the earned money from her and blames the neighbours are spoiling her. Nadia is accused of adultery when she gets pregnant wherein Mohsin does not own the baby. Her in-laws expel her from the house. Her neighbours give her a place to stay at their house.

Hira's husband, Ali who is a bad character person, tries to misbehave with Nadia when she is alone at home but when the family members come there, he blames Nadia for seducing him. In the whole drama, in her defence, she says that she has done nothing wrong. No one believes her though she tries to survive despite facing intolerable difficulties.

Brief Analysis. This drama shows an evil aspect of society where people love their son but have no respect for his wife. The drama also highlights an aspect of lower middle class families where in-laws, especially mother-in-law, are afraid to share their son with a new girl. This shows another aspect of society where a female is degraded by another female ignoring the fact that the same can happen to her or her daughter.

Drama 'Kankar' (Hum TV)

The Storyline. The story revolves around a teenage girl Kiran. Her cousin, Skiandar requests his mother to ask for Kiran's hand from her parents. After their marriage, Skiandar starts physically torturing her, just out of his callous nature. Kiran's mother-in-law also scolds her for her outspoken nature. Kiran miscarries her baby when she is thrown on the floor by Sikandar. After this horrible incident, Sikandar excuses for this act but Kiran demands a divorce. Everyone in her in-laws tries to influence Kiran but she insists on divorce. After divorcing Kiran, Sikandar's mother remarries him to her niece Arzoo, who is also Kiran's paternal cousin. Though Arzoo is fine with Sikandar yet not truly happy because Skiandar still loves Kiran. Everyone taunts Kiran for the divorce and praises Arzoo for her good fortune. On the other side, Kiran marries her cousin Adnan, who has an unmarried sister (Rukhsar) living with them. Later, she gets married but still lives at her parents' house (where her married brother is living with his wife as well) since her husband is doing a job in Kuwait. Earlier, when Adnan tells his mother that he wants to marry Kiran, the mother opposes the idea since she is against his marriage with a divorcee. Adnan convinces his mother to let him marry Kiran. They get married in a simple ceremony. Sikandar develops clashes with Arzoo, and she leaves him. Sikandar's mother censures him for the humiliation she has faced from Arzoo's parents. Sikandar regrets and reconciles with Arzoo. Kiran faces difficulties at Adnan's house. Adnan and Kiran also have quarrels. Arzoo bears a baby boy and sends sweets to Kiran. Sikandar abuses and slaps Arzoo for this act. She leaves the house again with her baby. Now everyone realizes Sikandar's ill-temper and appreciates Kiran for her in-time right decision of divorcing Sikandar. Arzoo is very upset, and visits Kiran and appreciates her for her decision. Kiran advises her to think before taking any decision regarding divorce because she has a baby. One day, Kiran with her sister-in-law, Rukhsar, goes to a market where Sikandar meets her and confesses his love and that he wants to remarry her. Hearing this, Kiran slaps him and warns him to never raise his hand to any woman. Sikandar realizes his mistake, and goes to Arzoo and asks for forgiveness. Rukhsar apologizes to Adnan and Kiran for her bad behaviour with them and leaves for Kuwait. Thus, Adnan and Kiran start living happily.

Table 7

Characters Description in Drama 'Kankar'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Derogated Characters	Derogatory Characters
Kiran	Sikandar	Aisha, Kiran's Mother	Kiran	Sikandar
Adnan	Rukhsar, Adnan's Sister	Jamal, Kiran's Father Shaista, Sikandar's Mother Waqar, Sikandar's Father	Arzoo	Rukhsar, Adnan's Sister

Derogated Characters. Kiran is degraded by her first husband. She is often humiliated and once slapped so hard that it leaves a mark on her face. Sikandar throws her in fury, on the floor while she is pregnant, and she aborts her in-womb baby. Her mother and mother-in-law both force her to be silent before Sikandar. They try her to convince that a husband has the right to torture and humiliate his wife. Kiran is not willing to be a victim of such abuse. She shows courage and gets a divorce from Sikandar. Rukhsar, Adnan's elder sister, also misbehaves with Kiran after her second marriage with Adnan. Rukhsar humiliates her for being a divorcee and for her second marriage with Adnan. By doing all this, she also tries to create rifts between Kiran and Adnan.

Arzoo is also among the humiliated figures. Though she is slapped and tortured by Skiandar yet she is not courageous enough like Kiran to divorce Sikandar. She decides to compromise with Skiandar because of her baby son.

Brief Analysis. The drama highlights the social evils of physical abuse and degradation of women which are quite common in the lower strata of patriarchal societies. Such evils are not limited to the lower strata only but also have traces among the educated and prosperous classes. Sikandar abuses both his wives because he has seen his father torturing his mother since his childhood and he thinks that it is normal to torture one's wife to ensure manhood. A woman like Kiran has to raise her voice to say "Enough" to resist such brutality.

Drama 'Chup Raho' (ARY Digital)

The Storyline. The story revolves around Rameen. She visits her sister Minahil's house where she becomes the victim of brother-in-law Numair's lust. He rapes Rameen and threatens her not to tell anyone. Rameen tries to tell her parents about the vicious act and nature of Numair. Her parents force her to seal her lips as this will ruin her sister Minahil's marriage. Azer, Umair's younger brother, loves Rameen and marries her. She tells Azer that Numair has raped her but he is not ready to believe her. She is treated as a psycho-patient who needs medical care. After Rameen's mother's death, Azar, Minahil and Numair force her to live in servants' quarters. She leaves the house and starts living in a hostel. In that hostel, she meets a prostitute who does not reveal her profession. When Rameen comes to know the truth, she leaves that place and meets Sheraz. He is a widower with three daughters and lives with them and her old mother. Azer, once drunk, commits suicide

with the guilt that he has done wrong to Rameen. Rameen develops an attachment with Shiraz's daughters and mother. Numair and Minahil's daughter is diagnosed with cancer. Now, Numair realises his wrong with Rameen and attempts to seek her forgiveness. He believes that God will forgive his sins if Rameen forgives her, and his daughter will be cured. Numair confesses his sin in front of his wife that he raped Rameen. Rameen marries Shiraz. Numair is distressed and thinks that his daughter would die as a divine punishment for his sins. He turns mad and is admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Minahil is also distressed at her daughter's condition and repents while remembering all her wrongs to her sister just because of her husband. On the other side, Shiraz and Rameen live happily with their daughters.

Table 8

Characters Description in Drama 'Chup Raho'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Minor Characters	Derogated Characters	Derogatory Characters
Rameen	Numair	Shiraz's daughters	Rameen	Numair
Shiraz	Minahil Azer Rameen's Mother	Shiraz's Mother		Minahil Azer

Derogated Character. Rameen becomes the rape victim of her brother-in-law (sister's husband), who forcibly makes her silent. She is unable to have support from her parents and later her husband. No one believes her as the culprit has maintained a gentlemanly image in the eyes of the whole family. Minahil is also responsible for her sister Rameen's further degradation. Though Minahil knows the truth, she does not want to lose her luxurious life with her husband. Azer is also not ready to believe his wife Rameen and inflicts more torment on her by not supporting her.

Brief Analysis. 'Chup Raho' is not a story of a rape victim but also of a tale of a rape survivor. A rape victim not only suffers the brutal act but also gets no support from her family in a time of turmoil. Whereas, the wrongdoer enjoys respect in society through a fake gentleman image.

Drama 'Bheegi Palkein' (A-Plus TV)

The Storyline. The story revolves around Mehrbano, a beautiful innocent woman in her early twenties. She marries Umer despite the disapproval of his mother and younger sister Fareeha. Umer dies in an accident after the marriage, and the widow has to live with the in-laws. Fareeha, Mehrbano's sister-in-law (Nand), is jealous of her beauty and starts misbehaving with Mehrbano. Fareeha is engaged to Hassan, but she does not want to marry him since she has not seen him for a long time. Hassan's family comes for condolence over Umer's death, and Fareeha is surprised to see Hassan's well-groomed personality. Hassan develops a liking for the widow Mehrbano for her beauty and innocence. Fareeha does not bear this and wants to marry Hassan immediately. She degrades Mehrbano before Hassan and plans to harm her. Hassan's mother dies because of Fareeha's one evil plan that she has set for Mehrbano. Hassan counts Mehrbano as the murderer of his mother. Mehrbano turns mad after this blame and is admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Hassan marries Fareeha. Now Fareeha has the guilt of her crime i.e. Hassan's mother's death. Fareeha's mother advises her not to disclose it to Hassan. In a state of depression, Fareeha starts behaving weirdly which upsets Hassan. Mehrbano gets recovered because of Doctor Raza's treatment who is

working in that mental hospital. Raza is a married man, but his wife is in a coma after an accident. Raza develops a liking for Mehrbano and wants to marry her. On the other side, Fareeha has gone mad. Hassan finds Fareeha's conspiracy in which his mother meets death and Mehrbano goes mad. Hassan meets Doctor Raza to ask about Mehrbano who pretends unaware of her. Raza's wife recovers consciousness on the day he is going to marry Mehrbano. Raza calls Hassan and asks him to take Mehrbano with him. Hassan apologizes to Mehrbano for his wrongs, and they get married.

Table 9

Characters Description in Drama 'Bheegi Palkein'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Derogated Characters	Derogatory Characters
Mehrbano	Fareeha, Mehrbano's sister-in-law	Hassan's Mother	Mehrbano	Fareeha
Umer	Fareeha's Mother	Dr. Raza		Fareeha's Mother
Hassan	Dr. Raza's Mother-in-law			

Derogated Character. Mehrbano becomes a victim of her Nand Fareeha's jealousy who does everything to destroy Mehrbano's image before Umer to hinder them from getting married. After Umer's sudden death, Fareeha and her mother treat Mehrbano adversely. Hassan's liking for Mehrbano increases Fareeha's hatred. She uploads Mehrbano's videos on social media to prove her a bad character lady. Fareeha and her mother also make a plan with another man, Bilal, to kidnap Mehrbano and marry her forcibly in the absence of Hassan but they fail to do so.

Brief Analysis. The drama highlights that societal norms do not allow a man to marry a girl of his choice. If he does so, the wife has to pay the price for that marriage by facing the hatred of her in-laws, especially of her mother-in-law (saas) and sister-in-law (nand).

Drama 'Humsafar' (Hum TV)

The Storyline. Khirad Ahsan (a late teenage girl) is married to her maternal cousin Asher when her mother falls seriously ill. Farida, Asher's mother, does not like Khirad as she wants to marry her son to her niece Sara who also likes Asher. Sara tries to commit suicide when she knows the news of Asher's marriage with Khirad. Asher appreciates Khirad's innocence and simplicity. Asher, who is a close friend of Sara, scolds her when she humiliates Khirad. Baseerat, Khirad's uncle, also supports Khirad. Khirad gets enrolled in a university to continue her studies and there she meets Khizar, Sara's paternal cousin, who likes Sara. Khizar and Sara make a plan to create misunderstandings between Khirad and Asher. He starts visiting Khirad to make Asher suspicious and jealous. Farida (Asher's mother, who dislikes Khirad) offers Khizar a deal to convince Asher that he has an affair with Khirad and for this, he will be given handsome money and Sara's marriage will be arranged with him. Khirad is pregnant and plans to surprise Asher. Khizar with Farida and Sara successfully traps Asher. Farida accuses Khirad of adultery and kicks her out of the house. Before leaving the house, Khirad leaves a letter for Asher to prove her chastity and to tell him about her pregnancy. Khirad gives birth to a baby girl, Hareem. She swears that she will never forgive Asher for his wrongdoings. Hareem is diagnosed with a severer heart disease and needs costly open heart surgery. Khirad has to seek Asher's help for treatment. Hareem's surgery is successful. Sara

commits suicide on Asher's refusal of marriage. Asher finds the truth and asks Khirad for forgiveness. She reconciles him for their daughter's well-being.

Table 10

Characters Description in Drama 'Humsafar'

Protagonist	Antagonist	Supporting Characters	Minor Characters	Derogated Characters	Derogatory Characters
Khirad	Fareeda	Baseerat	Maimoona	Khirad	Fareeda
Ahsan	Hussain	Hussain	Ahsan		Hussain
Asher	Sara Ajmal	Hareem	Batool Bano		Sara Ajmal
Hussain	Zarina Ajmal	Hussain			Zarina Ajmal
	Khizar				Khizar

Derogated Character. Khirad is derogated by Farida, Asher's mother who is against Asher's marriage to Khirad. Farida keeps silent during the marriage ceremony because of her husband, Baseerat, who threatens to divorce her if she creates any hindrance in the marriage. She plans her revenge after Baseerat's death. She succeeds in her plan to outcast Khirad from Asher's life and house by accusing her of adultery. Sara also plots to break Khirad and Asher's marriage. She consistently proclaims her love for Asher. Along with Farida and Khizar, she accuses Khirad of having illegitimate relations with Khizar. Farida pays Khizar a handsome amount of money for creating the impression that he has an illegitimate affair with Khirad.

Brief Analysis. This drama highlights the problems and sufferings of a married couple whose marriage is disapproved by relatives. The story shows that people defame a woman to get their evil aims. Such malicious people take it as a game to play with the lives of innocent people but forget that they will have to pay the price for their wrong deeds.

CONCLUSION

In the selected TV dramas, 'woman' is degraded in one way or the other. Mostly, derogatory roles are assigned to women. These TV dramas show the derogated conditions of women shackled with their presumed weak biological and social status in society. Gender imbalance is a widely shown phenomenon in Pakistani Urdu TV dramas. Gender stereotypes are seen as a dominant factor, and women are deemed suitable for depressed, distressed, malicious and evil roles. A wife is mostly not considered equal to her husband. An innocent woman is shown being degraded, inferior and helpless poor creature, and anyone can play with her and her emotions. The storylines of the selected dramas show that innocent women are maltreated by malicious women and their male collaborators. These malicious women degrade the innocent women to establish their superiority, whereas the derogating male characters maltreat the innocent woman to hold their typical dominance of a patriarchal society. The study reflects that female characters are assigned degraded and less valuable roles. Through these dramas, a weakened and toxic stereotypical image of women is emphasized, and a deleterious image of women is portrayed to society.

The storylines of selected dramas conform to the ethnic-social structures of the country. These structures have assigned gender roles which still exist in society and thus playwrights tend to depict them in the storyline. The present study views that the image of women is negatively portrayed in Pakistani Urdu TV dramas, whereas a woman needs to be valued as a human being and

not be treated and degraded as an inferior creature. Mass media has the right to portray realities but it has strong power to influence public opinion, thus a softer image of society needs to be depicted through media presentations such as TV dramas.

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Date of Publication	January 25, 2023
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