



RESEARCH PAPER

Silencing and Politics of Exclusion: Representation of Women in Pakistani Primetime Dramas

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ABSTRACT

Representation of women in the media is vital in shaping people's attitudes towards women, their beliefs about gender roles, and their construct of identity. This study aims to explore the nature of social roles, occupations and power relations assigned to women in Pakistani primetime dramas. Drawing on the theoretical stance of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, theory of representation and Social Semiotics, the content analysis was used to analyse 14 primetime dramas of PTV Home and Geo Entertainment channel. The findings suggest that in Pakistani primetime dramas, women are positioned in a narrow range of social and occupational roles. There are only a few women writers and they are unable to represent women as they want because the power is with the men who are the directors, producers and media owners. By systematic marginalization of the female experience and silencing of female voices, media makes it impossible for these voices to be heard and valued. It is suggested that primetime dramas needs to provide the balanced picture of women's diverse lives and their contributions to society.

KEYWORDS Feminism, Ideology, Primetime, Representation, Silence, Stereotypical

Introduction

Media texts embed certain meanings and cultural values; they do not provide a mirror picture of reality. Instead, media content represents a particular version of reality. Therefore, representations in the media are a product of particular conventions and are influenced and managed by the prevailing ideology. The way that women are represented in the media has a big impact on how people view and interact with women, how they view gender and gender roles, and how they view what is valued in society. According to Lacey (1998), "media texts are not neutral as they do not demonstrate reality as it is; they intervene and mediate reality" (p, 95). The ideology of people in positions of power and control, then, informs and shapes media representations.

Despite numerous promises and campaigns to abolish the unequal representation of men and women in the media, it is thought that media texts continue to promote gender prejudice and are insensitive to women's issues. Women are still presented and valued in conventional roles and relationships. Such a portrayal has an undesirable effect on young viewers and jeopardizes their development, particularly for women. Television is the main source of entertainment and information in Pakistan where the majority of the populace lacks literacy and access to print media. By creating and promoting gender ideas and gender socialization, the words and images used on television play a critical and fundamental role in forming the lives of both men and women. They have the power to govern and affect their attitude and conduct. This study therefore, aims to explore the nature of social roles, occupations and power relations assigned to women in Pakistani primetime dramas.

To have a broad view of the topic at hand, linguistic, sociological, cultural, and media theories have been incorporated into this research study. This study's theoretical underpinnings draw on feminism, semiotics, representation, and discourse analysis. Feminism is typically used as a multidisciplinary approach to social analysis that highlights gender as a crucial structuring element of power relations in society. Representation of women has always been a concern and a central area of study for feminism (Zoonen, 1996), which seeks to explore the ways the language of media texts defines and confines women (Kuhn, 1985).

Literature Review

In semiotic theory, the act of encoding information, ideas, or messages into a tangible form (language) is referred to as representation; however, the term "language" can also refer to writing, visual images, sounds, facial expressions, gestures, clothing, color, and music (Hall, 1997). Representation is thought to be a social process that includes both the act of representation and the result of the creation of many signs that stand for distinct meanings (Fiske, 1994). According to Lacey (1998), specific conventions dictate the representations, which are then influenced by the prevailing worldview. Additionally, according to Hall (1997), representations can expose and reflect particular socio-cultural values. Certain social practices and behaviors are shown to be natural by the systems of representation that media texts use to establish specific socio-cultural meanings (Chandler, 2002).

Meanings are produced and reproduced through the codes at work in representation(s), and even though the fact that meanings may seem natural and obvious, they are being produced and constructed through specific signification-related procedures and processes that are at play in all representations (Barthe, 1972). The way that individuals are represented in the media shapes their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about race, class, and gender as well as their assumptions about what is significant and valued in a given social setting. Feminism has always viewed ideas, words, and images as being vital to and essential to defining both men's and women's lives (Kuhn, 1985). The media's progressive rhetoric highlights how patriarchy and capitalism predominate in the mainstream media through a selection process. It is crucial to investigate whether the visual representation(s) of women in the media contributes to the development and normalization of diverse roles and power relations between men and women.

The three domains of analysis of media discourse identified by Fairclough (1989) are representations, identities, and relations. This means that it is necessary to understand not only how the world is portrayed in the media, but also the kinds of social identities, cultural values, and interpersonal relationships that it fosters. Therefore, according to Fairclough, all texts have double purposes and establish identities and relationships while also portraying them. A comprehensive feminist criticism of gender constructs in speech benefits greatly from a multimodal understanding of discourse (Lazar, 2005).

Numerous scholars have transformed semiotics into a framework for methodological investigation of art, photography, and video (e.g., Bignell, 2002; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1990, 2006). The key work of Kress and Leeuwen (2006), which is theoretically based on social semiotics, views representation as a socio-cultural process of creating particular signs to express meanings and being influenced by the interests of sign producers. Therefore, visual communication researchers should be aware of the values and interests that are served by current signals.

The dominant groups, being at a vantage position, paint the marginalized groups in their favourite colours. These constructed representations, with their excessive use and legitimization through various social institutions, become a 'convincing reality' in that society. These engineered facts and realities are internalized by the target groups who start

believing in them. This is also applicable to gendered discourses and practices that impact and shape identities. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013, p. 305) maintain that 'gender is a set of practices through which people construct and claim identities, not only a system for categorizing people. And gender practices are not only about establishing identities but also about managing social relations.' (Siddiqui, 2014, pp. 18-19)

The silence of women is above all an absence of female voices and concerns from high culture. If we look at a society's most prestigious linguistic registers- religious ceremonial, political rhetoric, legal discourse, science, poetry- we find women's voices for the most part silent—or rather, silenced for it is not just that women do not speak: often they are explicitly prevented from speaking, either by social taboos and restrictions or by the more genteel tyrannies of custom and practice (Cameron, 1996, 2003). Silencing—when a certain group is pushed to the extent that they are deprived of the roles and opportunities to voice their feelings.

Bing and Bergvall (1996) as cited in Siddiqui (2014) claim that 'gender polarization makes it easier to limit opportunities and exclude girls and women from education, public office and the military and easier to deny them legal protection and highly paid positions.' Said (1978, p. xii) quoted Marx as saying, 'They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented.' It's noteworthy that some male writers initially attempted to represent women by dictating them what to say and how to act. For example, *Mirat-ul-uroos* (mirror of the Bride), a novel by Nazeer Ahmed that was released in 1869, was created specifically for girls and women to promote "correct" and socially acceptable behavior.

Material and Methodology

Data for the study consisted of total 14 primetime dramas from PTV Home and Geo Entertainment. PTV Home is a government channel and has a huge viewership due to its availability in areas without cable service and Geo Entertainment was the first private TV station to launch in 2002 (Rahman & Khan, 2013). The idea is to analyze dramas from both public and private channels and compare the ideology behind these texts. The primetime hours were the focus of this study because, according to Danesi (2002), primetime is the period of the evening when the majority of individuals watch TV at home. The prime time in Pakistan is from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The analysis of primetime dramas used content analysis under the theoretical direction of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005), theory of representation and Social Semiotics (Kress & Van-Leeuwen, 2006). The reason content analysis was utilized to analyze the media text was because it is a key method for conceptualizing the media discourse as created texts that provide meaning.

Results and Discussion

Who is talking, i.e. who has got a chance to talk or who is considered relevant and trustworthy to talk to is of extreme importance when it comes to constructing and representing gender. Therefore, it is important to analyze whose voices are present and whose are absent, whose stories are fore-grounded and whose back-grounded, and who is active and who a passive creator of media discourse in order to establish whether there is a systematic creation of specific identities, roles, relations and beliefs of women.

Voices/Sources in primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment

It is important to know about the people working behind scenes in primetime dramas because they have the power to present men and women as they like and want them to be. It shows those who have the sources and power to represent his or her ideologies.

Table 1
Women representation(s) behind the scenes on Geo Entertainment

Drama	Director	Writer	Producer
Adhoori Aurat	1 Male	1Female	1 Male
Meri Dulari	1 Male	1Female	1 Male
Mirat-ul-Aroos	1 Male	1 Male	1 Male
Mann Ke Moti	1 Male	1 Male	1 Male
Teri Berukhi	1 Male	1 Female	1 Male
Dil Mohallay Ki Haveli	1 Male	1 Female	1Male
Nanhi	1 Male	1 Female	2 Male
Total	7 Males	2 Male, 5 Females	8 Males

Table 1 shows the representation of men and women behind the scenes in primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment. The results shown in Table 1 clearly point out that there is not even a single woman director and producer in these dramas. Women are not controlling any of the sources and therefore do not have the powers to present women in challenging positions, and in diverse roles and relations.

The results indicate that not even a single woman director and producer is there to present women in diverse roles but male directors and producers are there to portray women in traditional and limited roles.

Written by female writers, these dramas focus issues of women and family affairs and the main roles are also of women in these dramas where male characters are there to support their roles and are not the main protagonists in these dramas. These female writers are foregrounding the females and making them active. But the themes that are selected by these writers to foreground women in these dramas are limited and confined to the four walls of the home and deal with marriage and family issues to give rather a stereotypical representation(s) of women with traditional roles.

This shows that women writers are given representation in media but they are facing social and cultural constraints and cannot go beyond the already set roles and relations for women writers and also for the women characters they produce. These social and cultural constraints are because of a strong patriarchal society of the sub-continent which do not allow woman to go for challenging roles and through media these ideologies are propagated and filtered down to the individuals of the society.

Moreover, these writers also do not have the liberty to represent women as they want because the power and control are with the men who have all the authority as directors, producers as well as media owners and as a result representation is influenced by the patriarchal ideology. In real life women in Pakistan are not limited to family life only and they have other roles in the public life. In this way women from different areas of society are kept silent and their issues and achievements are not given any place in this systematic representation of women where they are marginalized by the production of stereotypical media images through these primetime dramas. This is what Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann proposed in the Spiral of silence theory (1974) which states that people remain silent because of the fear of isolation and reprisal and thus the minority's opinion is never voiced. People tend to follow the opinion of the majority and in some cases constructed majority. Research shows that very few people dare to flow against the stream and counter stereotypes (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Thus they willingly or unwillingly relate themselves to the opinion of the majority. By silencing certain groups in society, and marginalizing female voices within the public space, media makes it impossible for these voices to be heard and valued, and prevents viewers from viewing women as people with ideas and expertise. Silencing women's voices and denying them the right to communicate is correctly seen as

one of the methods of keeping women in "their place"- in private, where they do not have the authority to act as representatives or to speak as experts.

Voices/Sources in primetime dramas of PTV Home

In PTV Home primetime dramas too women are again not sharing equal powers and sources with men. Here too mostly men have control of all the sources as directors, producers or as media owners.

Table 2
Women representation(s) behind the scenes in primetime dramas of PTV Home

Drama	Director	Writer	Producer
Noor-e-nazar	1 Male	1Female	2 Male
Pain Killer	1 Male	1 Male	1 Male
Jail	1 Male	1 Male	1 Male
Anokha Ladla	1 Male	1 Male	1 Male
Kuch Is Tarah	1 Female	1 Male	2Female
Bus Ve Rabba	1 Male	1 Male/1 Female	2 Male
Kami Reh gai	1 Male	1 Male	1 Male
Total	6Male, 1Female	2 Female,6male	8Males, 2 female

Table 2 show the presence of female writers, directors and producers in primetime dramas of PTV Home. It results indicate that there is very little representation of women behind scenes in these dramas.

It clearly shows that the men have the power to access the media and express their opinions, and are considered relevant, competent and trustworthy and women are not given the authority to produce and direct the dramas. This approach cultivates traditional, previously described polarized gender roles that characterize women as passive rather than active, as inferior, hardly competent to offer objective opinions, represent official discourses or offer mature expertise for issues of public interest, and more likely to represent and be more interested in discourses of ordinary life, family affairs and personal experiences.

It is important to remember that to the extent that symbolic expression, through whatever medium, is dominated by one segment of society, the imagery conveyed is that group's imagery. If men, not women, are the artists, then images of women depicted in paintings and sculpture will be men's; women's images of themselves will not be conveyed either to men or to women.

Consequently to conform to a cultural representation of femininity, women may think of themselves as being-and act as though they are- physically weak, and preoccupied with getting married and having babies. Furthermore, such constructs govern the behavior of others toward the individual in such a way as to reinforce the actuality of the image.

Social Relations/Occupations

Occupation is one of the key markers of a person's identity and their status in a society, and is therefore often subject to stereotypical representation(s). As Williams (2003) pointed out, "stereotyping of women in the media occurs when their role in the society is represented as either housewives or mothers or sexual objects". Therefore, researcher also analyzed what types of occupations relate to representation(s) of women during the primetime drama hour on Pakistani TV channels.

Social relations and occupations of women in primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment

Women in primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment are more frequently shown as house wives. There are very few women shown in professional roles in these dramas.

Table 3
Occupations of females on Geo primetime dramas

Student	Lady Doctor	Lecturer
Nurse	Journalist	Maid Servant

Table 3 shows that occupations assigned to females are very limited and quite stereotypical. This shows that women if assigned any professional roles they are not diverse. In every society, certain tasks are deemed suitable for men and others for women, as these tasks are socially determined so it is referred to as “gender division of labor”. In most societies the tasks associated with males usually have higher status and more valuable than those associated with females. This usually allows men to exercise more power. The tasks carried out within these gender roles are often categorized as “productive” and “reproductive” work. Women in these dramas are shown in reproductive work as mother and passive in public domain where men are shown as active and in power.

Table 4
Occupations of males on Geo primetime dramas

Bureaucrat	Professor	Doctor	Marketing Manager
Businessmen	Driver	Police officers	Sales man
Journalist	Administrator	Gardener	Gate Keeper, Guard

The occupations assigned to men in primetime of Geo are diverse than the occupations assigned to women as shown in the Table 4. Moreover, it is also noted that men also have more authority and power in the professional roles than women. Women are very less visible in professional roles i.e., “productive roles” in primetime dramas of Geo entertainment but they have more presence in the “reproductive roles”. Whereas productive work refers to activities carried out to provide goods and services for income and reproductive role or work refers to all the tasks involved in the care and maintenance of the household and its members, including child bearing and child rearing, cooking, cleaning, and caring.

As it is mentioned earlier, occupation is one of the core mechanisms in an individual's identity formation and his/hers social relations. In these primetime dramas, women are more often identified in terms of their family status or relationships. The analysis highlights that the primetime dramas on Geo present women as dominant only as homemakers/parents. In all other professions women are represented significantly less frequently than men. Moreover, if women are shown in professional roles in these dramas, they are much less evenly distributed across different professions than men, and are primarily concentrated in professions of teaching and as doctors.

The results suggest that in primetime dramas women have difficulty in escaping their associations with family life. There is an obvious tendency to situate woman more in the context of family relations, even when the main issue of the drama is a woman's professional carrier. This tendency to situate women in the context of family could lead to stereotyping and suggestion that women's real status is determined by her family relations, rather than in terms of professional criteria. By this kind of representation(s) media maintains the traditional symbolic polarization of gender roles and division of labor that attributes the productive tasks to men and the reproductive to women.

It is also noted that there is always a woman character in all primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment who controls all the domestic and family issues and their husbands are either absent or do not interfere in these matters considering that these are women's domain. In dramas such as 'Mann ke moti', 'Adhoori Aurat', 'Dil mohallay ki haveli' and 'Teri Berukhi', it is always the mother-in-law who is in control of the house and father-in-law is either absent or they are not much interested to handle the family affairs as in 'Teri Berukhi'. This is actually what is being portrayed about the women of our society.

Occasionally, it is shown in these dramas that she takes up career as a consolation prize for the broken marriage or relationship and not for defining her identity as is the case with 'Maryam in drama 'Adhoori Aurat'. Women of Pakistan do strive very hard to keep everyone happy but women are a lot more than this. These women know how to handle all the responsibilities. They can even continue studies, work at an office and do the house chores simultaneously. There are many young girls in Pakistan who are students but they still take out time for jobs or internships in companies and the house chores.

Women in the primetime dramas are shown to remain busy in such activities which shows that their life is limited to home, family and children. It clearly shows that these primetime dramas do reinforce and promote division of labor by allocating socially accepted stereotyped tasks to women and men.

Table 5
Activities assigned to females in primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment

Washing	Knitting	Cooking	Serving	Planning	Buying grocery
Making tea	Reciting	Praying	Shopping	Talking on phone	Supporting
Watching TV	Gossiping	Match making	Assisting	Bargaining	Teaching Holy Quran
Weeping	Requesting	Taking care of children	Apologizing	Studying	
Consoling	Backbiting	Reading magazine	Caring	Eating paan	

Table 5 presents the activities in which women are involved in the primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment. These activities are stereotypically considered to be feminine activities such as taking care of children, serving, cooking, gossiping, match making etc. These activities do not show women working in the public domain except shopping which again is not a very productive activity and is stereotypically feminine as is seen in the drama 'Teri Berukhi' where the maid suggests 'Shahtaa' and says 'TV daikhain, magazine parhain, shopping karain, waqt guzr hi jaey ga'. So this shows that watching TV, reading magazines and shopping are the activities in which women are engaged in their leisure time.

On the other hand, men in these dramas are shown to be involved in number of activities which show their authority, intellectual abilities and present them as active in the public domain (see Table 6).

Table 6
Activities assigned to males in primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment

Attending meetings	Reading newspapers	Advising	Abusing
Touring/Traveling	Proposing	Playing video games	Fighting
Talking	Ordering	Forgiving	Driving
Discussing	Controlling	Recording	Loving
Taking interviews	Beating	Threatening	Buying

Social relations and occupations of women in primetime dramas of PTV Home

Though in primetime dramas of PTV Home women were predominately shown as housewives but still there are more women in professional roles in these dramas as compared to dramas of Geo Entertainment.

Table 7
Occupations of females on PTV Home primetime dramas

Student	Lady Doctor	Journalist	Lawyer	Writer
Nurses	Psychiatrist	Maid Servant	Prostitutes	Social worker

As shown in Table 7, occupations assigned to females in primetime dramas of PTV Home are more diverse than those of primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment. Here women are shown in roles of lawyers and journalists usually assigned to male but then there are stereotypical roles of prostitutes which is assigned to females only. It is also important to note that women in these dramas are mostly shown as working only when compelled by circumstances. Even educated middle class women are shown without any occupation as we see in case of 'Aleena', 'Maryam', 'Shahtaj' in dramas of Geo Entertainment. When they do work, they are concentrated in stereotyped jobs such as typist, nurse, school teacher and occasionally as lawyer and doctor. The working middle-class woman, in general, is a young woman who is doing a job while waiting to get married as 'Maryam' in drama 'Adhoori Aurat' was a teacher before marriage but then she got married and discontinued her profession and started her teaching profession when she got divorced.

By and large women are shown to work only in the absence of a male breadwinner, a father, a brother or a husband. These women are presented as unfortunate victims sacrificing their interests to support the family as is shown in the drama 'Noor-e-Nazar' where 'Alveena' is delaying her marriage so that she can support her younger brother and sister. Men, on the other hand continue to dominate women and are shown in more diverse professions having more power, authority and status.

Table 8
Occupations of males on PTV Home primetime dramas

Political leader	Land lord	Doctors
Businessmen	Driver	Police officers
Gate keeper	Administrator	Gardener

Table 8 clearly shows men in more diverse roles than women. Moreover, if women are shown in professional roles they are given secondary status. As we see in the drama, 'Pain Killer', that female doctors are present but they are just assisting the male doctors and sometimes they have no say in professional matters.

It is also seen that in case of the poor women, work is represented as an economic necessity. Poor women's work lives are either romanticized or sensationalized by depicting them as a victim of poverty and sexual harassment. Sexual molestation is presented as a dominating reality of poor working women's lives. As it is seen that 'Jasmine Inayat' in the drama 'Bus We Rabba', a nurse from a poor family, faces a similar situation in her workplace where she has a difficult time because of the male doctors and male patients. Such portrayal of working women obscures harsh working conditions and injustices and reinforces the myth that work outside the home exposes women to sexual violence.

Maintaining the domestic unit is essential to the functioning of society and the economy, but it has been given neither economic nor social value. Women, who are working, find their jobs devalued; they are restricted in their job choices and paid less than men.

The professions are also segregated by gender. Within the “female professions”, men hold the most top level jobs. Women sometimes find it difficult to enter a “male profession”, much less to rise within.

Table 9
Activities assigned to females in primetime dramas of PTV Home

Washing	Attending conferences	Cooking	Serving
Advising	Bargaining	Praying	Shopping
Watching TV	Gossiping	Match making	Assisting
Requesting	Reading magazine	Taking care of children	Acting
Writing	Backbiting	Weeping	Caring
Studying	Buying grocery	Talking on phone	Supporting

Table 9 presents the activities in which women are shown to be involved in primetime dramas in PTV Home. Most of these activities are typically feminine e.g. match making, washing, weeping etc. However, there are some activities like attending conferences, acting and writing, which show that women in these dramas are also working in public domains and are active outside the home too.

Table 10
Activities assigned to males in primetime dramas of PTV Home

Abusing	Advising	Attending meetings	Planning
Ordering	Decision Making	Beating	Proposing
Controlling	Recording	Discussing	Leading
Killing	Threatening	Addressing	Operating
Fighting	Loving	Reading newspaper	Ordering
Buying	Helping	Driving	Traveling

Table 10 clearly shows the inequality in representation as women are shown in very limited activities while there is a wide range of activities for males. Anusha (2008) has also said that media is not providing the balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society as despite increasing participation of men and women in the work force, working women is still an underdeveloped theme in dramas.

Discussion

The findings point out that women in the dramas are mostly presented in roles of wife, daughter and mother and are defined by their relationships and do not have their personal identity. There is a lesser representation of employed women in primetime dramas in Pakistan, even if they are employed, they have been depicted in traditionally female occupations and men are shown in a higher field. Similarly, McNeil (1975) found that when employed, a female character is less likely to have an important job and more likely to work under close supervision.

In the primetime dramas of Pakistan nursing, teaching and social work are presented as women’s professions and women outnumber men in them. Women are underrepresented in most other (men’s) professions, especially in medicine, science, engineering, and higher management and as stockbrokers. The issues for women in the two kinds of professions are somewhat different. Working women are rare in these dramas. When they are shown in any professional roles they are often portrayed as unfulfilled, unattractive and shown to be total failure in sustaining relationships. These dramas have also sensationalized the lives of working women by showing them the victims of poverty and sexual harassment. It is also noted that women work when they are pushed to the walls and do not work by choice but just forced by the circumstances.

Like all other societies, Pakistani society has assigned work by gender, and the work done by women has traditionally been valued less than that done by men. Women's reproductive functions have been used as an excuse for the division of labor by gender. Although the labor involved in reproduction and rearing children is essential for any society, often it is not recognized and is not given any value. The division of labor by gender has often been related to the differences in the reproductive roles assigned to women and men. As women are involved in child care the other work they do must be possible to do at the same time. "Housework", such as cooking and cleaning, generally falls into this category. As with reproduction, this work serves an important function: it "serves" the male worker so that he can return, fed and refreshed, to the workplace the next day. However, the housewife is not compensated for this work either. Moreover, in these dramas, women find more restrictions in their job choices than men, men rarely take the jobs largely filled by women, and women's jobs are stereotyped in the workplace just as they are in the home. Similarly, Carter and Steiner (2004) have also found that the depiction of sex roles in the media has been incredibly narrow, with women often only being shown within the domestic i.e. the private sphere, but with men being portrayed in a whole variety of different occupations within the public sphere.

Feminists have challenged such traditional conceptions of the "private" and "domestic" spheres of life as misleading and damaging to women. Women combine many sorts of work with childcare, which is often overlooked. Work, such as weaving, making pottery, and running business such as beauty parlors and family grocery stores can be carried in or near the home.

As women are mostly shown in the roles of mothers, wives and daughters, they are almost always absent in the public domain of life in Pakistani primetime dramas. The most effectively designed mothers appear in these dramas. Although in the last thirty years or so the representation of the mother has undergone a considerable change but stereotypes have persisted. Mother in Pakistani dramas was depicted as gentle and comforting, a moral force and a hardworking housewife. She is least concerned about what is happening outside her home i.e. i.e. private domain. She is rarely shown having a job, making major decisions, and being sexually desirous.

It can be concluded that despite considerable changes in women's economic roles during the last thirty years, little has changed in their social roles. In the dramas, women's roles are limited to household affairs and their absence in themes about other social issues points out that they have no role to play in society outside the home as they are presented as incapable of handling responsibilities other than taking care of the children and managing household affairs like cooking, washing, match making etc. In these primetime dramas, women are mostly shown taking care of their children while men are absent which symbolizes that in Pakistan parenting is not generally assumed to be the equal responsibility of both men and women. Depictions of men who occasionally take sole responsibility are usually played for comic relief.

Women most often have to do with their family roles as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers. In these dramas, daughters experience their roles in connection with parental figures to whom they owe duties of obedience and loyalty and for whom they may indeed experience tenderness and love. Daughters may also feel bonds of responsibility depending upon the age relationship. Whether women marry or not, stay at home or not, their obligations often grow over the years in relation to their families, for daughters more than sons may find themselves directly responsible for providing care for elderly parents.

It can be said that women are given representation in primetime dramas but they are facing social and cultural constraints and cannot go beyond the already set roles and relations for women in Pakistani socio-cultural context. These social and cultural constraints are because of strong patriarchal society of the sub-continent which does not

allow woman to go for challenging roles and through media these ideologies are propagated and filtered down to the individuals of the society.

The presence of more women in the dramas where the theme is about marriage and other domestic issues and the absence of men in these dramas points out that home is the domain of the women and men are mostly absent in these dramas. It means that most of the time women are controlling the household affairs and they decide about different family issues. Men on the other hand are shown to be the breadwinner for the family; therefore they are the providers and have control and authority over the women who are economically dependent on men. Many societal theories also hold that relationships between people are fundamentally based on economic power. The economic inequality between women and men has contributed to a widely held stereotype of women as dependent. Previous studies have also shown that men are more likely to be portrayed in a higher status employment (Barcus, 1983 cited in Fejes, 1992, p.11) and to be shown at work rather than in the home (Durkin, 1985).

Having restricted women to the four walls of a home they are excluded from the private sphere and men are controlling the economy and therefore have the power to control others and to make decisions which women lack. This is what Fernandez (1992) also contends that the media generally subvert women's positions and act to preserve the dominant values of society.

Tuchman (1979) states that media offers a deleterious portrait of women because few women hold positions of responsibility. Therefore we see that in these primetime dramas of Geo Entertainment and PTV Home women are represented in such a way that it serves the interests of men and helps to keep the power and control in their hands. As Croteau and Hoynes (1997, p. 148) also argue that the creation and production of media images is also in male hands. "Women are generally not in positions of control and perhaps as a result are less likely than men to be prominently featured in media products". It is noted that in these primetime dramas, women are mostly given the charge of household affairs. This is what Ingham (2012) has also pointed out that even when women are shown in a position of power, they are still viewed through a very patriarchal ideology.

It clearly shows that the men have the power to access the media and express their opinions, and are considered relevant, competent and trustworthy and women are not given the authority to produce and direct the dramas. This approach cultivates traditional, previously described polarized gender roles that characterize women as passive rather than active, as inferior, hardly competent to offer objective opinions, represent official discourses or offer mature expertise for issues of public interest, and more likely to represent and be more interested in discourses of ordinary life, family affairs and personal experiences.

It is important to remember that to the extent that symbolic expression, through whatever medium, is dominated by one segment of society, the imagery conveyed is that group's imagery. If men, not women, are the artists, then images of women depicted in paintings and sculpture will be men's; women's images of themselves will not be conveyed either to men or to women.

It is also apparent that within the "women's professions" there is gender segregation that places men at the highest levels. More men than women, for example, are Principals, superintendents, chief officers, and faculty and administrators of professional schools. For the most part, these female professions offer limited career mobility to women; they are the lowest-paying and least prestigious of the professions.

The results of this study show that, despite several pledges and initiatives to address the unequal representation of men and women in mass media, primetime dramas still contain gender prejudices and are insensitive to women's issues. These dramas continue to

highlight and showcase women in conventional relationships and positions. Therefore, it also presents barriers for both genders who could choose roles that are viewed as non-traditional and non-stereotypical in the future.

Conclusion

The aforementioned discussion leads to the conclusion that women are portrayed in old, fixed, and homogenous identities and relationships on Pakistani primetime television, which perpetuates and fosters gender inequality and portrays men and women as having competence, production, and authority while women are silenced, dependent on others, have families, and enjoy entertainment. The positioning of women in the primetime dramas suggests the systematic marginalization of the female experience, strengthening stereotypical images of women and reconstructing social power relationships and roles. By silencing certain groups in society, and marginalizing female voices within the public space, media makes it impossible for these voices to be heard and valued, and prevents readers from viewing women as people with ideas and expertise.

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