



Social Taboos in Pakistani Dramas

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ABSTRACT

This paper sheds light on the phenomena of Social taboos and determines their portrayal in dramas of Pakistan. The main objective of the study is to identify the ways in which Pakistani dramas discuss such taboo topics like transgender, honor killing, rape and child sexual abuse. In this research the content of the dramas were discussed. And, in order to see the impact of such dramas on the Pakistani Society, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The sample taken for this research was small and did not consider the socio-economic status, age or religion of the participants. And, also the experts in this field were taken as the sample. The findings of this study were that, the social taboo issues in Pakistani dramas have both the positive and negative impact on the people, they have helped break silence on the taboo issues in real life. Secondly this study found out that, these issues in dramas are not touched appropriately and mostly presented without being researched and are mostly discussed to get ratings. Other than that such dramas also help people fight their fears.

Keywords: Social taboo, Dramas

INTRODUCTION

In the modern times, various mediums of information media are available which attracts the people's attention. Ever since the introduction of various news channels, the information has reached the masses. Among the various available media, electronic media is the most that attracts the public at large. We live in a world of media and it has influenced our lives immensely. There has been nothing more appealing to people than television to the society and ultimately to the public.

Entertainment programs play a significant role in shaping personality of an individual. And also is a great platform to educate people regarding the prevailing social issues in our society. People adopt different cultural trends from the TV programs that they watch and the effects of TV entertainment programs are observed at each aspect of human life.

To educate individuals the values that are mandatory for building a united, disciplined and integrated society was the aim of the first launched state television in Pakistan. There were various attempts made by PTV to educate people about the social issues amongst people through education—entertainment dramas. Many such dramas were broadcasted in the starting days of PTV. "Taleem Baligan", which was the first attempt by PTV to encourage literacy amongst adults. "Ahat" was another drama, which focused on a middle income family, its problems and their desire for a male child.

In this new era also, Pakistani dramas have become successful in bringing into limelight the talent of the writers, directors and actors. The responsibility of the writers, producers and actors is to deal with issues rising in our society, silence on the taboos should be



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broke ,raise awareness amongst people and leave a positive impact on the society. All of this could be done on domestic level by starting dialogue.

Some of the best Pakistani dramas that represented the social –cultural taboos from 2009 -2019 included following:

Udaari :

On a prime time weekend slot , on a popular channel drama “Udaari” was aired . Momina Duraid productions and KASHF foundation collaborated for this drama serial. This drama brought two social issues that are class prejudice and child sexual abuse into limelight. This drama in an eye catching way moved, rapidly through these two troubling issues. It displayed the hardships that a single mother had to face, fighting for justice for her daughter. The role of child’s rapist “Imtiaz” was highly appreciated by the audiences . He made several attempts for taking revenge from the child’s mother it was considered a terrifying role.

Muqabil :

This drama was excellent though heart breaking. It was portrayed with a raw essence that was the reason why it was triggering. It showcased the same rising issue of child sexual abuse , it starred Kubra khan , Mohsin Abbas and Asif Raza Mir . The story of the drama revolved around Kubra Khan’s character who was raped in her childhood and in order to seek revenge she married the son of her rapist.

Chup Rahu :

This drama revolved around the rape of a girl by her brother in law. The girl was asked to stay silent for the sake of her sister and her marriage. In short this drama depicted the dark side of our society, in which women are a victim of continuous violence and in order to protect the veneration of their families they have to keep silent.

Khudgarz :

The riped issues in Pakistani society, which are misogyny and forced marriages had been depicted in this drama. Along with male domination and safeguarding the honor of everyone in the family , this drama dived into the very common problem of politics within families. The second lead male character was represented as an example of chauvinism with characteristics like vile and ruthless.

Dhund:

In this drama a multiple taboos like single parenthood ,honor killings , sectarian violence etc were discussed . In order to make the gloomier counterparts less intense the drama started with a light premise.

Dar Si Jati Hai Sila :

This was another drama which highlighted the issue of child abuse. A girl named Sila was sexually abused by her paternal aunt’s foster brother. Two other most important issues marital abuse and rape were also woven in the story. As per norm , the dramas in which such issues were showcased women were forced to keep silent.

Baaghi :

This drama was based on a true story of Qandeel Baloch , who was killed by her own brother in the name of honor. Saba Qamar played the role of Qandeel Baloch and was named Fauzia Batool in the drama. She was a rebellious and outspoken girl, who was always disciplined by her mother. Fauzia did not want to marry to a person who was jobless, lazy and had no future that was why she rejected the proposal sent by her sister - in-law’s brother. She was an ambitious girl who wanted to become a top model and thought that marriage was an end to her dreams. Her life changed and became dark when she fell in love with a man named Abid , who had his own cosmetic shop in the village , both of them married . Fauzia was betrayed by her husband as she saw him cheating on her and



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had an affair with one of the girls from village. Before their marriage Abid made many promises that he would let her live her life on her terms and would let her go to Karachi to become a model . But unfortunately he completely changed and became a conservative man. Their life after marriage became very complicated, though they both had a son but that did also not change their lives. Fauzia was subject to continuous torture and violence from her husband and mother –in-law . She was not ready to sacrifice her whole life for a man who did not care for her , so she ran away from her husband ‘s house in order to chase her dreams.

1. Research Questions:

- How Pakistani drama touches different controversial issues like honor killing, transgender, child sexual abuse and mental illnesses?
- How is discussion of social taboos in Pakistani dramas affecting the Pakistani society?

2. Proposition:

- Different social taboos like transgender, honor killing, Rape , Child Sexual Abuse and different mental health issues are depicted in Pakistani Dramas.
- Dramas depicting social taboos are affecting Pakistani society.

Research Methodology:

1. Purpose of the Research:

There are many different rising issues in Pakistan like, honor killing, discrimination with transgender , rape and mental illness. These issues are considered taboos in our society and are not discussed openly. But, nowadays media has a big hand in discussing such issues through different soap operas. As media is an influencing agent it could spread a great amount of awareness among the masses. The purpose of this research is to investigate how often are such controversial issues depicted in media and how are they affecting the people . This research would add to the already existing literature on this topic. It would help people to break the silence on the social taboos in our society. Also it would make people aware that dramas serials are not just for entertainment purposes rather they also play a big role in educating and creating the awareness among the masses about the issues which are taboos in our society.

2. Method of Research:

i. Research Design:

As a way to understand and gather information on the current topic of study Qualitative research will be conducted.

- a) Approach Adopted: Interpretivism
- b) Strategies: Exploratory
- c) Choices: Qualitative research
- d) Time Horizon: Cross Sectional
- e) Techniques and Procedures:

The techniques and procedure that were adopted by this research were as follows :

- Typology
- Content Analysis

i. Measurement /Instrument Selection:

Secondary and primary were the sources to collect the data for the thesis, The data for it was taken from valid secondary sources like published articles, published books and research papers ,and for primary data interviews were conducted.



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ii. Constructs /Themes:

As this is a qualitative research, so there will be constructs /themes instead of variables:

- Transgender
- Rape
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Honor Killing
- Mental illnesses

iii. Data Analysis:

After reading and thoroughly reviewing all the information gathered for this research. Typology would be used for coding, sorting and sifting the data. The other method which is of content analysis, would be used to analysis the content of the dramas selected.

iv. Research Ethics:

The information used in this research was not plagiarized and data was collected from trust worthy sources like Google scholar and J STOR. Secondly all the data taken for the literature review was properly cited. Other than that, the respondents were interviewed after their consent and they were not forced to take part in the research.

Literature Review:

The word society has a Latin origin, it came from the word “societas”, and persons who belong to a specific in-group are designated by it. It does not only refer to a group of individuals but also includes the arousal of complex patterns amongst them. “The activities of men are limited and liberated by the organization, society. For men to follow and maintain a standard it sets up a standard: it is a mandatory condition of every fulfillment of life and whichever tyrannies and imperfections it has displayed in the human history” (MacIver & Page, 1949). Norms, practices, actions and beliefs are some social elements that govern behavior of humans (Strong, 2005). Shared values and standards are two things that are present in every society. In order for societies to practice them, they are recognized as acceptable norms (Zia, 2012). Through these practices and norms, the individuals and their behaviors are guided by a culture or a society. People and their specific beliefs regarding various spheres of life are called social taboos (Colding & Folke, 2001). In eighteenth century ‘taboo’ was introduced to English language. The word taboo is taken from two words ‘tapu’ or ‘tabu’ of Tongan language and it has a Polynesian origin basically. Some norms which are held by all in the society and which might get violated due to some social action, then those actions are prohibited and are called taboos (Jeejeebhoy, Shah, & Puri, 2003). In society for others to practice it is believed that such behavior is under a curse speaking broadly. Since distant past in human society these taboos are present. In general by some societies an area of human activity or custom which is considered objectionable is related to taboos (Fiske & Tetlock, 1997). An assimilation of an individual in association to different societies is socialization in general (Young, 2011). There might not be any logical justification present of taboos and totems of a society (Sigmund Freud, 1983). From one society to another, taboo items vary. In the countries whose native language is English, there are strongest taboo- words that are linked to sex and further are linked with excretion (Trudgill, 1987). Certain words, expressions, names of animals and birds, body parts, sex, marriage and blood relations are considered taboo in Africa (Mbaya, 2002).

In everyday life members of the community of Khawja Sara were being harassed, vilified and discriminated in Pakistan. Other than that the members are still living a life in seclusion. The corrupt lifestyle as a street dancer or pauper and sex worked adopted by



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transgender in Pakistan was because of the religious, social and economic restrictions. Our understanding about the association between sexes and gender were shaped by media (Cooke & Kim, 2017). In any society media has the capability to explain the perceptions of gender. Our understandings about the sexes and their relationship and the gender are being shaped by media. Ideals of a culture and expectations about gender are responded and reflected by the media (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz, 2017). When the law regarding transgender rights came in 2009, it improved the depiction of transgender in the media (Abbas, 2019). In Pakistan the issue of isolating and disowning the intersex children or killing intersex infants has become a rising issue in Pakistan, this issue was first portrayed in Pakistan in the movie *Bol* (2012), in which an intersex teenager was killed by his own father. This movie also depicted the issue of patriarchal society, in which there was a continuous desire for a male child (Khan, 2017). The isolated life and struggle and hardships of intersex children were depicted in telefilm *Chandni* and drama *Khuda Mera Bh Hai*, these dramas gave a positive message to the society. The traditional pattern of representation of gender is modified by these dramas (Nisar, 2018).

Another rising issue in Pakistan is mental health, and its discussion is considered as a taboo. There are a very few number of mental health professionals present in Pakistan. Only 2 or 3 psychiatrists are found per million population and just a few psychologists and social workers are found. Adding to this, due to the misconceptions regarding mental illnesses that it is caused by some possession, evil or Jin and the attached social stigma with psychiatric patients the hospital based psychiatric services are not utilized (Afridi, 2008).

The Pakistani Dramas came into advent during the The Regime of Ayub Khan that is 1964. During its early years PTV was a joint venture that involved two Chinese companies which were Nippon Electric company and Kane Matshu Goshu. After sometime PTV came under control of the government. From the subsidies, grants of the government, TV license fees from the public and commercial advertising the income was generated by PTV. For 3 years, PTV was democratized after the 30 years of its advent. The first time it was democratized in the era of General Yahya Khan (1966-1970) and second time in the golden era of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In this era, there were a very minimal amount of restrictions on the television broadcast so women wearing sleeveless clothes and some bold things like ballroom dances were also broadcasted. In addition with it news coverage without any restrictions and dramas with a social critique were also telecasted. Then came the Era of Zia who brought Islamisation, in his era a ban was put on a lot of things like the live news coverages were restricted and women were found in minimal roles in dramas. Then came the third era of openness of PTV that is the era of Benazir Bhutto, in her era the live broadcast of parliamentary debates were being done and the parties in the opposition also had televised presence (Kothari, 2006). In a newspaper article it was found that dramas that came out in the era of Ayub Khan till Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were liberal and progressive. In these eras writers like Hasina Moin, Ashfaq Ahmed, Bano Qudsia and Asghar Nadeem were approached by the media. A purpose to educate the masses was found in the dramas of these eras. For example the drama by Khawaja Moinuddin named "Taleem Balighan", by its title only portrayed that this drama was to educate the adults. Other dramas of Hasina Moin such as *Shehzori* and *Kiran Kahani* had strong females, these two were to educate the females that they should not be submissive all the time and should fight for their rights. Other than that Noor Ul Huda Shah wrote about the conservative traditions of Sindh culture, she also discussed the issue of women marriage with the Quran in her drama *Jungle* and in *Marvi*, she discussed the struggle of a woman who was pursuing education. In Zia's era there was censorship on a



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lot of things so some rising issues were not been discussed in the dramas. After Zia's era it felt like the drama industry has come out of shackles and some dramas like *Nijat* were being broadcasted. In the drama serial *Nijat* it was noted that Atiqah Odho and Noman Ejaz were asked boldly by Huma Nawab to bring gap in child births. In addition with it the drama serials like *Zaibunnisa* portrayed the issue of domestic violence and a scene of miscarriage was also shown in the drama. Another drama named *Parosi* also had the scenes of miscarriage (Ali, 2017).

The focus of the people shifted towards Indian dramas for some time in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the year 2008 to 2009, in dramas like “*Meri Adhori Mohabbat*” the characters of the dramas were modernized and women did dressing like Indian women. The drama won the heart of million people as in the first half of the drama an indian culture was portrayed, then to Islamic mysticism the drama was turned over. Dramas like *Malal* and *Vasl* were also aired on hum TV. After it in the year 2012-2013 discussion of the social issues were again portrayed in the Pakistani dramas and dramas like *Lahasil* which showed prostitution and kankar in which domestic violence was shown. The social issues in soap operas were first used as fadders by Pakistan's biggest entertainment channel HUM TV. Where sex is still a taboo drama *Udaari* took the subject to every household. Other than that the issues of forced marriage, honor killing and denial of property inheritance to women were depicted in *Sammi* (Arab news, 2018).

Even if unintended by the provider and unnoticed by the audience the education media educate “us” (Piotrow, Ramond, Lawrence, Reinhart, 1997) The most general education mass media genre such as newspapers and popular magazines, instruct us on how to speak, think, behave and dress. Over the last few decades entertainment education has been used for raising awareness and changing health behavior. For instance in the cases of HIV prevention, family planning, gender equality and child development the education media has a big role in educating masses and building awareness (Brown, 1990). In order to improve the attitudes, knowledge and health, entertainment education has been used worldwide. For instance people were encouraged to use contraception around the world, in reproductive health interventions and family planning antenatal care services were used and people were encouraged to prevent infections of HIV (Piotrow & De Fossard, 2004). From generation to generation wisdom and values have been passed on by entertaining stories. The idea of amalgamating education with entertainment can be traced back in human history. Folktales, with morals and heroism are an essential part of a child's non-formal education. Stories are told to children with an educational lesson in them in many countries.

During 1940s and 1950s, the use of entertainment education as a specific method started. People got motivated to adopt agricultural innovations, due to entertaining and popular radio dramas such as *Archers* in United Kingdom and *Lawson's* later called *Blue Hills* in Australia (Singhal & Rogers, 2004). People relate themselves to the characters in the dramas, so these drama characters can help people to resolve their problems and control their lives. They encouraged to solve problems by observing the success of others is the sense of control called self-efficacy. The audience believed that they can also be like the character in the TV program. This was due to the influence of these programs. Thus a community in order to solve their problems can form the collective ability to change (Lande & DeFossard, 2008). As explained by social influence theory entertainment education can work as a flow of communication. The behavior of people and the ways that they made changes was influenced by interpersonal communication. The drama was discussed by people with other community members like friends and families. Through this interpersonal communication, members could spread the learning among their



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neighbors and repeat the messages that receive from the drama . Through the MARCH approach (Modelling and Reinforcement to fight HIV) , the US center for Disease Control used drama serial along with other activities to encourage interpersonal communication (Galavotti, Pappas-DeLuca, & Lansky, 2001) . For longer periods or short term periods a soap opera or drama serials could be shown for several times in a week or one time in a week on TV or radio. A lifelike social situation and as it happens in actual life the characters of the drama serials evolve slowly through the successes and the difficulties are created by the continuing story in the drama serials (Brooke, 1995). Another strong medium of entertainment education is film or feature film . The films could be displayed on a videotape in campaigns or they could also be shown in cinemas or TV (Church & Geller, 1989). Themes of family planning and gender equality have been explored in the films of many countries which are Bangladesh , India ,Mexico and Turkey . For instance in order to promote family planning in Turkey in a multimedia campaign a film named “Bredel” was presented to display the consequences of gender discrimination. In 14 provinces which were surveyed , 60 percent people reported to watching films (Yaser, 2004). A HIV awareness program , a Bengali movie named “Megla Akash” displayed in theatres and campaigns got popularity as a celebrity actress was featured in the film (Chowdhury, 2007).

Limitations:

- There are certain limitations in the research as it is mainly based on both primary and secondary data , so there might be a possibility that the data collected from different secondary sources shall be obsolete and on the other hand the sample size was small , so on a large scale the perspectives of the experts were not taken.
- There shall not be many ways to build the reliability of the information collected because in Pakistani context very few researches are being done on this topic.

Reliability and Validity:

1. Neutrality :

Neutrality was preserved in this research by considering all the aspects of the topic as there was not any inclusion of researcher’s perspectives. The information gathered for the research was objective and free from prejudices or personal biases.

2. Trustworthiness:

The research has preserved Trustworthiness by collecting data from trustworthy , authentic and valid sources like Google scholar, published articles and research papers. The information collected for the research is not plagiarized but rather was taken from reliable sources and was properly cited and references were given. On the other hand by keeping the responses confidential trustworthiness was also assured in the research.

3 . Transferability:

Transferability was protected because all the information related to the topic was taken from credible sources and the background to the research was also explained thoroughly. In addition to it discussion and conclusion would be drawn by reviewing thoroughly the literature review .So the research done in future on the same topic could rely on the results of this research.

Discussion and Analysis:

This study is conducted to analyze the availability of social taboos in Pakistani dramas of



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different television channels. This chapter would focus on the responses that were collected from the semi structured interviews from the experts in this field. On the other hand it would also include the analysis of the content of the dramas selected.

7.1 Theories

Marshall McLuhan in the year 1933 and 1934 did his BA and MA both in English Literature respectively. In these years he came to a conclusion that, it was not the content of the media that was important rather the form of the media was important. In one of his famous book “McLuhan’s Galaxies”, he said that on the thinking process and the perceptions of the human kind electronic media had a great effect (Skewers & Artur, 2019). There is another theory by **Max McComb** and **Donald Shaw** “**Agenda Setting theory**”, this theory states that those issues which are being discussed in media are the matter of discussion and debate of the public. This theory could be used by producers, writers and directors, so that more dramas discussing these issues should be aired resulting in more people talking on these taboo issues (study.com).

7.2 Content Analysis

This study revolved around the concept that how representation of social taboos in Pakistani dramas, have affected the Pakistani society, how some social issues were considered taboos throughout the history of Pakistani television and now how the silence is broke around these issues. The content Analysis of dramas which had depicted taboos and had high rating were Udaari, Cheekh, Baaghi, khuda Mera Bh hye, Dar Si jaati hye Sila, chup Rahu.

7.2.1 Social Taboos

In laymen term those religious and social traditions which are not allowed to be performed, discussed or determined by the society are called taboos (Hoffman, Gneezy & Freshtmen, 2011). As soon as possible, some taboos should be abolished as they are downright demeaning in our society. Following are the views of the participants about social taboos:

When asked about social taboos, all the participants had different definitions. Majority of the participants’ were of the view that social taboos are related with shame and embarrassment.

“People are often embarrassed talking about social taboos. Women often in our society

cannot talk about taboos, whereas men in our society to an extent can talk about them.

“Social taboos are a sort of information which people often are embarrassed to talk about in a large group. Anything which is anti –normative is social taboo.”

7.2.3 Role of Media in discussing Social taboos:

While talking about media’s role in highlighting taboos all the participants, were of the view that media has played a crucial role in highlighting the social taboos as there are number of dramas being on aired. Following are the views of the participants about media and its role in discussing taboo topics.

“Dramas have played a very crucial role in highlighting the taboos and in building the pragmatic approach. Many Pakistani Dramas have been made that have discussed like less or no education provision to girls, girl child marriages and their problems related to health.”

The number of the taboo discussing dramas increased after the success of Udaari, this was the opinion of one female participant.

“Perhaps after the success of Udaari in 2016, topics that weren't discussed before, such



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as the plight of transgenders in Khuda Mera Bhi Hai or mental health and depression in Aakhri Station, suddenly came to the small screen. It can be debated whether these TV shows helped the cause or damaged it further but it cannot be denied that producers did pick up some heavy topics to make shows on."

7.2.4 Censorship

All the participants were of the view that Pakistani entertainment industry has managed to broadcast dramas, discussing taboo issues. Majority of the participants were of the view that after the success of drama Udaari, the discussion of the taboo issues in the dramas increased. Accompanied, by this the participants were also of the view that very few such dramas are being produced. After the collection of the responses, it was also found that taboo topics like child abuse and rape have come forth, other than that talking about religion or discussing issues like abortion are not yet featured in dramas.

"Yes, our drama industry has managed to on air dramas discussing social taboos. One was Umrao Jaan, which discussed the issue of prostitution".

After the collection of the responses, it was also found that taboo topics like child abuse and rape have come forth, other than that talking about religion or discussing issues like abortion are not yet featured in dramas.

"Pakistani entertainment industry has managed to discuss few taboos in their dramas not all of them. One of its example is drama Udaari which talked about sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of minors and it became a huge topic for conversation."

7.2.5 Presentation of the dramas :

While talking about the manner in which the dramas were portrayed, participants were of the view that these dramas need to portray the issues in a more bold way, bold in a sense that it should be convincing, so that the viewers should not develop any kind of sympathy with the culprit. One of the participant also said that though, the number of the dramas discussing social taboos have increased but mostly such dramas were being featured by the writers and producers in order to get the rating and they do not do research before making the storyline.

"TV producers pick up taboo topics to get ratings but often they forget to do research about the topic and cause more damage. Sarmad Khoosat is one filmmaker who made a TV show on depression but took help from psychologists and an NGO that works on women's issues to make the script as realistic as possible. Unfortunately not many directors and producers do that though."

To another participant who was Dr Tauseef Ahmad Khan, such dramas are not portraying the taboos in appropriate manner, he was of the opinion that the message regarding the issue was shown in such a way in the drama that viewers were developing sympathy towards the villain. He then suggested that,

"The script of the drama should be penned in such a way that the people should not glorify the character and in no way feel sympathetic towards them. Also the character should be portrayed in such a way that people should abhor this character and strive to work against that taboo."

7.2.6 Helps fight fears

Majority of the participants were of the view that these dramas would help people fight their fears. One of the participant was of the view that this depends upon the storyline of the drama that, if it is showing justice with the victim or is showing solutions then it



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would definitely help people fight their fears. As one of the participant quoted :

“If there is a solution at the end, or justice is given to the victim in the show, then yes. If the victim simply suffers in the end also, then it will just make real victims feel hopeless and demotivated also.”

While talking about the fears , we could also say that men have a fear that if , such dramas will be broadcasted than women will get influenced as media is a reinforcing agent and it would make women fight for the injustices done to them .This was the opinion of a female participant, as she quoted:

“In my opinion yes , men are reacting positively to these dramas as well as negatively. Men are afraid that women are going to understand their issues are being highlighted and vice versa. For example in the cases of molestation we never faced those fears but now we are facing.”

7.2.7 Personification of Sufferers

While talking about how the sufferers of these issues relate with these dramas , majority of the participants were of the view that the victims or the sufferers do relate with these dramas as one of the participants was of the view that ,

“ Yes, I think such dramas are giving strength to the victims. And I think dramas should be portrayed in such a way that the victims should get strength.”

Another participant was of the view that not all the sufferers are same for the dramas cast and crew to relate. Further, he said that he talked about how large the spectrum was but , he was of the opinion that these dramas definitely help people talk about things and for narrative it opens further avenues. He mentioned an example that :

“mjhy jeeny du” which was done by Angeline Malik on Urdu 1 and it talked about child brides and after that we did see that the large number of women did speak about issues of early marriages and marriage in general

7.2.8 Increase in the Broadcast of Dramas

While talking about this all the participants were of the view that the broadcast of such dramas should increase , as one of the participants quoted :

“I absolutely believe that such dramas should be broadcasted because they not only provide you with awareness but they also provide you with a sense of reality which is really crucial for media industry.”

Among these participants' there was just one participant who had a somewhat shaky opinion, towards the broadcast of such dramas as she reported :

“Only if the drama is actually highlighting the problem accurately. Otherwise it's just sensationalism and spreading more false information.”

7.2.9 Positive Initiative

Majority of the participants were of the view that yes, this is a positive initiative of the drama industry as one of the participants quoted :

“I absolutely believe that it is the positive initiative of the drama industry and it just only adds to the variety of the shows we have . One must look at it from both the perspectives of informing and educating and also the perspective of entertainment, in short I think it provides all of that.”

But among these participants one female participant was a bit doubtful in this regard as she reported ;

“Not sure. Because if the intention behind it is to get ratings and money then producers will always be doing a disservice to the cause being discussed. They will not be able to



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produce content sensitively and will not put in the work that is required when handling sensitive topics”.

Likewise another participant while quoting about John Hopkins University said;

Yes, this is a positive initiative of our drama industry but if this was on the basis of grant then it is not . John Hopkins University said that if these dramas are commercialized then it is not a positive initiative.

Hence, this showed that the portrayal of such issues depends upon the intention of the producer and the amount of research is being done by him or her in making the drama.

7.3 Child sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is one of the rising issues in Pakistan, per day 7 children are being sexually abused. This in humane figure was shown in the statistical report of Barkat Ali who was the provincial coordinator of Sahil, ngo (Daily Times, 2019). After doing the analysis of the content of the dramas it is found that taboos topics are now presented in Pakistani dramas. The improvement in the depiction of taboo topics is a sign of recognition which is positive for this community. In the past few years Pakistani dramas have started portraying taboo topics. **Udaari** and **Dar Si Jaati Hye Sila** are two dramas that have depicted child sexual abuse .These dramas in a slight manner have managed to change the mindset of people. Udaari is a Punjabi word which means to “Fly “. This drama was aired in 2016 and showcased the issue of child sexual abuse along with gender empowerment , this drama was inspired from the true stories of people with whom KASHF foundation used to work . The sole purpose of this drama was to educate people, Ahsan Khan played the role of a pedophile in the drama who sexually abused his stepdaughter. Ahsan khan in his interview said that this drama was very close to his heart and he even said that , it was not just a drama for the cast of the drama but rather it was a campaign to raise voice against this evil act prevailing in the society . Depiction of what was happening throughout the world especially in Pakistan , Ahsan khan played the role of a ruthless vulture. He said, that he did this drama because he wanted to spread awareness amongst people. He even said that this drama had brought a great positive change in him and he had become more sensitive towards the conditions of victims of child abuse. In his interviews he even said that whatever profit he would get from the drama , he is going to donate it to the victims of child abuse. The first scene of child abuse was portrayed in the episode number 9 in which victim’s mother goes out for work and the stepfather and daughter are alone at home. According to reviews of this drama it was found out that people found this scene a little bold , as one of the viewer of the drama had posted on the page of Reviewit.pk that a few threats given to the girl by Ahsan Khan could have been enough . In episode number 12 is when mother (Sajida) of the victim gets to know that her daughter was being sexually abused . Since many days, she felt that it was her illusion but after knowing the truth , she went into the complete state of shock. Sajida acted very cleverly in order to seek revenge from that vulture , as she started distancing her daughter from him. In **episode 14**, it was when she confronted that vulture , the things got intense in the drama when the girl was abused in front of her mother . This enraged her mother and filled her with the emotions of revenge. In order to seek revenge she stabbed in his chest and ran away with her daughter. In order to start a new life she runs away with her daughter to her old neighbor (Sheedan). After a very gloomy and dark episode a good and fresh start was shown in **episode 15** , as Zebu (the victim) starts going to school and Tahira who had a talent of cooking scrumptious food , with the help of KASHF foundation starts her work by sending bakery items to the bakeries . This was a great example of **gender or women empowerment for women** who think that they cannot stand on their feet and do somet. In



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episode 16, the drama showed more progress of Tahira and Meeran as 6 years had been passed. Tahira had started her own business and had opened her own bakery which was flourishing. Her daughter Zebu now named as “Komal”, was also excelling in her studies. But at night the girl used to wake up all scared and in a state of panic. It is in the episode number 21 that Zebu, the victim decides to tell the truth and go to the court. Till date there was no drama broadcasted that brought the issue in the court. In the episode number 23 which was the last episode a strong message was given in which the victim when came to the witness box said that **“Main Victim nahi Hun, Mai survivor hun”, main apny mujrim ko saza dila ky rahungi**. This message showed that whether it be women or girls they should not remain silent as their silence would give more strength to the culprits. All the dramas that focused on such issues in them women were bound to keep silent in order to restore the honor of their families. This drama also faced a lot of negative criticism as PEMRA also asked to ban it as there were some words or scenes according to them, were in appropriate to be shown in a drama serial as there were some scenes in which there were use of some slang words, other than that they also found some of the scenes were very bold (Haider, 2016).

Dar Si Jaati Hye Sila

Dar Si jaati hye sila was another drama after “udaari”, which talked about the issue of sexual harassment and abuse. It was found that all the right chords were hit by this drama. On the issues of mental and sexual abuse the curtains were raised of by this drama. It was a head turner from the beginning. The opening scene of the drama was very horrifying, the scene opened as a man entered into a girl’s room and started stroking her face in an inappropriate manner. The three main characters were Sila, Joi mama and Sadia. This drama showcased the life of the people living in a building called Noor Manzil. The relationship between aforementioned characters was shown in a horrifying way. The scene opened as Noman Aijaz (Jui Mama) entered into Silas room and touched her face in an inappropriate manner. Her mother rushed into the room, in order to save her from this vulture. The relationship between the mother of the victim and the culprit was depicted in a twisted way in later scenes and instances. The girl in the drama was shown as one with a nervous nature, too frightened in order to raise the alarm. Silas mother was also harassed by Joi Mama but she used to stay mum about his actions. It was clear and apparent in the drama that Silas and her mother were sexually and mentally tortured by Joi Mama. But they were not able to take any stand against him because he was Sila’s elder aunt’s brother, who raised all their expenses. Secondly Sila’s father was abroad since Sila was a child and her mother had brought her up all alone. This also gave Jui mama a chance to assault both mother and daughter as there was no man in the family to protect them. To get through the episodes of the drama was getting tough for people because of the downright cringe depiction of a sexual carnivore. The writer of this drama had always written dramas that were not based on commercial success, rather they were hard hitting, controversial plays that were based on reality. As the dialogues depict what could not be shown and they witnessed the powerful script of the drama. The dialogues such as “Achy Sy Darwaza Band Karliya Karo” and “Akely Chaat Par Mat Jaya Karo”. These dialogues portray that how in our society the movement of the women in the patriarchal society restricted. In short this drama pushed boundaries and continued to break the taboos (Zafar, 2017).

7.3.1 Solutions in these dramas

Now while talking about the solutions, participants were of the view that the dramas which were done with an intensive research had solutions like drama “Udaari”. But overall the participants were of the view that asking for solutions was too much from the dramas. As



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a participant reported that

“A drama can provide you as a vessel that what is happening in the society. Its primary objective is not to provide solution , so I think it as a question and as a need from a drama is wrong in itself . But to just add to your point some shows like Akhri station , it does have in a very large form solutions for women to protect themselves.”

7.4 Honor Killing

Honor Killing is still a big issue in Pakistan , though the law has come out . Our media had also started talking about this issue. But still the number of cases of honor killing have not decreased. As “honor killing” go unreported or are passed off as natural deaths or suicides . That is why there were no official valid figures found of it. In 2017 by close family members 94 women were murdered as an indication in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Ijaz,2019). When we talk about honor Killing , we cannot ignore the case of the girl named Qandeel Baloch. In 2016 , she was murdered by her brother . She became renowned because of her untraditional viral videos and statements. Qandeel had always grabbed the attention of the audience, when she was alive and even when she passed away untimely. A trail of facebook posts and opinions were continually left by her when she was alive and when she died. People had different opinions regarding her. Some thought of her as an attention seeker, some thought of her as the proponent of feminism and as she stood up for her beliefs that is why she was considered as a hero by some people. She was a sensation , regardless of what anybody thought about her. Honor was the reason her brother gave for murdering her . On grounds of offending the honor of the family she was strangled by him. Inspired by the life of Qandeel Baloch drama , **Baaghi** was aired .The role of Qandeel Baloch was played by the very renowned actress Saba Qamar . She has a strange ability to personify and character. The writer of this drama chose to name the protagonist as Kanwal Baloch .

As a poor , less educated and bound within the shackles of her violent marriage was how the character of Kanwal was portrayed. Though Kanwal had no bank balance , no contacts but she had a dream of becoming a renowned model. With a few clothes on her back , she escaped from her house and moved to Karachi. On the life of Qandeel Baloch the drama was loosely based as it was clarified by the writers of the dramas Umera Ahmad and Shazia Khan. While on the events in the Qandeel ‘s life the storyline of the drama was based. It was very heart wrenching to watch her son being snatched from her. When she moved to Karachi , she faced many hardships as she had no work. She was not educated that is why she had to do work , which were very difficult for a woman , she became a bus conductor. She was bullied many a times by the men in the bus. But still , she did believe in herself and went in a reality show for which she got selected , but unfortunately got out because of her misbehavior with another participant. She even tested her luck in Pakistan Idol but was also rejected from there. She was very depressed because of getting rejected from everywhere. She did an attempt to commit suicide because the amount of humiliation she had faced from the corporate seths and honchos and from the hosts of the reality TV shows, secondly the life she had come to live also made her attempt suicide. In the drama it was shown that the husband of Kanwal Baloch was a liar and a womanizer, before their marriage he had made many promises to her that he would let her follow her dreams but got changed as soon as they got married. He used to beat her and always used to threaten her that he would going to give her divorce.

After marriage when Kanwal used to say to him that I want to go to the city and become a model, he used to say that those working in media are not good people. She was demotivated to take up modeling as a career by her ex-husband. There was a conversation



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between them :

Abid: People in Media are not good people.

Kanwal: What is good or bad you tell me . On its own does a gun fires itself?

Abid : no

Kanwal: Who shoots it then

Abid: Humans

Kanwal: yes, so this shows that a work is never bad but the people around you are bad.

Link Of Story Of Qandeel and Drama Baaghi

There were many similarities between Qandeel's Story and drama Baaghi . As the protagonist of the drama belonged to a low social economic background like Qandeel .And women belonging to this strata had to face certain kinds of pressures in order get into media industry. There are no contacts of their fathers who could introduce them to the showrunners. Of the casting couches and harassment these women are the biggest victims. Nothing was going the way she wanted , everything was exploitative, as she tried everything from being a bus hostess to doing a job of actor or living in a women's shelter. This drama even made us to think for a question that **how could it not be expected from a girl to use honor or her body, when she doesn't have education or any skill?** In an interview of the writers of this drama , Baaghi was found as a mirror to our society by Umera Ahmed. Whereas Shazia Khan said it she sees the drama as having a moral and lesson for young women , challenge for patriarchy and a project for raising awareness. They even said that they named the title Baaghi because Qandeel was a rebel in the patriarchal society , this showed that she had committed a treason. They even said that both sides of the life of Qandeel were portrayed in the drama , the hardships and difficulties of her life and the life she wanted to show to the people (Hasan,2018).

7.5 Transgender

More of a norm than an exception , throughout the world in media transgender are being stereotyped .Significant improvements have been made in the depiction of transgender when one looks at the Pakistani media , but in order to bring a fairer portrayal of transgender in media still there are multiple challenges which have to be coped with. Now there are dramas being aired which are discussing this, taboo issue and the mistreatment of the society with them. The opinion of experts in this field have defined this issue as follows:

7.5.1 Improvement In depiction of Transgender

When asked about the depiction of transgender after the law regarding it came out , the participants were of the view that though the law came . But, it did not much affect the depiction of transgenders in the media as one of the participants said ,

Not really. It took ages for them to some positive representation on television but till today they are the butt of all jokes on the small screen, and are depicted stereotypically.

Other than that we till today are unable to differentiate between an intersex and transgender . As in one such drama an intersex child was portrayed as a transgender . In this regard a participant said that

I feel that , there is still no depiction of transgender in the media. We must understand that in shows a transsexual character is put in and it is not transgender and usually they are intersex , so we hardly see any representation of transgender in media.

7.5.2 Traditional patterns of gender

The traditional patterns of representation of gender in media have affected by these dramas



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, participants were of the view. One participant said that to a very small extent but it has. While flashing back women were mostly featured as house wives in dramas, this now has changed. And to an extent the traditional roles of men have also changed. To this one participant said,

“The liberalization of TV channels has changed the whole perspective of how we were looking at women. The roles that we were assigning to women and men have changed. And in a very large sense in the last 20 years, things have been gotten through a perfect space. We definitely have moved from our traditional gender representation.”

Now while talking about dramas one such drama about transgender was aired on ARY digital in 2017. This drama was based on the life of an intersex child. It portrayed the challenges an intersex child has to face in our society. Mah gul the protagonist of this drama was married to a man named Zain. Mahgul gave birth to an intersex child. Zain called off their marriage as Mahgul was in the favor of keeping the child with her whereas, Zain wanted his son to be given to the transgender community. Against all odds Mahgul brought up her child, she faced many challenges as when she went for her child's admission in school he did not get admission because of his biological condition.

It was mother of Mahgul and her best friend who gave her strength to take this step. This drama on the side talked about the taboos that are attached with divorce in our society and the rights that transgender and intersex children get. Noor who was the intersex child with all her mother's struggle became a famous and a rich businessman. In the last episodes, he gives a speech in which he speaks his heart out that how people have called him with derogatory names all his life, he tells the way parents of her friends used to behave when he was around them and lastly he tells that how his immediate father disowned him. Lastly he thanks his mother and the man to whom her mother does second marriage. And he makes an appeal that why on the birth certificate there isn't a third option for the people like me. He gives strength to all the people like him to do pursue the careers they want to (Badar, 2017).

Critique On The drama By Kami Sid :

Kami Sid was interviewed by the international news, where she told that there were flaws in the storyline of the drama. She said that she was called up by the writer Asma Nabeel for the interview, but she said that the writer herself was confused and did not know this whole concept of trans community. She even said that she called her to tell her in detail but she was not quite interested (Tahir, 2017).

7.5.3 Positive or Negative Change :

Now while talking about the positive and negative change all the participants' had different opinions, one of them said that its bringing both and polarizing the public. Whereas, the other participant said it is bringing little change in our society. One of the participant was of the view that it is bringing an extremely positive change in our society as he reported

“I think the portrayal of such issues in dramas is bringing an extremely positive change. If only thing it opens up more conversation and its essential for a society which is already misogynistic and patriarchal. To change its narrative and mindset for that I feel these shows are perfect.”

7.5.4 Changes in Culture and traditions

Dramas have a great impact on us and this great impact could change the whole social fabric of the society. And could also impact, the cultures and traditions of the society. But, this process could be slow. As one participant quoted that,

I do believe that these shows bring a change in the culture and tradition as well, because anything that is bringing a new narrative to society is bringing change.



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Another participant while talking about the impact of these small screen dramas , gave an example of drama Meray Paas Tum Ho . She quoted ,

It does. For instance in the recent show Meray Paas Tum Ho, Humayun Saeed's character buys shares of Adnan Siddiqi's company and in real life, it caused a change in our stock market as Pakistanis world over suddenly started buying shares. So if one small scene can do that then imagine how these dramas are already impacting people.

7.5.6 Break Silence on Taboo issues

These dramas give voice to people . As they give people courage to talk and deal with these issues. To this all the participants said that , these dramas helped people break silence on the taboo issues. As one of them quoted,

“Yeah for sure. That's the one good outcome of these dramas. People openly talk about child sexual abuse now, for instance. They encourage children to speak and have conversations with them and our TV has had some role in bringing that change.”

7.5.7 Conservative Mindset

In our society the mindset of the people is very conservative , because of the dominant patriarchal system. As we know that talking on issues like child abuse , honor killing is considered a taboo in our society. We cannot even talk about religion, we are not given freedom of speech. As more awareness was spread ,regarding such issues in the recent decade more or less affected the thinking of the people. To this question2 participants said that they do not change the conservative mindset of the people. But, they could make the people cognizant which could help , change things around.

I do not think that it will change the conservative mindset of people , but it will definitely work as one thing that may make them more cognizant and help them change the things around.

Other participants' were of the view that they could change the conservative mindset of the people but , to a small extent and it also depends upon the progressive content of the drama .

“They can. But then progressive content needs to be made. Just because social taboos are being discussed doesn't ensure change on its own.”

7.6 Rape

The typical dramas with storylines of weeping women have shifted to bold issues. Rape which is one of the most taboo topics in Pakistan , was discussed in a number of television shows of which the most popular show in which this issue was discussed was Chup Raho. *Chup Raho:*

This was the drama in which the protagonist was shown as a simple girl , belonging to a lower middle class background . In the first episode it was shown that a girl along with her parents was travelling to her elders sisters home for her engagement ceremony . Where she met her brother –in-law , who had bad intentions towards her and she also sensed it. On the day of her engagement, when she went on the roof top to meet her fiancé she was touched in an inappropriate manner by him. Her father realized that he had bad intentions for her and was keeping an eye on him. But unfortunately that vulture harassed her in front of him . Her father was not able to fight with him and got a heart attack, which led to his death. She even told this thing to her mother but she said that it was her doubt and she was just overthinking. But one fine day he told all the family members that he is going out for some business work . But it was lie and he had planned everything beforehand, he wanted Rameen her sister-in-law to be alone in the house and in was in search of that moment. As



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soon as he found her alone he went in the room and held his hand and raped her. Her mother when found her was shocked and wanted to take revenge but because of her elder daughters family she remained quiet and asked her daughter to remain quiet as well (Haider,2015).

7.7 Analysis :

In order to find out the expert opinions in this field semi structured interviews were conducted. The findings of my research evidently mirrored the notions and ideas presented in the literature review of the same research. On an initial stage the literature review of this research explained that, social taboos in every society were present and mainly the taboos in society were related with sex and gender. On everyday life of people dramas put forth a strong influence. Now , they have become a crucial part of our everyday life and also have a great impact on the lives of people (admin,2021).While talking about Pakistani drama industry from just one channel PTV , the drama industry moved to a multiple channels and each channel is doing up to the mark . These dramas have become prominent all over the world because of the new great actors and directors. And through these dramas we are presenting our country globally. It's been a few years that the writers and the directors of the channels have started discussing social taboos in dramas. The research done on this topic was to find out the impact of Pakistani dramas on the society and how these dramas touch such sensitive issues. While after collecting all of the responses and reading the whole literature on this topic , it was found that these dramas have both positive and negative impact in the society. Here we could discuss the eminent media theorist **Marshall McLuhan** who in his book “Galaxies”, said that a great impact on the thinking and perception of people are caused because of media .Also it was found out that these dramas helped break silence on the taboo issues in our society, this finding is linked with the “**Cultivation theory**”, of George Gebner which said that , when a same message is continually being exposed then it influences the beliefs of people in the real world so this shows that the increase in the broadcast of such dramas would help people influence their beliefs and also make them talk about such issues without any fear(Vinney,2019). Other than that while answering the former research question of its effect on the Pakistani society ,it was found that discussion of such issues in dramas effect the culture because media is a reinforcing agent. Further answering the second research question , the study found out that social taboos were present in dramas , as also a research conducted by PEMRA showed that ,viewers watched 65 percent of such taboo dramas (Pakistan Today,2018). But, this study foundout that such issues were not portrayed in a an appropriate manner and mostly these issues were presented to get high ratings. While answering the same question it was also found that, such dramas help fight fears of people mainly if the justice is given to the victim. The study also found out that there were some dramas like Udaari and Akhri station, who had solutions in them.

7.8 Conclusion :

The interviews that were conducted to find out the opinions of the experts in the field of the media found out that, the social taboos in Pakistani dramas are affecting the Pakistani society in both positive and negative way , these dramas are changing our culture and traditions as well as they are influencing the people in every way. The most interesting finding of this research was that these dramas are giving strength to victims and they are raising their voices against these evils . The interviewees gave detailed answers about every aspect of the research and this led to the detailed understanding of the topic. As the



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respondents were experts in this area, so they were able to answer the questions with precision and accuracy. Like all other researches this research also had limitations as the sample size was small. So, the perspective of the experts on a large scale was not been taken. As well as the interviews were conducted over phone so the cross examination of certain questions was not possible as well as there was limited time to converse with the experts which made it a bit difficult to clarify a few points. The validity of the research was assured by the answers to the research questions like, how is Pakistani society affected by these dramas? and are how are these controversial issues being portrayed in Pakistani dramas?. Hence this study showed that both positively and negatively these dramas affect the Pakistani society. And the answer to the second question, made the study conclude that such issues in dramas are mostly not being researched but, rather they are being broadcasted just to get the rating.

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