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Reproduction of Gender Hierarchies through Television Dramas/Soaps in Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This study examines the representations of gender on television in Pakistan. Our specific concern in this study is to examine representations of men and women or masculinities and femininities in Pakistani dramas/soaps. Keeping in view the importance of television in people's everyday life, we attempt to explore whether television soaps and dramas reproduce or challenge traditional notion of masculinity and femininity. The study utilizes data from two soaps/dramas (Mahey Ray and Jeena Dohswar Hey) broadcasted on Pakistan television Network (PTV Home). The study used discourse analysis as methodological and theoretical tool for the analysis of data and reaching informed conclusion. The analysis explicates television as one of the key cultural sites which maintains and reproduces masculine and feminine identities. The overall conclusion that we derive from the study findings is that television dramas/soaps are ideologically invested-and contribute to the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity. In this context, the gender blindness of the soaps and drama writers and directors is a matter of serious concern.

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Introduction

The representation of men and women on television has been a central topic of research and discussion over the last 50 years or so. Much of the early and contemporary academic writings criticize television for stereotypical representation of men and women. Research studies have consistently concluded that female characters are much more likely than male characters to be seen caring for children, or doing household chores, but male characters are portrayed in wider variety of roles and careers in the public domain (Anderson & Taylor 2002; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). Male characters have been depicted in line with traditional masculine traits such as strong, independent, competitive, authoritative, controller and powerful (Gill 2006; Anderson & Taylor 2002; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). Skimming the empirical studies unearthed that female characters have been portrayed stereotypically as mothers, wives and daughters. They are relegated to sex objects and focus of erotic love. Much of the empirical research on portrayal of women in television commercials and advertisements concludes that “television advertisements portray women as sex objects” (Ullah and Khan, 2014: 26). They have been presented submissive and dependent creature (Khan, 2010). This consistency in the findings of many studies confirms that men and women representation on television is ideological invested-reproducing the existing gender hierarchies (Ullah and Khan, 2011). Skimming the large number of studies on gender representation on television does not mean that the study of gender representation on television in Pakistan is a low-profile gender issue. We argue that the continuous analysis of gender representation on television is important from a number of practical and philosophical perspectives.

The regular analysis of gender representation on television is important because (a) television watching has been cited as the third most time-consuming activity after sleep and work (Signorielli and Bacue, 1999), (b) television watching has profound influence on children’s and adults’ perception of their and others’ sex roles (McGhee & Frueh, 1975; Jennings *et al.*, 1980; Aubrey & Harrison, 2004), (c) it is the central cultural arm of society, serving to socialize most people into standardized roles and behaviors, particularly gender-appropriate behaviors, (d) the continuous research on the portrayal of men and women on television is crucial because the stereotyped representations of men and women produce socialization in audiences that unconsciously take this misinformation as truth (Holtzman, 2000), (e) the beliefs disseminated through television soaps and dramas are imbued with issues of gender, culture and power (Ullah and Khan, 2011). That is why television texts have been identified as important contributor to the formation of gender identities.

It is also accepted and acknowledged that the representation of men and women in television dramas and commercials have been studied in a serious academic tone over the last fifty years or so, but much of these studies have been carried out by western scholars on the representation of men and women in soaps, films and commercials broadcasted on western television (Kim & Lowry, 2005). However, there are few empirical studies on men and women representation in television soaps/dramas in the global south. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, much of this work in the South as well as in the East Asian contexts has tended to focus on Chinese and Indian soaps (Zheng, 2011; Ahmad, 2012). Very little is known about the institutional and cultural context of Pakistani television dramas and its role in sustaining and maintaining gender hierarchies. Thus, it is believed that a study from the global south, especially from a developing country like Pakistan, would significantly contribute to the existing scholarship on how gender hierarchies are produced and reproduced on television screen across societies. We also claim that the analysis of men and women portrayals in television soaps / dramas in Pakistan will add useful findings to the current emphasis on developing “global perspective on gender that recognizes differences and diversity across time and space” (Nayak and Kehily, 2008: 3). This will also shed light on how gender is embedded in Pakistani culture and disseminated to audience through television discourses as something natural and real.

The Study Context

Pakistan is a south Asian country sharing a common border with China, India, Iran and Afghanistan. It “is the second most populous Muslim-majority country where about 97 percent people are Muslim” (Ullah and Khan, 2014:27). Along with economic class and caste, Pakistani society is stratified by *gender*. The ideology of sex difference, which we refer to as the ideology of gender, is used to justify unequal treatment of women and men. The ideology of gender determines gender roles and gender order (Ullah and Ali, 2012; Ullah, 2013). The private sphere (home) has been believed as women’s legitimate ideological and physical space where they perform their reproductive role as mothers, wives and sisters (Ullah, 2006). Men dominate the public sphere (the world outside home) and perform their productive role as breadwinners.

Property and other economic resources are dominantly allocated in the favor of male members of the family. Education for boys in general and in the rural areas of Pakistan in particular is given preference over the education for girls with the belief that education for girls is not as important as it is for boys (Ullah, 2006; Raza, 2015). Sex differences or the differences between men and women are the basis on which rules / resources/

responsibilities/power and rights are distributed or allocated between women and men in society resulting in gender hierarchies. Cultural practices, deep rooted traditions and the 'internalization of patriarchy by women themselves' (Ullah, 2013: 277) are some of the key factors that legitimize men and women different positions in society. Family, religion, community, education and mass media, especially television, teach what it is to be a proper man or woman in Pakistan.

Like other part of the world, television has become an important part of people's everyday lives in contemporary Pakistan. It is, therefore, getting impossible to understand Pakistani society without recourse to its cultural artifacts like television. In comparison to other cultural forms television has a significant reach into people's lives and homes. Television programmes (talk-shows, advertisements, dramas/soaps) provide people with the resource to discuss issues, especially gender issue, that they may not be sanctioned within some of the religious, familial and cultural spaces they inhabit. Television serials (soaps and dramas) have the profound effect of mirroring viewers' ongoing daily experience. Television dramas in Pakistan function as a culture form for millions of Pakistani to make sense of contemporary Pakistani culture and their place in it. Public and private issues represented in soaps and dramas provide people with ideals to follow and feel attached to the daily depictions of the lives of a group of characters (Nayak and Kehily, 2008; Skeggs, 1997). It can be argued that television dramas/soaps can be placed within the broader cultural context of people's lives as a popular, mass-produced and publically shared cultural text for people that they can talk, think and relate with. This centrality of television in people's everyday life needs serious academic research, especially from feminist perspective. The aim of this study, thus, is to examine how television screen is space/site on which gender relations are produced and reproduced on a societal level. Our particular focus is to illustrate how television soaps/drams in Pakistan can be seen as sites for the production and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. The forthcoming discussion outlines the theoretical framework and methodological steps employed for conducting this study.

Gender relations and family issues represented in television dramas reflect social realities of contemporary Pakistani society.

Methodology

This study examined the portrayal of men and women or masculinity and femininity on Pakistan Television Network (PTV Home). PTV Home, the original PTV, is twenty four hour state run entertainment channel. Founded on 26 November 1964, PTV was the first major televised media broadcasting network in Pakistan and popular for its hour-long drama series

and serials. The reasons for examining the representation of men and women on PTV Home were: first, "PTV home is accessible to all people across Pakistani "irrespective of their geographical locations in the country" (Ullah and Khan, 2014: 28). Second, this channel is widely available to the people of rural areas of Pakistan where private cable television networks are either resisted on religious and cultural grounds or do not exist at all. Thirds, we think that broadcasting on PTV home should be taken into account "an expression of the state's point of views" (Ullah and Khan, 2014: 28). Forth, PTV home, in the official discourses, is titled a "family channel" which means parents, children and other family members, irrespective of their age and sex, may watch it together. Thus, the decision of studying PTV Home was purposive and not random. The research is a case study focusing primarily on two drama serials, *Jeena Doshwar Hey* (Life is Difficult) and *Mahi Ray* (Oh Sweetheart!) which were broadcasted by the same channel between March and July 2015. The drama serial *Jeena Doshwar Hey* consisted of 26 episodes whereas *Mahi Ray* had 36 episodes. The selection of these dramas was done randomly.

The data for the study was collected from 62 episodes of the aforementioned dramas between March and July 2015. The data was gathered through watching the dramas and taking notes of what were observed in dramas or heard in conversations / talks among characters. Selected samples of texts from notes have been analyzed with the help of discourse analysis. We have used discourse analysis in the same way it has been used by poststructuralist feminists. The forthcoming section (theoretical framework) explains how discourse is used as a methodological and theoretical concept by feminist for making informed analysis.

Theoretical Underpinning

We have used discourse as a key theoretical concept for informed and critical analysis of television text in Pakistan. Discourse, for poststructuralist feminists, is the site in which language is used and where meaning and subjectivity are constructed and contested. Poststructuralist theorizing on gender asserts that gender inequality and gender identities arise from discourses. Drawing on insight from feminist poststructuralist, we have employed discourse analysis to explain how gender representation in television dramas contributes to the construction of gendered identities and the reproduction of gendered hierarchies in Pakistan. Our analysis of dramas points out how the circulation of gendered discourses on television screen explicitly and tacitly offer preferred forms of subjectivity so that viewers take up their subject position according to their socially constructed gender category (Walkerdine, 1987).

We deem it important to mention it here that our use of discourse has much in common with Foucauldian discourse analysis. The fundamental assumption of Foucauldian / poststructuralist feminists is that the linguistic choices, as well as substance, in a conversation, talk and text are not random and can be affected by the ideology of its producer. With an insight from this approach, we have attempted to shed light on how dramas are ideologically invested and used as a strategy for maintaining hegemonic power relations or serve men's interest. We also point out how dominant ideologies are naturalized through television discourses. Deconstructing television text (conversations) with the lens of Foucauldian discourse analysis, we delineate how conversations in the dramas contribute to the reinforcement of the traditional notion of masculinity and femininity. This paper, however, does not take into account the notion of masculinity and femininity as singular constructs but draw on Connell's approach to masculinities and femininities as plural and socially situated.

This study takes the sociological perspective on masculinity and femininity or gender identities as socially constructed categories rather than biological ones. For majority sociologists, femininity and masculinity has changed over the period of time and differ from society to society and even within a society (Kehily, 2007). It was this social constructionist understanding masculinity and femininity that the Australian sociologist Raewyn Bob Connell extensively argued on subject of masculinity. Connell shifted attention away from the notion of masculinity as a singular, universal category towards the idea of masculinities as a plural and socially situated category (Connell, 1995). Drawing on Connell point of view, it can be argued that, like other gender categories, masculinity and femininity are multiple and fluid. According to Connell (1995), in any given context one form of masculinity becomes dominant or *hegemonic masculinity* (Kehily, 2007).

For Connell, hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity to which women and even some men (i.e., young, homosexual men) are subordinated. In hegemonic masculine societies, masculinity is the standard from which everything else is measured, and masculine traits are the most desired and valued in society (Connell, 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is the ideal form of masculinity in a particular culture (Connell, 1990) which emphasizes physical toughness and competitiveness. It also believes in the subordination of women. Connell argued that the idealized form of masculinity "become hegemonic when it is widely accepted in a particular culture and when that acceptance reinforces the dominant gender ideology of the culture" (Trujillo, 1991: 290). This reveals that hegemonic masculinity is not the characteristics of a certain man, but a specified socio-cultural normative standard, to which men and boys are geared.

Thus, drawing on Connell's notion of multiple *masculinities* (1995) and *hegemonic masculinity* (1987) as central concepts, we attempt to examine and highlight how *hegemonic masculinity* and *emphasized femininity* have been naturalized through television soap operas in Pakistan. We highlight how hegemonic masculinity and emphasized/idealized femininity operate on the terrain of common sense and conventional normative standards. We use the *emphasized femininity* as interchangeable concept with *idealized femininity*. By these terms we mean a complete compliance to patriarchy. This insight from Connell's work is helpful to shed light on how some femininity are hegemonic and other subordinate when it comes to gender relations. To sum up this section, we deem it important to spotlight here that media and gender studies scholars highlight at least five feature of hegemonic masculinity: (1) Physical toughness and force- (2) Professional and occupational accomplishment (3) patriarchy (4) heterosexuality (5) frontiersman-ship (see Connell, 1990). The paper highlights how television in Pakistan reproduces these features through soaps and dramas. The forthcoming discussion highlights how hegemonic masculinities in all its features and gender hierarchies are perpetuated and reproduced through television texts.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of television dramas and soaps unpacked that television texts in Pakistan reproduce hegemonic masculinity-men controlling women and children in the family (as well as controlling women and other (less privileged) men in the public domain. Briefly, it is argued that television texts reinforce and legitimize muscular and social dominance of men over women in all spheres of life.

Reproduction and Legitimization of Familial and Public Patriarchy

Pakistani television dramas and soaps industry is one of the key sources of the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity. Television soaps and dramas portray men controlling women and children in the family as well as women and other (economically disadvantaged) men in the public domain. Patriarchal family structure here means a "family system in which men, irrespective of their age, act as the primary authority figures, and control family affairs, women, children, and property" (Ullah, 2013: 269). To situate our analysis in the broader discussion of gendered broadcasting and reproduction of patriarchy, we examine the ways gender-power relationship is represented in the dramas and soaps. Our analysis of the dramas reveals how men (husbands, fathers and brothers) have power and control over women, children and resources.

Salman Ahmad (a rich businessman in the Drama *Jeena Dohswar Hey*) tells his wife to obey his words in all matters and speak his language (say what he said to her and do not add or omit anything). He threatened his wife with serious consequences, if she would disobey him. Salman Ahmad to his wife, "You have to tell what I told you. If you do not, I will kick you out of the house, forgetting the fact that we are married for the last three decades". In an almost similar tone, Sajad (Salman Ahmad's son) threatened his wife, "get lost before I come back home; otherwise I will drag you out of the house". In crises when there was no one to drive Jamal's mother to market, Ramsha (Jamal's wife) came forward and said, "I will drive the car". Her mother-in-law disliked Ramsha's offer. When Jamal came home, his mother told him to inform Ramsha that she should leave her urbane life style. Jamal, dragging Ramsha violently to the bedroom, threatened her, "Why did you offer mother that you will drive her to the market. You should not say it again". Ramsha, defending herself, argued, "Jamal you know I used to drive a car in my mom's home. Jamal, scolding her, asserted, "This is not your mom's home; it is my home. Remember rules are different here. Only my rules are applicable here". On another occasion, Salman Ahmad warned his wife, "Reform you son otherwise I will kick him out of the house". Similarly, Salman Ahmad ordered her daughter in law to leave his home: "Leave my house, I told you leave my house; otherwise I will drag you out". Zubair to his daughter, Sara: "I wish I kill you. I should not see you taking a step out of this house". Sajjad, reacting to his wife objection on his affairs with another girl, said,

I just take one minute to change a girl who does not agree with me or obey me. You are a wife and try to be a good a wife. Do not try to control me. I cannot make a woman the crown on my head. Woman is a shoe and must remain a shoe as she suits there....If you wish to spend life with me, lets things go the way they are otherwise I will take a moment to kick you out of my life. I do what I say.

The analogy (equating woman with shoe) in the above quote positions women in the lowest and degrading position in society. These quotes from the study findings show that men have power over women, children and resources. Soaps and dramas reinforce the belief that the space within the house belongs to men. Wives and children can live in it if they obey husbands or fathers. Television dramas and soaps legitimize the exercise of power as men's prerogative. Power here refers to both resource and domination. See Allen (1999) and the theoretical framework in this study for a detailed discussion on power. These television discourses reinforce and legitimize the biological differences between men and women by depicting men angry and violent and women weak and terrified. These excerpts communicate a strong message that wives should not say anything without the prior approval of their husbands. These conversations

also affirm that women have no house, i.e., when they are in their parents' house they are told that they have to go their homes (husbands' homes) whereas their husbands constantly threat women to be expelled from homes. The concern that we voice here is that men have been depicted to possess women as objects or things whom men can discard and dispose whenever they wish if they (women) do not fit into their schemes of life. TV dramas tell women in general and wives in particular that they have to agree with their husbands, no matter what. If they (women) wish to have peaceful relationship with their husbands they have to obey them, otherwise their husbands will not take a moment to discard them. Dramas also communicate a powerful message that it is the prerogative of husbands to dominate wives and not the wives to dominate their husbands. To truncate the discussion here, it is argued that these are a few of the several discourses that depict men expelling women from homes. The point to be noted here is that such messages tell women that they have no homes but are in a constant threat of becoming homeless.

Cementing the Domestic Ideology: Men for Career and Women for Kitchen

Despite a considerable social change taking place in Pakistan, the belief of making career as men's prerogative is reinforced by television dramas and soaps. The study found that television texts exaggerate and legitimize career as men's prerogative. In the drama *Jeena Doshwar Hey*, Salman, Hamad and Sajad have been portrayed as business men operating nationally and internationally. Similarly, Sara's father was working in a government department; Danial's father was a university professor.

Contrary to men's representation in the public sphere, television soaps and dramas generally ignore females' professional lives, or more often, they are portrayed as housewives who take care of children and everyday domestic chores, with no interest in career. For the relatively small number of women who showed some ambitions to make a career or further their professional lives, they were invariably discouraged. For example, Fakhara got a job in *Dubai* and wished to join it but she was unsuccessful as her mother did not allow her. Fakhara, very excitedly and proudly, tells her mother, "Ma (mother), I have a very good job offer from *Dubai*. I wish to avail this opportunity. It will make my future. It will make our future-as soon as I settle there [in Dubai] I will call you all". The mother, rejecting her daughter's request, said, "I will not let you go....My happiness lies in marrying you off". She further argued,

I will not let my young daughter to go to *Dubai* alone. Men are free to go and live anywhere. The world [people] becomes a beast for a young and lonely woman. A young and alone woman is gazed at with sexual eyes in her own country, how can I send my daughter abroad?

The above discourse not only discourages women but also legitimizes that men-and not women-have the right to go abroad, make career and live wherever they wish. Similarly, in the drama serial *Jeena Doshwar hey*, Ms. Mawa (daughter of a businessman) joined Mr. Salman Ahmad's office with her insidious desires-to get revenge from Mr. Hamad by involving him in love. Mawa's mother was very angry at her daughter and said: "You do not need a job. Your father is a wealthy man and will be quite angry to hear about your job". This is one of the several conversations that discourage women to aspire for career, especially away from their families. It is also pertinent to mention here that young women, especially from middle and lower classes, are discouraged and not allowed to struggle for a career/job abroad. It can be argued that television texts (soaps and dramas) support and reinforce the dominant ideology- the correct way for women to live life is to marry a man and have children.

Women's Cultural, Economic and Social Dependency on Men

Television dramas and soaps reinforce the socially ingrained belief-women are innately weaker than men and therefore physically and intellectually less capable of taking care of themselves. The soaps and dramas portray that women need to be protected and cared by their men. Soaps show women asking for and seeking men's care and protection in the capacity of brothers, fathers and husbands. Facing cruel treatment by her step-mother, Sara tells her step-sister that she missed her brother, Danial. Sara, in a conversation with Mahira, "Today I miss my brother Danial too much. Mahira, consoling Sara, replied: "I am your sister. Please don't weep. Sara said: "Brothers are matchless. They are their sister's confidence". In almost a similar fashion, Ramsha complained that why her brother who visited her home did not meet her. Ramsha to her husband: "Brother came home and did not meet me". Jamal said: "Leave it". Ramsha, in a complaining tone: "No. He is a brother and it is his responsibility to ask about me and see me".

These quotes communicate many messages, i.e., sisters are helpless and lack confidence in the absence of their brothers; Sara seems depressed and needs her brother's shoulder to cry on; it is brothers' obligation and responsibility to protect sisters. This means that the existing patriarchal social structures do not provide women with the environment which enables them to build confidence in themselves and to be independent persons with their agency and confidence. Similarly, the protection and care responsibility shifts from brother and father to husbands. In a conversation between mother and son, mother tries to make her son realize that his wife is his responsibility and he has to take care of her. Mother to her son (Sajjad): "Are you not concerned about your wife. She is your responsibility". Sajjad argued, "I give her as much money as she needs".

Mother: "She needs your support and attention as well". Similarly, television soaps construct women as innocent and sensitive who need to be cared and protected. Maryam to Sufiyan: "Our daughter Anousha is very innocent and sensitive. Take care of her and don't hurt her".

These discourses reinforced the biological and innate differences belief that women are physically and intellectually weaker than men and have to rely on their parents, husbands and brothers for their protection and support. This reproduces the stereotypical belief that women are innately deficient and cannot take care of themselves. They cannot solve their problems and do need men as their caretakers and protectors. When Faiza's mother got sick, Faiza told her sister to call Faizan (their younger brother) to come and take their mother to the hospital. This reinforces the stereotypes that women cannot handle crisis no matter what their age and status are.

Similarly, women depend on men for their social recognition. Women derive their social class, status, and identity from the class status and name of their men. Women, in majority of the world societies, change their names upon marriage. When women subsume their identity into their husbands' identities it impacts women's perception of themselves and their role in the social world. Our name is our identity. Changing it, women are not simply who they are, they are defined by their role as someone's wife, mother, daughter or sister. When Jamal threatened Ramsha that he will send her back to her mother's house forever, Ramsha requested Jamal: "You may cut me into pieces but please do not separate yourself from me". In almost a similar fashion, another wife, sitting in her husband's feet, requesting her husband: "It is enough for me that your name is attached with me. Please do not detach my name from your name". It is pertinent to mention here that sitting in or holding someone's feet is the extreme form of apology or request in Pakistani culture. The point to be noted here is that such representation of women in the television text demonstrates women's helplessness and their dependence on men for their identity and recognition. Similarly, when Sara's father in law did not accept her as a daughter in law, Sara's mother in-law tried to convince her husband: "Salman! Sara's recognition is now associated with Hamad". Such discourses reinforce the belief that women do not have independent identity and recognition but bank on men for their identity and recognition. In other words, women do not have any identity or recognition without attaching themselves with men in the capacity of wives, mothers or sisters.

Does a woman have a home?

Albeit with some changes in the urban centres (Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta) of Pakistan, women's place is believed to be in homes. Their husbands' homes are considered their real homes. Television soaps very forcefully reinforce these traditional stereotypes that parents' homes are not

the real homes for women. Rather, they have to get married and go to their husbands' homes. Television soaps and dramas persistently reinforce this sexist message. A mother, in a conversation with her daughter, tells her: "Girls have to go their husbands' homes. They are like sparrows. They come, sing in the house and fly. They are not supposed to be caged". Similarly, a father tells her daughter: "the house is very quiet and colourless after Mahira's marriage. [He continued] daughters are like sparrows, colourful sparrows. They sit on their fathers' heads, sing and then fly. One day you [he refers to Sara] will also fly like Mahira". These discourses cement the belief that parents' homes are not the real homes for daughters. Young women are constantly given the message that they have to get married and move to their husbands' houses. "Fly" in the above quote means 'marrying off'. In another conversation between a father and a daughter we see that a father feel relaxed and happy by marrying off his daughters. Father tells Mahira: "I am sad and happy that my sparrows (daughters) have gone to their homes". These discourses communicate a very powerful message that marriage and shifting to husband house is the ultimate goal of a woman's life. These discourses also belittle women by comparing them with birds and animals.

The analogy-comparing girls with sparrows-belittles women. In many cultures, including Pakistani culture, analogies between animals and human are made to equate humans with birds and animals, i.e., powerful man with tiger, stupid man with donkey. In many cultures (for example Korea and Japan) man is compared with tiger, dragon and phoenix whereas woman is compared with cat, snake and sparrow (Yol-kya, 2005). "This animal analogy demonstrates masculinity in a position of light, the matching femininity with a contrasting set of animals, in order to position women in an inferior place in relation to men"(Yol-kya, 2005: 123). The repeated utterances of labeling girls as sparrows in television soaps and dramas are ideologically invested-like sparrow is inferior to phoenix which in turn means girls/women are inferior to boys/men.

Anger and Masculinity, Sadness and Femininity

Anger whether expressed in speech or body language is more likely to be perceived as masculine whereas sadness as feminine traits. Television texts legitimize and naturalize anger as men's characteristic. Soaps and dramas show men serious, aggressive and angry. Following quotes show that women (wives, mothers and sisters) should not ask men where they go and what they do. If they do ask they are insulted and receive a very harsh and angry answer.

A wife (Tania) asking her husband, "Where do you go after applying scent? Husband: "Going to a friend's". Wife: Friend or girl friend? Husband: "Why are you being curious about my life like uninformed and

uncivilized girls? The husband continued the conversation and warned his wife: “keep your voice low. You should not be heard outside this room [he pushed her away].

Sidra: Is there any other woman in this house?

Yazdani: Shut up and get lost. Don't interfere in my personal matters otherwise I will be very rude and bad.

Sidra: You forget that now your every matter is my concern. Being your wife, I am part of you.

Yazdani: Shut up Sidra and get lost. Don't interfere in my personal matters.

Sidra: I am your wife.

Yazdani: Wife! My foot [he shouted with anger].

Next morning, Yazdani tried to console Sidra. He went to her and said: “I spoke loudly and scolded you last night. [You know] anyone who interferes in my activities and business, I do not like it”. The point to be noted here is that ‘wife’ is entitled ‘anyone’ i.e., an employee, a stranger or anybody. This means wife for husband here is not someone who emotionally close to her husband but is someone like all people in his life. In the same drama serial, Azfar very harshly gave a shut up call to his wife when she tries to advise him on his sister's marriage. He [rudely] said: “Would you stop advising me, I know my responsibilities and obligations”.

Similarly, Sajjad goes out to meet his girlfriend despite his wife's objection. Sajjad returned late night with a lipstick stain on his shirt. His wife (Tania), pointing to the stain, said: “What is this stain on your shirt? Sajjad: “It may be just a colour”. Tania: Sajjad, this is a lipstick stain not colour”. Sajjad: shut up and get loss”. Sajjad spoke loudly on his wife and called her uncivilized and uneducated. He even pushed her away and threatened her that she should keep her voice low and should not be heard outside the room. This means that in intimate relationships such as wife and husband only men have power and should exercise control over their wives. It can be asserted here that Television texts reinforce the dominate ideology-power is a resource that only men should possess (Dahl, 1957). This further communicates a strong negative message that husbands can continue extra-marital relations whether their wives like it or not. Salman's wife to Salman: “I have told Sajjad to leave girlfriends and drinking”. Salman: Tell him if he will not change his life style and attitude I will throw him out of the house”. Wife to Salman: Ok. Try not to be angry otherwise your blood pressure will shoot up/get high”. Salman: “Control your son if you really care for my health”.

The excerpt suggests that reforming sons, irrespective of their age, is the responsibility of mothers. It also suggests that it is the mother to be blamed for the misdeeds and immoral acts of the children. The excerpt also shows that Salman who acts as dictator in his household exercises his

absolute power but avoided the expected direct confrontation with his son. The micro-level politics being played here is that he knew that the threat to Sajjad may bring resistance and bad interaction. When the mother asks/advises Sajjad why he hangs around with women while his wife Tania is waiting for him at home, Sajjad gives a very rude and insulting response.

Mother to Sajjad: Why do you hang around with girls when you know that you are married?

Sajjad: I am not a child. I know what is good and what is bad. You married me off so you did. Now let me do what I want to do.

Mother [referring to Sajjad's angry tone]: In what tone are you talking to me?

Sajjad: I am not an infant to hold your finger and walk the way you dictate me. Stop advising me like lower middle class mothers.

This excerpt very vividly reveals that men do not accept women's interference in their lives and question their authority in any capacity. Men, irrespective of their age, think of themselves not to be advised or interrogated by women even in the capacity of mothers. Men think that they are wise and know things better than their mothers, wives, sisters and in other capacities. These discourses give the location on the top of the gender hierarchy to men who supposedly possess the properties that are socially ingrained as masculine (see Connell, 1990; Kon, 2008). Men's rude behaviours can be seen the primary characteristic of hegemonic masculinity in Pakistan that places women in positions below men. This communicates a very powerful message to the passive audience that what it means to be a man in the Pakistani cultural context (see Pedersen, 2002).

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to highlight how gender hierarchies and hegemonic masculinity in Pakistan is reproduced by television texts. The analysis illustrated that television dramas and soaps legitimize gender hierarchies and hegemonic masculinity-the cultural expression of men's dominance over women (Connell, 1995). Television soaps and dramas depict men controllers of women, children and other men. Salman Ahmad had absolute control and power over his wife, sons and daughters in law. Similarly, Jamal was the final authority in his family and exercised absolute power over his sisters and wife. Sajjad was an extremely rude with his wife and mother. Men have been depicted as bread winners and protectors of family. These characters, when placed in the hegemonic masculinity framework, reflect the first feature of hegemonic masculinity. Masculinity is hegemonic when power is demonstrated as force or control that is vested in body of gender relations that define men as holders of power and women as subordinate. This is one of the main ways in which the superiority of

men is naturalized (Connell, 1995). Masculinity is also hegemonic when men control women and children in the family (familial patriarchy) and women and other (poor) men in society in general (public patriarchy). Familial patriarchy exists when men are breadwinners, family protectors and strong father and husband figures whereas women are housewives, nurturing mothers and sexual objects (Trujillo, 1991). Looking at the male and female characters in Pakistani dramas, the study found that television soaps and dramas naturalized men's superiority irrespective of their age and class. Masculinity is hegemonic when it is associated with professional and occupational success and achievement in contemporary society. The study findings highlight that television soaps showed men (Salman Ahmad, Faizaan, Hamad, Jamal, Azfar etc) economically independent and focused on their professions. Masculinity is hegemonic when good middle class values and high career aspirations are considered as men's domain only. The findings highlight that soaps and dramas discourage women to have a career. They (women) have been portrayed in stereotypical gender roles (housewife) or prisoners in the iron cage of beautification. The overall conclusion that we reach from this study is that television is one of the most important tools that ideologically disciplines men and women as modern gendered subjects.

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