Gender Stereotyping in TV Drama in Pakistan: A Longitudinal Study

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ABSTRACT

The research was aimed at analysing gender portrayal in TV drama in Pakistan over a period of five decades from its very inception in the late 1960's till 2017. The research explored what types of gender stereotypes were being propagated in the prime time drama serials on the State owned TV channel, PTV which was the only platform available for most part of this duration. The methodology adopted for the research was quantitative in nature and involved a content analysis of the most popular Urdu serials aired between 1968 and 2017. The research focused on the three main characters in each drama and the total sample comprised 72 characters. These characters were analysed in a total of 4834 scenes to observe the display of gender stereotypes. The findings indicated that although overall both the genders were displaying their gender specific stereotypes yet some stereotypes such as bravery and aggressiveness were not being displayed by males and passivity, victimization and fearfulness were not being displayed by females. Later the 50 year time period was sub-divided into five decades to observe whether there had been a change over the years keeping in view the massive changes which had taken place in society. Findings indicated that although there were differences in gender depiction between the five decades for both the genders yet the changes were not linear which pointed to the role of other factors such as government policies which could have contributed to

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the increasing and decreasing stereotyping over the years.

INTRODUCTION

Television has been found to be a primary socializing agent (Bandura, 2002; Gerbner, 1998) which has shown to influence all facets of life including the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of life mainly because of the considerable amount of time people spend in viewing its content. One aspect where TV content has been found to have a particular influence is that of gender construction and within it one area of serious concern is the perception of gender stereotypes. Seminal research by McGhee and Frueh (1980) revealed that viewing stereotypical contents contributed to the learning of stereotypes amongst children and youth. Later these restrictive perceptions create distorted gender identities and then become so prevalent that they become very difficult to counter (Espinosa, 2010).

The present research did not merely look at television but was focused on the genre of drama mainly because it provided a clear picture of the functioning of society by dramatizing the values and norms of the society (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). It was focused on the stereotypes about the male and female gender that had been perpetuated via the prime time drama serial as well as ascertaining whether over the period of five

decades there had been any transformation in gender depiction.

Background

Pakistan is a conservative developing country with a literacy rate which has still barely reached 60 percent (Government of Pakistan Finance Division, 2016). In the seven decades since its creation, it has suffered from a multitude of problems ranging from poverty and disease to more recently radicalization and terrorism, all of which have garnered much social and political debate on the national and international level. However, one issue that has constantly been delegated away from the forefront is the issue of gender inequality (Mumtaz, 2006).

The low levels of literacy has created a situation where the role of print media is limited and the responsibility of social change lies primarily in the hands of the electronic media. Further, with Radio's declining listenership (Gallup Pakistan, 2014) and cinema's limited viewership (Gallup Pakistan, 2012), the only source of information and entertainment for the masses has been the Pakistan Television (PTV) a state-owned television channel which was the only one allowed to operate till 2002. The only exception was NTM (Network Television Marketing) a public/ private partnership offering entertainment content but also under strict government control for a short while from late 80's till early 90's.

The genre of drama has enjoyed immense popularity throughout the history

of the country (Chaudhry, 2016; Kothari, 2005). As private television channels were not allowed to operate in the country till as late as 2002, it was the state channel which provided the only source of affordable entertainment to the masses. However, being state-owned, there were considerable influence of the power regimes on the ideology and the content of the programming (Hashmi, 2012; Kothari, 2005).

The emergence of the satellite TV channels after 2002 with a multitude of international and regional entertainment content created a huge stir with even fears that the flamboyant Indian dramatic content would over shadow local productions (Hashmi, 2012; Saleem, 1994). However, neither the foreign content nor the arrival of private entertainment channels have been able to over shadow the state-owned channel PTV with its 99% reach (Hashmi, 2012; Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority [PEMRA], 2010). Thus, the research focused exclusively on the dramas aired on the state owned channel PTV as it was not only the oldest but also had the largest reach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Stereotyping in Media

It has been suggested that the idea of stereotyping is not necessarily bad as it does help in reducing the mental effort needed to make categorization in daily life (Gorham, 2004). However, this very stereotyping becomes problematic when it is used to over-simplify situations and create confusing assessments about subjects in any social category. The situation becomes even more troublesome when it is the media which is perpetuating these stereotypes particularly about gender (Lorber & Farrell, 1991).

The term "stereotype" was initially used by Lippman (1922) to refer to the images of particular things that people have in their minds. However, Lippman himself went on to argue that these mental images might be distorted and might differ from reality. Later, when the idea of gender stereotyping emerged, Perkins (1979) called it an over-simplification of the real life gender differences in power structures in society. In a similar vein, Goffman (1979) asserted that it was used primarily to convert the more obscure notions of gender identity into more easily understandable concepts. However, media content such as advertising shows us a hyper-real world with distorted gender relations.

Gender stereotyping is a pervasive phenomenon but female stereotyping is relatively more common than male stereotyping (Collins, 2011; Goffman, 1979). With reference to female stereotyping the first observable phenomenon is their under-representation (Collins, 2011; Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media, 2014; Kharroub & Weaver, 2014; Prieler, 2016; Shanahan et al., 2008; Wood, 1994) which Tuchman (1978) had called the symbolic annihilation of women. A further case of under-representation also occurs whereby the role of the main protagonist is created for the male and not the female (Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media, 2014).

The most common type of stereotyping occurs with regard to the physical appearance of the female characters who are almost always shown to be beautiful and young (Ahmad, 2002; Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018; Aullette et al., 2009; Chalupova, 2011; Lauzen & Dozier, 2005; Luif, 2014; Poerwandari et al., 2014; Prieler, 2016; Prieler et al., 2015; Scott, 2011; Shanahan et al., 2008; Steinke, 2005; Wood, 1994; Zheng, 2011). Also, this depiction is carried over to a preoccupation with youth and beauty whereby the females are shown to be only concerned about their physical appearance (Wood, 1994).

Another commonly occurring stereotype pertains to the depiction of women as the victims of violence and all sorts of other criminal activities (Bosch, 2019; Gerbner, 1970; Gunter, 1995; Tuchman, 1978). Alongside being the victims of violence media frequently portrays females as passive objects that are viewed by others (Ahmad, 2002; Ali & Batool, 2015; Bosch, 2019; Collins, 2011; Mulvey, 1975; Wood, 1994). Other attributes similar to passivity are submissiveness (Ahmed, 2012; Ali & Batool, 2015; Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018; Bosch, 2019; Chalupova, 2011; Tuchman, 1978; Wood, 1994) dependence (Ali & Batool, 2015; Gunter, 1995), weakness (Ali & Batool, 2015; Gunter, 1995) and emotionality (Ahmed, 2012; Chalupova, 2011; Espinosa, 2010).

Stereotypes are not just formed about appearance and behaviour but also about relationships. Significant research has suggested that the media portrays the females as being extremely preoccupied with romance and their love lives (Bosch, 2019; Gunter, 1995; Lauzen et al., 2008; Poerwandari et al., 2014; Steinke, 2005) as well as nurturing and caring for their loved ones (Aullette et al., 2009; Lauzen et al., 2008; Wood, 1994). Also, women who forego their nurturing responsibilities towards their families are demonized (Walderzak, 2016a). Interestingly, the caring and nurturing element is also often linked to the domestic sphere (Ahmad, 2002; Ali & Batool, 2015; Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018; Carter & Steiner, 2004; Gunter, 1995; Poerwandari et., 2014; Prieler, 2016; Shanahan et al., 2008; Tuchman, 1978; Wood, 1994) where the females are shown to be involved in the performance of common household chores.

Interestingly, stereotyping is not just a common practice for the representation of females but males also get the same treatment. They are shown to be tough and authoritative (Bosch, 2019; Chalupova, 2011; Espinosa, 2010; Wood, 1994) as well as passing over emotions in favor of logic and rationality (Chalupova, 2011; Espinosa, 2010; Wood, 1994). Further, Song's (2010, p. 420) assertion of there being instances of "muscular athleticism and a rebellious sensuality" were reinforced by others (Ahmed, 2012) who found the males to be represented as athletic and intelligent as well as being unfaithful and criminal at the same time.

Contrary to the depiction of females, males are not always shown as being very young (Ahmad, 2002; Prieler et al., 2015). Work is shown to play a major part in the

lives of men (Ahmad, 2002; Kharroub & Weaver, 2014; Kiran, 2016; Luif, 2014; Prieler, 2016; Prieler et al., 2015) where they are frequently shown to be displaying the qualities of being ambitious and successful (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005; Prieler et al., 2015). Further, in stark contrast to women, men are shown to be more successful as they grow older (Ahmed, 2012; Carter & Steiner, 2004; Lauzen & Dozier, 2005). Also, male stereotypical representation also includes a complete lack of knowledge or responsibility of work and nurturing in the domestic sphere (Fogel, 2012; Wood, 1994).

A lot research has pointed out the linkages between the representation of males and violence (Gerbner, 1970; Signorielli, 2003; Sink & Mastro, 2017) whereby the male characters are the epitome of bravado and masculinity (Fogel, 2012). Violence committed by the male protagonist is generally shown to be for the right cause and a sign of bravery (Song, 2010). Alongside this display of bravery and aggression, another essential male stereotype has been the avoidance of emotions and weakness (Seidler, 1994). However, in recent times the depiction of males is also characterized by a phenomenon described by D'Acci as "masculinity in crises" (1994, p. 88) whereby males are represented in somewhat feminine roles.

Alongside male and female stereotyping, transgender characters are also stereotyped. Ryan (2009) had identified the four most common stereotypes of those of the Deceiver, Mammy, Monster and Revolutionary. By deceiver, Ryan (2009) referred to characters

being in drag to achieve some objective but this depiction put them across as being very selfish and conniving. Although the second stereotype of Mammy is not itself negative but it is derogatory as it shows the trans-characters to be very servile. The third stereotype of the monster or psychopath is a frequently occurring trope often used in horror or violent media content. Alongside these three negative stereotypes a new stereotype which has emerged is that of the revolutionary where trans characters are shown to question the status quo.

Analysis of the stereotypes thus suggests that they can be placed on a spectrum with every male stereotype having a counter female stereotype. Thus, for the purpose of the present research, the following sets of stereotypes were marked for analysis; visible-invisible, mature – youthful, brave-afraid, assertive-submissive, independent-dependent, confident-shy, unattractive-attractive, saviour-victim, aggressive-passive, not nurturing- nurturing, rational-emotional, non-domestic- domestic. For the purpose of the present research, all these have been covered in a single research questions;

RQ 1: *Whether TV dramas in Pakistan reinforce gender stereotypes?*

Transformation of Gender Stereotyping

Research has shown gender stereotyping is the norm all over the world but a pertinent question in this regard pertains to the persistence of stereotypes and to find out whether there has been any transformation in gender depiction over the years or not

(Kiran, 2016; Prieler et al., 2015). With regard to the representation of females, some like Gerbner et al. (1978), believe that it is changing for the worst in spite of an increase in awareness about the issue. Further, media is still perpetuating the older stereotype of women as the home makers while the males are the head of the household (Gauntlett, 2008; Gerbner et al., 1978; Poerwandari et al., 2014). Other researchers (Gauntlett, 2008; Zeisler, 2008) observed a continuing trend whereby the ratio of male to female central characters was considerably in favour of the males. Similarly, it has been observed (Gauntlett, 2008; Poerwandari et al., 2014; Zheng, 2011) that stereotype of the female's preoccupation with and representation as young and beautiful has also continued. Gentility and passivity have continued to be the norm for female portrayal (Poerwandari et al., 2014), while their job status also tends to be lower than the male characters (Zheng, 2011). In fact, in some instances, the female depiction has seen a turn for the worse through greater stereotyping in the recent times as compared to a more liberal depiction in the past and greater usage of the trope of the evil modern woman and the angelic traditional woman (Chaudhry, 2016).

Many researchers have also observed that male representation has not varied greatly over the years such that males are shown to be intelligent and resourceful (Gauntlett, 2008) while the tradition of masculine bravery and bravado are also a continuing trend (Pérez, 2005). Maclean (2011) had found that there were greater instances of men being shown as resorting to crime than in the past. In more recent times, considerable effort has been put in to reduce stereotyping through direct government intervention or civic pressure, but in some cases, the outcome has been worst than before, i.e greater stereotyping post the regulation (Verhellen et al., 2016). Just like male representation, transgender representation is not believed to have changed much over the years, with the stereotyping associated with them continuing even in more recent times (Gauntlett, 2008).

In spite of many researchers have a dismal view of gender representation over the years, not everyone is pessimistic and many (Ahmad, 2002; Gauntlett, 2008; Sandonato, 2014) even believe that things are changing for the better. Increasingly, the bravado and machismo of male characters is being replaced by a representation as softer, caring individuals (Gauntlett, 2008; Long et al., 2010; Pérez, 2005) and weariness towards violence (Gauntlett, 2008). However, it is pertinent to point out that the softer masculine side is displayed only in the private sphere while in the public sphere; the males have to resort to the display of hegemonic masculinity (Khai & Abdul-Wahab, 2017).

Like males, the depiction of females has also undergone a change (Gauntlett, 2008; Long et al., 2010; Poerwandari et al., 2014; Sandonato, 2014). The most positive change which has been observed is a significantly larger number of female protagonists (Ahmad, 2002; England et al., 2011; Gauntlett, 2008; Zeisler, 2008) as well

as the inclusion of slightly older and more mature females in leading roles. Women are increasingly being shown as confident, resourceful, assertive and in control of their lives (England et al., 2011; Gauntlett, 2008; Long et al., 2010; Panitchpakdi, 2007; Zheng, 2011). Further, women are being shown more often as career women (Gauntlett, 2008; Pérez, 2005; Sandonato, 2014) who also excel at running their homes (Long et al., 2010; Panitchpakdi, 2007). They are portrayed as being more educated than in the past (Zheng, 2011) and less likely to display stereotyped feminine traits such as being worried, fussy, demanding, sulky and fearful. While discussing the female lead in superhero movies, Walderzak (2016b) observed the increasing trend of the females having greater agency and were shifting away from passivity to aggressiveness alongside the male super-heroes.

The transformation in both male and female gender depiction did not come about by itself but a lot of effort by the feminist movement was able to reduce the gap in the positions of males and females and the emergence of more empowered females who are also confident about their sexuality (Panitchpakdi, 2007).

Gender representation in Pakistani media content has not been studied in great detail but links have been observed with the ideology supported by the ruling elite whereby General Zia's martial law regime opted for the Islamization of media content (Abbas, 2018; Hashmi, 2012; Kothari, 2005). One key part of the Zia doctrine was the concept of the veil and four walls i.e

women are to stay hidden inside the house and are to kept away from prying eyes with the help of a veil (Abbas, 2018; Kothari, 2005). Further, the privatization of media has also brought about some changes but the representation has not changed drastically and the traditional of representation of gender continued to be the norm (Hashmi, 2012). In this context, the present research with its vast sample and time frame was aiming to find more conclusive evidence as to the situation of gender depiction over the years and to find out whether there has been any alteration in the depiction of gender in TV dramas in Pakistan. The second research questions was thus framed as follows;

RQ 2: Has there been a transformation in the depiction of gender in TV dramas in Pakistan over the past five decades?

METHOD

The research was aimed at determining the frequency and extent of gender stereotyping in TV dramas, the methodology adopted for the research was quantitative content analysis as many previous studies on gender depiction also opted for this method (Ahmad, 2002; Collins, 2011; Kharroub & Weaver, 2014; Lauzen & Dozier, 2005; Luif, 2014; Poerwandari et al., 2014; Prieler, 2016; Scott, 2011; Steinke, 2005; Zheng, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, the research focused on the dramas aired on the state owned channel PTV primarily because it had been in continuous operation for over five decades as well as having the largest reach (Hashmi, 2012; PEMRA, 2010). The

population of the study comprised all the prime time drama serials aired on PTV from 1968 till 2017. All drama series, sit-coms, and soaps. as well as foreign dramas were excluded from the sample. Although PTV was launched in 1964 but the content from 1964-1967 was aired live so no record is available therefore this period was also omitted. A purposive sample which was selected from the population comprised of the most popular plays for each year, however due to the lengthy duration of the study, the sample was limited to every second year rather than every year. The list of plays was made in consultation with the sources at PTV. The year 1971 was omitted from the sample as civil unrest and war had a negative influence on the production of new dramas. Thus, in all 24 plays were finalized for the 50 year study period rather than 25.

Only the three most significant characters were selected for analysis and in all 72 characters were analysed. The micro-level unit of analysis in this study was each singular character which was further assessed to find out whether the character traits that were being displayed were stereotypically male or female. Coders aimed to observe the depiction of the following sets of stereotypes; visible-invisible, mature – youthful, brave-afraid, assertive-submissive, independent-dependent, confident-shy, unattractive-attractive, saviour-victim, aggressive-passive, not nurturing- nurturing, rational-emotional, non-domestic- domestic. The Coders were provided with detailed operationalization of each indicator in the code book and the analysis was made on the

basis of the context as well as the thoughts, attitudes and actions which were displayed by each character. For coding purposes only, all the stereotypes excluding visibility and age which the literature pointed out to be male stereotypes were coded as 1 while all the stereotypes presented as female stereotypes were coded as 2.

Before conducting the final study, a pilot test was conducted on five episodes of a drama serial which was not in the final sample to test for reliability and validity. Two post graduate students were involved in the coding process who were trained in five sittings to learn the coding protocols. Minor changes were incorporated into the code book and coding rules in line with the suggestions by the coders.

For the final analysis the dramas were saved on the personal computers of the coders in MP4 format and the entire coding process took six months. Data was manually entered into coding sheets which was later transferred to an Excel and SPSS format. Inter-coder reliability was judged by uploading the excel data into the online software RECAL2 which showed that the average Krippendorff's alpha coefficient of the two coders was 0.79 which according to the criterion set by Neuendorf (2011) indicates a significantly high degree of reliability. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS and applying relevant tests.

FINDINGS

Findings of the study revealed that in all 4834 scenes were coded out of which 2581 featured males while 2253 featured females.

Interestingly none of the central characters was a transgender. A significant majority (3379) of the scenes were placed in urban locations while 1443 scenes featured a rural and 12 featured a resort location. With regard to age, it was revealed that a significant majority (3881) were young characters (19-34 years) followed by 449 scenes featuring mature individuals (35-49 years), 369 scenes featured elderly individuals (Over 50 years), 120 scenes featured teens (13-18 years) and only 15 scenes featured children below the age of 12.

With regard to other demographic indicators such as marital status, it was revealed that 2814 scenes featured single individuals, 1633 featured married individuals, 321 widowed individuals and 66 divorced/ separated individuals. The occupational status of the characters revealed that 2793 were employed somewhere or were themselves employers. 643 scenes featured housewives, 266 scenes had students, 252 with criminals and 144 were either looking for work or had retired from work. Observation regarding the socio-economic class of the characters revealed that 1804 scenes featured middle class individuals, 1536 had elite class characters and 1494 had working class characters.

RQ 1: Whether TV dramas in Pakistan reinforce gender stereotypes?

To answer this question, first all the individual sets of stereotypes including visible-invisible, mature – youthful, brave - afraid, assertive - submissive, independent - dependent, confident -shy, unattractive - attractive, savior - victim, aggressive - passive, not nurturing- nurturing, rational - emotional, non-domestic - domestic, were analysed and then they were computed to form the variable entitled gender stereotyping.

Table 1

Frequencies of males and females in PTV dramas

	Males	Females
Observed freq.	2581	2253
Expected freq. (prop.)	2417.0 (0.5)	2417.0 (0.5)

Note. χ^2 = 22.256*, df =1. Numbers in parentheses, (), are expected proportions. Freq. =frequency and prop. = proportion. *p= .00

With regard to the first indicator of stereotyping i.e visibility versus invisibility, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test was applied which indicated that there was a significant difference in the proportion of males to females, x^2 (1, n = 4834) = 22.256, p = .000, such that there were significantly more males as compared to females (See Table 1).

The remaining eleven sets of indicators for stereotyping were explored by applying independent sample t-tests (See Table 2) which revealed significant differences

between the representation of male and female characters with regard to the attributes of maturity versus youthfulness (t(4627.52)= 11.891, *p*= .00), assertiveness versus submissiveness (t (4832) = -2.384, *p*= .017), independence versus dependence (t (4382.59) = -7.973, *p*= .000), confidence versus shyness (t (4832) = -4.721, *p*= .000), unattractiveness versus attractiveness (t (4742.49) = -16.834, *p*= .000), not nurturing versus nurturing (t (3977.20) = -6.043, *p*= .000), rational versus emotional (t (4830.018) = -3.805, *p*= .000), and non-domestic versus domestic (t (4805.67) = -6.100, *p*= .000).

Findings (Table 2) revealed that males tended to be more mature, assertive, independent, confident, less Nurturing, rational and non-domestic in comparison to the females who were more often youthful, submissive, dependent, shy, attractive, nurturing, emotional and domestic.

The stereotypes of masculine bravery, aggressiveness and saviour ship and feminine fearfulness, victimization and passivity did not hold true. Interestingly no significant differences were observed regarding bravery-fearfulness (t (4832) = -0.152, *p*= .879) and saviour-victim (t (4743.60) = 1.454, *p*= .146) while the stereotypes of aggressiveness and passivity were reversed with males showing more passivity and females showing more aggressiveness.

Table 2

T-test of individual gender stereotype sets in PTV dramas

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mature-Youthful	Male	2581	2.22	0.429	11.891	4627.52	.000
	female	2253	2.10	0.302			
Brave- Afraid	male	2581	0.17	0.48	-0.152	4832	.879
	female	2253	0.18	0.52			
Assertive-Submissive	male	2581	0.74	0.50	-2.384	4832	.017
	female	2253	0.78	0.52			
Independent-Dependent	male	2581	0.89	0.55	-7.973	4382.59	.000
	female	2253	1.03	0.66			
Confident-Shy	male	2581	0.86	0.41	-4.721	4832	.000
	female	2253	0.92	0.46			
Unattractive-Attractive	male	2581	1.30	0.94	-16.834	4742.49	.000
	female	2253	1.70	0.71			
Savior- Victim	male	2581	0.16	0.47	1.454	4743.60	.146
	female	2253	0.14	0.47			

Table 2 *(Continued)*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Aggressive-Passive	male	2581	0.21	0.46	6.247	4830.39	.000
	female	2253	0.13	0.39			
Not Nurturer-Nurturer	male	2581	0.07	0.38	-6.043	3977.20	.000
	female	2253	0.16	0.54			
Rational-Emotional	male	2581	1.79	0.597	-3.805	4830.01	.000
	female	2253	1.85	0.510			
Non-domestic-Domestic	male	2581	1.62	0.484	-6.100	4805.67	.000
	female	2253	1.70	0.455			

Computation

In order to answer the first research question, regarding reinforcement of gender stereotypes in TV dramas in Pakistan, all the individual sets of stereotypes mentioned in Table 2 were computed together to form one variable. As mentioned earlier, all the

stereotypes associated with the male gender were coded as 1 while all the stereotypes associated with females were coded as 2. Significant differences (t(4832)= -8.11, *p*= .000) were observed between the depiction of males (M=10.14, SD=2.10) and females (M=10.65, SD=2.26) such that males had a significantly lower mean value in comparison to females which goes on to show that gender stereotypes are the norm in the dramas aired on the state owned channel in Pakistan (See Table 3).

Table 3

T-test of computed gender stereotypes in PTV dramas

Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	t	df	Sig.
Male	2581	10.1418	2.10464	-8.110	4832	.000
Female	2253	10.6520	2.26754			

RQ 2: Has there been a transformation in the depiction of gender in TV dramas in Pakistan over the past five decades?

The second research question pertained to whether there had been a transformation in the depiction of gender over the past five decades. In order to find out whether this was so, ANOVA tests were applied for each gender separately.

Findings of the study (F (4, 2576) =20.349, *p*= .00) revealed that there were significant differences in the depiction

of male stereotypes over the years (See Table 4). As the characteristics of male stereotyping were coded as 1, while the female stereotypes were coded as 2, thus the lower the overall number for male characterization, the greater the stereotyping. Thus, the findings revealed that stereotyping was the worst during the 2008-2017 (M=9.7, SD=2.52), while the least amount of stereotyping was done during the period from 1978-1987 (M= 10.62, SD= 1.69).

Table 4

ANOVA Test- Transformation of gender stereotyping of males

T	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	F	Sig.
1968-1977	277	10.3430	2.29241			
1978-1987	687	10.6259	1.69670			
1988-1997	354	9.9068	1.95699	4/2576	20.349	.000
1998-2007	428	10.2617	1.52780			
2008-2017	835	9.7150	2.52189			
Total	2581	10.1418	2.10464			

Table 5

ANOVA Test- Transformation of gender stereotyping of females

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	F	Sig.
1968-1977	240	10.8542	1.98097			
1978-1987	449	11.1069	2.19113			
1988-1997	617	10.8979	1.67418	4/2248	66.958	.000
1998-2007	400	11.3775	2.08948			
2008-2017	547	9.3821	2.63435			
Total	2253	10.6520	2.26754			

Findings of the study (F (4, 2248) =66.958, *p*= .00) revealed that there were significant differences in the depiction of female stereotypes over the years (See Table 5) As the characteristics of female stereotyping were coded as 2, the higher the overall number for female characterization, the greater the stereotyping. Thus, the findings revealed that stereotyping was the worst from 1998-2007 (M=11.37, SD=2.08) while the least amount of stereotyping was present in the period 2008-2017 (M= 9.38, SD= 2.63). The period from 1998-2007 is interestingly the period where the private TV

channels were allowed to start functioning. The sudden increase can be attributed to the arrival of competition but the next phase clearly shows a sort of settling down whereby the portrayal of females improved drastically.

DISCUSSION

The research was aimed at analysing gender portrayal in the drama serials on Pakistan's state owned channel. Pakistan is a developing country with a multitude of socio-economic and political problems. Although over-population, illiteracy and poverty appear to be the main concerns of the country, the patriarchal mind-sets and culture are creating hurdles in the lives of many. In such a situation, the role of media becomes particularly important as it can be used effectively to counter the prevailing situation.

Significant literature had suggested that media across the globe tended to stereotype both genders whereby the first research question was aimed at determining the prevalence of this phenomenon in Pakistan. A computation of the stereotypes showed the tendency of dramatic content to stereotype both the genders. However, to analyse the phenomenon in greater detail, various stereotypes were studied individually to find out which were more common in the Pakistani context.

The first stereotype related to what Tuchman (1978) called the symbolic annihilation of women or other researchers (Collins, 2011; Geena Davis Institute on Gender and Media, 2014; Kharroub &

Weaver, 2014; Prieler, 2016; Shanahan et al., 2008; Wood, 1994) referred to as the under-representation of women which was found to hold true in Pakistan. It is interesting that inspite of having significantly more female audiences in comparison to male audience, the female gender is relatively less frequently visible in the TV drama serial. Further, even when women are shown on screen, it was more often in the domestic sphere, a phenomenon also observed by previous researchers (Ahmad, 2002; Ali & Batool, 2015; Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018; Carter & Steiner, 2004; Gunter, 1995; Kiran, 2016; Poerwandari et al., 2014; Shanahan et al., 2008; Tuchman, 1978; Wood, 1994). This indicates that the drama serials too were purporting the notion that women are meant to stay in the domestic sphere leaving the outside world as the sole domain of men. These findings strengthen the idea that the Zia doctrine of the veil and four walls was followed not only during the Zia regime but many successive governments adopted and perpetuated these ideals.

The stereotypes of youth and beauty/ attractiveness as pointed out by various researchers (Ahmad, 2002; Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018; Aullette et al., 2009; Chalupova, 2011; Lauzen & Dozier, 2005; Luif, 2014; Scott, 2011; Shanahan et al., 2008; Steinke, 2005; Poerwandari et al., 2014; Prieler et al., 2015; Prieler, 2016; Wood, 1994; Zheng, 2011) was also found to hold true. Similarly, the data also supported the notion that females were shown more often as dependent (Ali & Batool, 2015; Gunter, 1995) and emotional (Ahmed, 2012; Chalupova, 2011; Espinosa,

2010). The media has played a crucial role in instilling the ideal of the compliant and beautiful female who has no regard for her own desires but is there merely to please the eyes of the beholder.

The female stereotypes which were not found to hold true were fearfulness, and victimization. Although considerable previous literature had shown the presence of these stereotypes (Ali & Batool, 2015; Bosch, 2019; Gerbner, 1970; Gunter 1995; Tuchman, 1978), yet no support was found in the sample. Interestingly, the commonly found stereotype of passivity (Ahmad, 2002; Ali & Batool, 2015; Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018; Bosch, 2019; Collins, 2011; Wood, 1994) was actually found to be reversed such that females were more often aggressive in comparison to males. This is a singular discovery as coming from a region where all sorts of violence against women is fairly common, the breaking of the stereotype of victimization and passivity paints a different picture. Although the patriarchal structures are still prevalent and are mainly responsible for the subjugation of the female populace yet the dynamic portrayal of females on State television indicates the positive role that media can play in bringing a positive change in society.

When it comes to males, various stereotypes were identified by literature; prominent amongst these were maturity (Ahmad, 2002; Prieler et al., 2015) and being occupied with some work outside the home (Ahmad, 2002; Kharroub & Weaver, 2014; Kiran, 2016; Luif, 2014; Prieler, 2016; Prieler et al., 2015) which were both found

to hold true. The stereotype of assertiveness and confidence as pointed out by literature (Bosch, 2019; Chalupova, 2011; Espinosa, 2010; Wood, 1994) was also found to hold true with regard to masculine depiction alongside the stereotypes of independence and rationality (Chalupova, 2011; Espinosa, 2010; Wood, 1994).

Interestingly in spite of significant literature indicating masculine bravery, toughness, aggression (Bosch, 2019; Chalupova, 2011; Espinosa, 2010; Wood, 1994) and violent tendencies (Gerbner, 1970; Signorielli, 2003; Sink & Mastro, 2017), the complete opposite was found to be true with regard to masculine depiction in Pakistani dramas. This is again a significant finding as alongside the rejection of female victimization, the rejection of masculine bravado and aggression can have positive long term influences.

The second research question pertained to the transformation of gender depiction in Pakistani dramas over the years. In this regard the fifty-year period was divided into five decades to better understand the shifts in representation. Interestingly the socio-political landscape of the country was also evolving along similar lines such that the authority of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977), General Zia-ul-Haq (1978-1988), General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2007) lasted for almost entire decades while the remaining period was shared by the two main political parties, right-winged Pakistan Muslim League and center left-winged Pakistan People's Party. Of these Z. A. Bhutto and Musharraf alongside

Pakistan People's Party had a more liberal approach which was also reinforced through State Media while General Zia had a more conservative approach and opted for the Islamization of Media content (Abbas, 2018; Hashmi, 2012; Kothari, 2005; Talib & Idrees, 2012). Further, even though General Zia-ul-Haq's regime lasted for only a decade, many successive governments especially the many regimes of the right-winged Pakistan Muslim League tried to adopt the narrative initiated by him especially pertaining to the situation of women (Talib & Idrees, 2012). Thus, when viewing the gender depiction during different governments, the relative frequency of female leads and central characters during the more liberal regimes indicates that perhaps the notion of the veil and four walls was the key factor in the invisibility of women under more conservative government setups.

Findings of the study revealed that although there were significant changes in depiction of both the genders, the changes did not follow a linear path from better to worse (Chaudhry, 2016; Gerbner et al., 1978) or a continuation of the worse as found by many others (Gauntlett, 2008; Gerbner et al., 1978; Maclean, 2011; Poerwandari et al., 2014; Verhellen et al., 2016; Zeisler, 2008; Zheng, 2011). Although some literature had suggested a slight improvement in the depiction of both males (Gauntlett, 2008; Long et al., 2010; Pérez, 2005) and females (Ahmad, 2002; England et al., 2011; Gauntlett, 2008; Long et al., 2010; Panitchpakdi, 2007; Pérez, 2005;

Poerwandari et al., 2014; Sandonato, 2014; Walderzak, 2016b; Zeisler, 2008; Zheng, 2011), this was only partially supported as contrary to expectation female portrayal significantly improved in the most recent times but the depiction of the males was the worst possible. However, the evidence leads to the conclusion that the changes in the portrayal cannot possibly be due to the changing times; changes due to globalization and greater awareness of the audiences as had this been the case, the changes would have followed a more linear path for both genders. One possible explanation can be the emergence of the private TV channels in 2002 which created competition for ratings for the state broadcaster which compelled it to resort to formulaic and tested content with traditional storylines and hence traditional gender relations.

A better explanation for the non-linear changes in the depiction can be attributed to the changes in the government policies, PTV being a state channel the policies and attitudes of successive governments have definitely had a huge impact on media content. As mentioned earlier, the successive governments with their liberal or conservative agendas significantly influenced media content (Abbas, 2018; Hashmi, 2012; Kothari, 2005). Thus, the depiction can in part be attributed to the attitude of the successive governments in terms of gender parity and gender discrimination. However, no study so far has looked for conclusive links between gender representation and government policy. The

present study identifies the possibility of this phenomenon which needs to be investigated in greater detail by future researchers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that although overall the data showed both the genders as displaying gender-specific stereotypes yet surprisingly some anomalies were observed, such that dominant stereotypes such as bravery and aggressiveness were not being displayed by males while passivity, victimization and fearfulness were not being displayed by females. With regard to the transformation in gender depiction, it was found that although there were differences in gender depiction between the five decades for both the genders yet the changes were non-linear which points to the role of other factors such as the influence of reigning governments which could be a contributing factor in the increase or decrease in gender stereotyping over the years, a phenomenon which needs to be explored further.

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