



**Representation of domestic violence in Pakistani Urdu
drama serials: a feminist textual analysis**

by

Najma Khaliq Khan
MA (Women's Studies)

Thesis submitted to the College of Humanities, Arts and Social
Sciences, in fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Arts (Women's
Studies)

Flinders University
Bedford Park, South Australia

Date of submission: 18 December 2020

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Najma Khaliq Khan

18 December 2020

Summary

This research aims to explore the representation of domestic violence, and portrayal of women in Pakistani Urdu drama serials over the last 30-40 years, and how the interplay of gender and underlying patriarchal ideologies leads to misogyny and violence against women. This study argues that domestic violence is normalised in Pakistani TV dramas within the discourse of honour, and the tradition of silence and obedience by Pakistani women. This thesis will also problematise the representations of women's struggles against domestic violence, which usually conclude with a resolution with heteronormative familial values. The key research question is whether, the dominant discourse in Urdu dramas encourages pursuing legal protection against domestic violence, or is it heavily invested in reinforcing patriarchal hegemonies that silence women to preserve ostensible familial values and integrity? This study will draw from a mix of feminist, media, and cultural theories to evaluate dominant ideology, discourse, and representations of women and domestic violence in popular Urdu dramas. A feminist textual and discourse analysis will be utilised to evaluate Pakistani drama serial, *Zun Mureed* (literally translating as 'uxorious': having or showing excessive fondness for one's wife).

The study concludes that the majority of Urdu dramas are heavily invested in a 'heteronormative visual culture' that strongly adheres to the patriarchal norms and traditions of Pakistani society, which reinstates and sustains, rather than disrupts, the status-quo between the binary genders. Furthermore, modern day Urdu dramas are even more embedded in patriarchal hegemonies about a woman's role in society, that is in stark contrast with the Western popular culture that mostly represents women in an individualistic framework. While the 'new heroine' trope envisaged by the contemporary dramas offers some level of subjectivity to women with their portrayals of agency and progressive outlook, underneath this 'independent woman' resides a stereotypical homemaker and mother, who is expected to put her home and children before herself. The feminist textual reading of *Zun Mureed* offers same insights, where the lead female protagonist is offered a compulsory heteronormative resolution in the end. Even though there are some moments of rupture in the dominant ideology within the *Zun Mureed* text, those moments are fairly limited, and are always overridden by a competing ideological discourse that is more aligned with heteropatriarchy.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, praise be to Allah, God Almighty, who has been my guide and saviour throughout the times of hardships and doubt. It is due to His blessings that I have found the courage and strength to emerge as a survivor against all adversity.

I am immensely grateful to my lovely sisters who have been my support system, and endless source of inspiration, and for my mother's prayers, who has been a silent source of strength throughout my life.

My sincere appreciations and gratitude to the Australian government, for without their financial support, I would not have been able to fulfill my lifelong dream of studying in an internationally renowned institution. My profound thanks to my supervisor Dr. Laura Roberts who has been immensely supportive and remained patient with me throughout the course of my thesis. Her invaluable feedback and thorough discussions have enabled me to gain clarity in my writing and made this whole task less daunting. I am also deeply indebted to Dr. Karen Austin, a dear friend and mentor who edited my work and provided invaluable feedback that helped me improve my work.

I am also indebted to my dear friends Son Le and Hiền for the countless animated academic discussions, fun, and laughter. Moreover, for being my sounding boards and helping me see the light at the end of the tunnel. I could not have managed such a formidable academic journey without them. I shall always remain grateful for their friendship.

Lastly, I want to thank my beloved husband, companion, and best friend Rahat-Ullah Khan for his presence, understanding and support through the exciting and fulfilling journey and stay in Australia. Without him I wouldn't have survived this extremely challenging adventure, away from the family and comfort of home. I owe a large portion of my achievements to my husband.

Dedication

I dedicate this work, and all my worldly achievements, academic and otherwise, to my beloved father who invested his entire youth and energies in shaping my character. He is no longer with me, but I am sure he is feeling proud of me right now. Thank You Abu!!

Table of contents

Declaration.....	i
Summary.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of contents	v
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Country Background and Context.....	5
2.1 Islamic Republic of Pakistan.....	5
2.2 Impact of Islamisation on women.....	6
2.3 Patriarchy and Domestic violence	8
2.4 Domestic Violence and Legal Frameworks in Pakistan.....	10
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework.....	13
Chapter 4: Literature Review	18
4.1 Representation of women in dramas.....	18
a) Impact of various government regimes on Urdu dramas.....	21
b) Discourse on honour and representation of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ woman.....	22
c) The ‘new heroine’ amidst rapid globalisation.....	23
4.2 Representation of Violence against Women	25
4.3 Conclusion.....	26
Chapter 5: Analysis of Zun Mureed	28
5.1 Pakistani Television and the genre of Urdu drama serials	28
5.1.1 Urdu Drama Serials.....	29
5.2 Zun Mureed – textual analysis.....	29
5.2.1 The Story	30
5.2.2 The scene - episode 4	32
5.2.3 The Title ‘Zun Mureed’: Cultural and Ideological Significance.....	32
5.2.4 Gender perceptions, norms, and masculinist hegemonies	33
5.2.5 Gender and Class: Power and stereotypes	36
5.3 Discourse on Domestic Violence.....	39
5.3.1 Ruptures and opportunities for social change.....	41
5.3.2 Compulsory heteronormative resolution	42
Chapter 6: ZM Conclusion	46
References.....	51

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AM	Aurat March
CII	Council of Islamic Ideology
CEDAW	Convention to end discrimination against women
DV	Domestic Violence
IMDb	Internet Movie Database
NIPS.....	National Institute of Population Studies
PTV	Pakistan Television
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PPC	Pakistan Penal Code
PDHS	Pakistan Demographic Health Survey
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WEF.....	World Economic Forum
WPB	Women’s Protection Bill
ZM	Zun Mureed
ZGH.....	Zindagi Gulzar hai

Chapter 1: Introduction

The year 2018 saw a revival of radical feminism in Pakistan (Saeed 2018; Maqsood 2020) in many ways. On International Women's Day in March 2018, a group of women organised a march that was later called as the Aurat March (aurat is the Urdu word for women – meaning, women's march, hereafter AM), to mobilise women from all segments of society in resistance against patriarchy and unabated violence against women (Basir 2018). This isolated march evolved into a nation-wide movement where similar marches were held in the other metropolitan cities of Pakistan (Basir 2018). Women, men, and transgender people from a cross-section of society rallied with placards and banners demanding accountability for violence against women and sexual harassment. Saigol (2019) an eminent Pakistani feminist scholar claims AM to be a 'tectonic shift from the previous articulations' of feminism in Pakistan, as the movement claimed, 'personal is political'. Unlike previous feminist movements of Pakistan during the 1960s and 1980s, that were largely focused on broader political issues such as demanding freedom from dictatorship; basic human rights; and social reforms, the renewed phase of feminism brings the body politics and domestic life to the centre stage. As Saigol (2019) notes, 'young feminists reclaim their bodies, denounce sexual harassment, stake a claim to public space and challenge the gender division of labour on which rests the entire edifice of patriarchy'. Inexorably, this newly found utopia was met with swift and fervent backlash, online trolling, and threats by the conservative facets of the country (Asher 2020). Especially the slogan *mera jism meri marzi* (Urdu for 'my body, my choice') attracted the ire of some of the moderate factions of the society, as the slogan was interpreted as 'obscene, having a sexual connotation and going against the highly prized expectation of modesty in a woman' (Asher 2020).

This backlash took an ugly turn in 2020, just before the AM, when on a live television panel discussion, the renowned Urdu drama writer, director and actor Khali-ur Rehman, called a leading journalist and feminist '*do kodi ki ourat*' (loosely translating as slut) (Gulzar 2020). Rehman's crass behaviour and remarks instigated a country-wide debate on the rights and position of women in Pakistan, adding new vigour and fervour to AM 2020 (Chughtai 2020), as more people were able to identify with the overt and hidden misogyny in Rehman's plays and Pakistani society at large.

Rehman has been writing Urdu plays since the 1990s, however, his reputation found a new high in 2019, as his drama *meray pass tum ho* (MPHT) was aired on a popular private television network, ARY Digital in August 2019 (ARY Digital Networks 2019). His serial was called misogynistic by the feminists because of its regressive portrayal of women (Sarwari 2020; Zia 2020). According to Rehman, not every woman is ‘worthy’ of being called a woman, as, for a woman, her ‘haya’ (modesty) and ‘wafa’ (loyalty) are the only traits and metrics by which she can claim to be woman (Tribune 2019; Zia 2020). Nonetheless, MPHT garnered unprecedented IMDb ratings (IMDb 2019) and the final episodes were screened across major cinemas of Pakistan (Tribune 2020). This, and innumerable other incidents, signify the deeply entrenched patriarchy and misogyny in Pakistani society, where women are killed, maimed, and burnt alive in the name of honour¹ every day. This thesis investigates the culturally coded messages about gender roles, and how they manifest in the form of domestic violence (DV) in popular Urdu drama serials (hereafter drama/s). It argues that the serials’ subliminal texts and representations normalise and perpetuate harmful stereotypes and acts of violence against women. This thesis further suggests that these popular serials could provide important opportunities to counter dangerous social ideologies and support women’s empowerment. As Zia (2020) argues: ‘rather than resorting to cancel culture and legal recourse, it would be more beneficial to critique and challenge sexist content in a more political but unapologetic manner’. Furthermore, this thesis provides a textual analysis of the media representations of women and DV, to identify possibilities for social change in drama narratives.

In Pakistan, dramas, mostly scripted in the Urdu language, have been produced since the late 1960s (Ahmad 2015), and have gradually gained national and regional popularity. In particular, the decade of the 1970-80s is often seen as the ‘golden age’ of Pakistani dramas. During this period, state-run Pakistan Television (PTV) produced a significant number of nostalgic television dramas in competition with India’s growing film industry (Sulehria 2018). This research aims to explore the representation of women in Pakistani dramas since the 1980s to present times. Moreover, this study problematises the representations of women’s struggles against DV in the dramas which generally conclude with hetero-patriarchal values. It shows how the interplay of gender and underlying patriarchal ideologies lead to the subjugation of

¹ Honour killing is a form of domestic violence is a customary practice where women, and sometimes men are murdered after accusations of sexual infidelity (Nasrullah et. al. 2009)

women in a heterosexual marriage, and the resistance they face from the family and society at large, in case they try to exercise their legal rights against DV.

Pakistan is deemed as one of the most dangerous countries for women (World Economic Forum 2016; TRF 2018), with domestic violence perpetrated against them by their husbands accounting to 34% of all acts, as per the most recent Pakistan Demographic Health Survey by National institute of population studies (NIPS 2018). Moreover, Pakistan was ranked globally at 4th position for discrimination and harmful cultural traditions committed against women in 2018 (Ali 2018). As Zia (2020) explains ‘cultures are not changed by punitive sanctions only, but by exposing the fallacies of single dimensional flat characters and challenging patriarchal cultural [media] production[s]’. This study will further investigate the cultural and ideological bearings regarding the role of women in Pakistani society, by showing how DV is normalised in Pakistani dramas within a discourse of honour and the tradition of silence and obedience by Pakistani women.

This paper draws from a mixture of feminist, media, and cultural theories to evaluate dominant ideology, discourse, and representations of women in popular serials. The literature review suggests that the Pakistani dramas have always been invested in portraying a ‘heteronormative visual culture’ (Mehra 2019, p.632), that conforms to the patriarchal mores of Pakistani society and contributes to maintaining the status-quo between genders and classes. Furthermore, contemporary dramas from 2000 onwards are believed to be further skewed towards stereotypical portrayals of women that largely occlude genuine progress made by Pakistani women, while constructing a highly dichotomised identity of the idea of woman, which is expected to fulfil both traditional subservient *and* contemporary public roles at the same time. Cultural and media scholars argue that media are important contributors to the production of meaning in society, including the meanings of gender and identity (Hall 1997; Gill; 2007). Consequently, scholars are wary of the stereotypical representations in media that are deemed to ‘limit an individual’s behaviour’ in their assigned gender role (Krijnen & Bauwel 2015, p. 24). Going further, this study will continue to examine gender roles and their representations in the primetime dramas and their discourse on religious, and cultural hegemonies regarding a woman’s role in a heteronormative family.

This study begins by providing a brief history and socio-cultural background of Pakistan; a genesis of the feminist movement in Pakistan; and a short account of the existing protective

provisions for women under the law. The third chapter outlines the theoretical and epistemological frameworks that will be utilised to analyse the drama *Zun Mureed* (ZM - Urdu for submissive to wife/uxorious) through textual analysis. The fourth chapter provides a succinct literature review of the scholarly work done on representations of women in Pakistani dramas and DV. The fifth chapter outlines a brief trajectory of the PTV, and Pakistani dramas followed by a feminist textual analysis of the dramas ZM, that aims to focus on the stereotypical representations of gender and class; ideological discourse on family; and women's role in the society. The last part of this chapter appraises the dominant ideology vis-à-vis DV and opportunities for social change. The final chapter provides a summary of discussion

Chapter 2: Country Background and Context

2.1 Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Pakistan is a country overridden by a host of social, political, and military upheavals. It could be argued that Islam is the defining spirit of all of its personal, social, and political ideologies and practices. For Pakistan, and Pakistanis, Islam is not merely a religion, but a political identity as 'it is a manifestation of local customs, and it is a metaphor and motivator for political action' (Robertson 1996, p. 4). Pakistan is a theocratic nation, established on the ideology of the 'two-nation theory', denoting that Muslims and Hindus (who lived side by side in Colonial India) are two distinctive nations, with religious, political, social and cultural ideologies that are not always aligned with each other. Therefore, the founding father of the nation, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, laid the foundations of a Muslim majority state, with a democratic governance pattern in 1947 (Anon 2013; Mahmood 2002). In Jinnah's words, 'Pakistan is a state which has been deliberately created not on an economic, linguistic or racial basis; but on religious unity' (Majid et.al. 2014). There is a conflict among scholars and historians about whether Jinnah's vision of Pakistan was a secular or an Islamic one, based on the democratic and egalitarian principles (Mahmood 2002). Nevertheless, it could be argued that various geopolitical, and transnational events and phenomenon converged to shape the now 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan'. Democracy in Pakistan has, and continues to face challenges, owing to its colonial legacy, weak institutions, linguistic differences, and a pattern of domination by the ruling elites, both in the civil bureaucracy and military (Robertson 1996; Parveen & Bhatti 2018). The 73-year-old history of Pakistan is marked by the intermittent shuffle of power between the authoritarian and democratic governments, where the former takes up two-thirds of Pakistan's political history. Altogether, there has been almost 35 years of periodic military rule, starting from General Ayub Khan 1958-1969; Gen. Yahya Khan 1969-1971; Zia ul Haq 1977-1988, and Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf 1999-2008 (Parveen & Bhatti 2018). In between, there have been brief democratically elected governments, who had been usually overthrown by the military regimes (ibid.).

Lawrence Ziring (1984) periodises the Islamisation of Pakistan from 1947-1971 during the power struggle between the authoritarian and democratic governments. He argues that Islam, as an ideology, has proven to be a strategy for domination equally by authoritarian and democratic governments. General Ayub Khan was the originator of the first authoritarian rule

that came into power in 1958. However, Ziring (1984) suggests that Khan did not envisage his administrative system as Islamic, either in ideology or content. Hence, in 1960 through making amendments in the constitution, Ayub Khan dropped the word “Islamic” from the country’s name (Robertson 1996) and created the ‘Council of Islamic Ideology’ (CII) shortly after to provide an advisory role to align all the state laws according to Islamic injunctions (Robertson 1996; Yilmaz & Ahmed 2018). Soon the CII became a ‘weapon’ in the hands of extreme right religious politics headed by the ulema,² and then to what later came to be known as an ‘anti-women Islam’ (Robertson p. 23). By the same token, the successive democratic government of People’s Party, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1972, also resolved to play the Islam card to gain currency with the majority population (ibid).

2.2 Impact of Islamisation on women

Evidence suggests that General Zia’s aggressive policy to align Pakistan and its people with the teachings of Islam, also referred as ‘Zia’s Islamisation project’ (1977-1988) in Pakistan coincided with the Islamisation of Afghanistan and the Russian invasion in 1979 (Ghosh 2015). Like in Afghanistan, Islamisation endeavours initially aimed at keeping the secular, socialist influences at bay, infiltrated into personal and family laws of the country. This predominately translated as the imposition of Islamic strictures on women on both sides of the border. Zia’s Islamisation project was ‘written on the bodies of women’, as it required the female body to be concealed behind the *Chador and char deevari*³ in an attempt to ‘control the rebellious and potentially dangerous female body capable of irredeemable transgression’ (Saigol 2019) and ‘dictate a special ideal image of women in Islamic society’ (Yilmaz & Ahmed 2018, p. 12). This postulation is deemed as one of the most crucial impediments to women’s participation in paid work, and by extension, their economic independence (Moghadam 1992; Malik 1996). Notwithstanding, it is important not to see women’s issues in Pakistan as a culmination of Islamic injunctions only. Neither should they be seen as an ahistorical, apolitical phenomenon. Gender issues in Pakistan, and other Islamic countries, need to be studied within the intimate interplay of the state and religion. As Malik notes, ‘women's issues are [...] not so much Muslim specific as cross-cultural and intra-regional’ (Malik 1996, p. 140).

² Islamic scholars

³ Translating as the veil and the four walls (of a house). It signifies that the right place of a woman in (Islamic) society is behind the (protection of) veil and the four walls (of her home).

Zia's Islamisation project was fundamentally misogynistic as it largely circumscribed women's freedom and legal autonomy. For example, acting on recommendations of the CII, Zia ordered amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), to instate Islamic derived penal codes of the 'Hudood Ordinance',⁴ and *Qanoon-e- Shahadat*,⁵ that severely impinged on women's legal rights (Khan & Hussain 2008; Burki 2015). For example, according to Qanoon-e-Shahadat, two (pious) male witnesses were required to testify against crimes falling under the 'Hudood Ordinance', like rape and adultery. In an event of a (female) rape victim failing to produce valid testimony, she feared incrimination as an adulteress, punishable by stoning to death (ibid). Several cases are recorded where women were falsely accused of adultery when they digressed from the sanctioned norms of mobility or sexuality (ibid). Burki (2015, p. 104) argues that these laws are 'a *psychological albatross* for Pakistani females who seek greater economic and social opportunities in a conservative milieu, since there is the widely perceived threat of being falsely accused under the stipulations of these laws'. Afiya Sheherbano Zia (2009) situates the feminist struggle in Pakistan roughly within the same period, arguing women's movements of the 1970-80s were predominantly directed against the military dictatorship and its legacies of oppression, as well as capitalism. Hence the popular rhetoric of the feminist movement was structured around 'men, money, *mullahs*⁶ and the military' (Zia 2009, p. 30). Even though earlier feminist struggles were largely secular, they chose not to take a radical stance against the patriarchy perpetuated by the religious and familial mores. This was mostly done to retain the numbers within the movements, as members hailed from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, and it was not prudent for the feminist struggle to be perceived as antithetical to Islam (Kothari 2005 Zia 2009; Saigol 2019). To date, feminist movements in Pakistan find themselves at the crossroads, where 'a non-critical stance towards tradition and culture, though more acceptable to society, seems to betray feminist principles, while a critical stance only swells the ranks of the fundamentalists' (Jafar 2005, p. 52). Hence, in Pakistan feminism and feminist struggles remains a highly contested and confronted subject to date.

The sheer incongruity and overt discrimination of Hudood laws was a psychological deterrent for women that many deeply internalised. In the absence of a transparent and just legal system,

⁴ Hudood Ordinance predominantly dealt with five criminal laws that were to be tried under supposed Islamic injunctions, through the application of Sharia (Barki 2015; Yilmaz & Ahmed 2018). These five crimes were murder, adultery, rape and prostitution, perjury, theft, and intoxication. The law also prescribes specific punishments for specific crimes, of which stoning to death for adultery is the gravest of all (Khan & Hussain 2008; Burki 2015)

⁵ literally translating as 'law of evidence', that stipulated that in Hudood cases, two male witnesses or four female witnesses were required to prove a crime (ibid)

⁶ Islamic clergymen

these laws acted like a ‘loose cannon’ that could be used against women both by the state and their patriarchal families. Hence, women’s ventures outside the sanctity and protection of their homes were strictly regulated according to the rhetoric of ‘*chador and char deevari*’. Furthermore, internalisation of these misogynistic legal injunctions, in the form of self-restrictions and appeasement seeking behaviours, reinforced the already unequal and discriminatory societal norms pertaining to gender. In such an organisation of gender, women were deemed vulnerable while, men, either the perpetrators of sexual violence or custodians of the family honour, which was believed to reside in the bodies of women. I argue that, even though Pakistan has taken significant strides in providing legal protection to women over the last 73 years, the legacy of Zia’s Islamic state continues to haunt women who seek societal validation for almost all of the choices that they make in life. This includes entering heterosexual marriage and remaining in it, despite any ills. Unfortunately, despite having made progress in feminist efforts in various areas, including in legal provisions, Pakistani dramas are largely invested in the image of an ideal Pakistani woman that was postulated by Zia. Pakistani popular media, especially dramas have played a very passive role in reconstructing this identity in a meaningful way.

2.3 Patriarchy and Domestic violence

Patriarchy can be defined as ‘the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general’ (Lerner 1986; cited in Hadi 2017, p. 298). Pakistan is a deeply patriarchal society with male-dominated structures permeating every aspect of formal and informal institutions leading to pervasive inequalities between men and women. In feminist theory, patriarchy is a concept used to understand the power dynamics between men and women (Sultana 2012). It should be understood as a social structure, and societal practices, that men use to oppress women, and not a ‘natural’ or ‘biological’ order that determines men’s superiority over women (Walby 1990, p. 20; cited in Sultana 2012, p. 2). Therefore, patriarchy is a systematic subjugation of women through the institutionalisation of restrictive norms and practices through legal, religious, social, and cultural sanctions. This understanding of patriarchy helps in looking at gender differences and gender roles where women are subordinate to men, as a social construct, and which could be changed. However, Kandiyoti (1988) argues that, the socialist feminists’ framework of analysing patriarchy as a relationship between patriarchy and capitalism suggests a monolithic concept of male dominance, which largely occludes the

intricate dynamics of the cultural and historical context. Kandiyoti (1988) coined a term, 'patriarchal bargain', which can be understood as women's strategies 'within a set of concrete constraints' that are specific to their particular politics of location. For example, these strategies are defined by factors such as women's class, caste, or ethnicity. Kandiyoti (1988, p.257) further argues that these 'patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts'. These patriarchal bargains also provide unique forms of 'women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression' (ibid). Hence, it could be argued that the patriarchal bargain offers a certain level of subjectivity and resistance to women, which in turn provides a better framework to analyse the gender dynamics in a given society and to imagine social transformation. In my analysis of ZM, I demonstrate various forms of patriarchal bargains which female characters engage in, to access power, even though it is often to the detriment of other (vulnerable) women.

Patriarchal codes pervade the public and domestic sphere of Pakistani society, demanding unquestioned and complete subordination of women by men, and institutions. For example, women's subordinate position is maintained through the reinforcing of discriminatory practices against women and girls in access and control over resources; men's control over women's bodies; relegation of women to unpaid domestic duties; sexual harassment at the workplace; seclusion of women through or without *purdah* (veil); denial to legal services; and above all, the overt and covert use of coercion such as domestic and sexual violence (Butt & Shahid 2012; Malik 1996). Misplaced and un-contextualised verses of the Quran are used to validate a man's expression as the law, and a woman's duty to comply without questioning his authority. Arguably, there are certain verses which could be read as vindicating man's authority over his wife, owing to his status as the provider and protector of the family.⁷ These verses have been used to reinforce women's subordination in an Islamic patriarchal society such as Pakistan's. For example, the Quranic verse 4:34, also known as the 'beating verse' (Reda 2019) sanctions

⁷ Men (those who are able to carry out their responsibilities) are the protectors and maintainers of women in as much as God has endowed some of people (in some respects) with greater capacity than others, and inasmuch as they (the men) spend of their wealth (for the family's maintenance). Good, righteous women are the devoted ones (to God) and observant (of their husbands' rights), who guard the secrets (family honor and property, their chastity, and their husband's rights, especially where there is none to see them, and in the absence of men,) as God guards and keeps undisclosed (what should be guarded and private). As for those women from whose determined disobedience and breach of their marital obligations you have reason to fear, admonish them (to do what is right); then, (if that proves to be of no avail), remain apart from them in beds; then (if that too proves to be of no avail), beat them lightly (without beating them in their faces). Then, if they obey you (in your directing them to observe God's rights and their marital obligations), do not seek ways against them (to harm them). (Be ever mindful that) God is indeed All-Exalted, All-Great (An Nisa - Qurani. Verse 4.34)

a man's 'light' beating his wife to discipline her, even if it is deemed the last resort (Reda 2019; Pakeeza 2015). As Khan (2004) notes '[a]lthough the constitution of Pakistan forbids discrimination based on sex, the requirement that no law may be against the injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah has opened the door to a legal formulation that draws on male-biased readings of the sacred text and reinforce the unequal status of women' (Khan 2004, p. 667). Hence, misogyny and patriarchy have been institutionalised within the legal and administrative structures of the state, and domestic abuse is naturalised through a fundamentalist reading of the Quran.

2.4 Domestic Violence and Legal Frameworks in Pakistan

According to the World Economic Forum's (WEF), Global Gender Gap Report (2016), Pakistan ranks 143 out of 144 countries on the gender inequality index (WEF 2016). And it is among the top four countries for gender discrimination against women (Reuters 2018). According to the most recent data available on Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) (NIPS 2018), 28% of women between the age of 15-49 have experienced physical violence, and 34% of ever-married women have experienced domestic violence at the hand of their husbands. This includes both, emotional violence (26%) and physical violence (23%). There is empirical evidence suggesting that violence is deemed an acceptable method to exercise men's domination over women. Furthermore, violence is naturalised as part of masculine identity that men use to control women and keep them in a subordinate position (Bandyopadhyay & Khan 2013). Many Pakistani women have internalised violence as a man's prerogative, which they rarely challenge or seek help against. PDHS (NIPS 2018) data also shows that 56% of women who have experienced any type of physical or sexual violence have not sought help. Furthermore, the tendency to reach out to the family is higher (76%) than consulting formal help like lawyers or social services (NIPS 2018). This trend is indicative of the inadequacy of, or lack of trust in, the formal legal systems, or simply because of the entrenched cultural and patriarchal hegemonies of family honour. ZM textual reading is also consistent with these findings.

Evidence suggests that punitive measures alone are not sufficient to deal with DV in Pakistan. As Qureshi (2012, p. 209) notes, 'women's experience with the criminal justice system is exhaustive at its best and bitter/unpleasant at its worst'. Qureshi further argues that justice-oriented interventions might not be a plausible choice for women in Pakistani society given

intertwined social, political, religious, and cultural issues. However, a strong social support system comprising of family and friends might catapult women to seek legal remedies for domestic violence (ibid). The finding from the PDHS (NIPS 2018) seems to be supportive of this argument, as the only time women seemed to seek support from their family and friends is in cases of DV. Another study conducted by Tanwir et. al. (2019) concurs, arguing that social norms pertaining to gender in Pakistan are more resolute than any other forms of legal sanctions. Hence, this study postulates ‘reappropriation of gender equality by scholars in the global South and using new formulations of gender equality that emerge within developing countries’ (Tanwir et. al. 2019, p. 130). This entails contextualising available international gender frameworks that operate on individualistic models of the global South, into ones that take account of entrenched patriarchal structures. As discussed, these patriarchal structures take their lifeblood from the misplaced and misinterpreted religious dogmas, patrilineal hierarchies, and harmful traditional practices against women. To some extent, dramas have been successful in representing structural patriarchy and its ramifications on women, as well as on society as a whole. However, media discourse often leads to a situation of despondency, suggesting there might never be a solution to this protracted situation.

After ratifying the Convention to end discrimination against women (CEDAW) in 1996, Pakistan took almost 12 years to draft its first domestic violence bill in 2009, and another two more years to enact the *Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2009* (Qureshi 2012; Pakeeza 2015). Earlier in 2006, the *Protection of Women Act 2006* was enacted to provide some level of protection against harmful practices against women. More importantly, it subverted some provisions under the Hudood Ordinance, if not abrogated them all completely (Qureshi 2012; Pakeeza 2015; Yilmaz & Ahmed 2018). There has been slow, but consistent, progress vis-à-vis pro-women legislation and provisions since the 2000s. However, there is still a long way as Pakistani society is still embroiled in state-sponsored, deep-seated discriminatory laws and practices against women. As Malik (1996, p.140) notes, ‘[s]ocietal themes and those in the religious arena inadvertently relegated the role of powerful state institutions into a complete 'nothingness'’.

In Pakistan, legal and administrative powers have been devolved to provinces since 2010 (Ali 2015). Currently, there are various pro-women legislation in various stages of preparation and implementation in all provinces. In the same vein, the *Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Bill, 2015* (hereafter the WPB) (United Nations Development Programme - UNDP

2017), is one of the most significant, and perhaps a historical piece of legislation, that offers women a comprehensive framework for both prevention and protection from DV. Staying true to Zia's indoctrinated legacy of misogyny, extremist factions of Pakistani society, spearheaded by the CII, strongly condemned the law and even took to the streets to protest against it (Dawn 2016). The CII and its leaders called it 'un-Islamic' and against the Islamic ideology of Pakistan. Again, the verse 4:34 was used as the pretext for this proclamation (Siddiqui 2016; Craig 2016). Fazlur Rehman, the chief of the Jamiat-i-Ulema Islam, the leading right-wing religious political party of Pakistan, claimed that '[t]his law makes a man insecure... [t]his law is an attempt to make Pakistan a Western colony' (Dawn 2016). The key reason for receiving the ire of the religious leaders, and men in general, were some of the unconventional clauses of the Act. These include prohibiting abusers from throwing the victim out of the house or coming near the victim; and wearing a GPS tracker bracelet (Siddique 2016). CII's argued that these clauses go against the 'dignity' of a man, which is ordained by Almighty Allah.

Conversely, civil society hailed WPB as a subversion of the 'traditional power equation', (Naeem Mirza; quoted in Khan 2016), which caused moral panics across the patriarchal fraternity. It also led to a nationwide debate on the issue of DV and rejuvenated feminist activism in the country. Successive International Women's Days from 2018 onwards were marked with new vigour, and a rebellious streak, where women from all segments of society marched to claim their rights, and demand accountability for the violent crimes committed against them (Basir 2018). Within this background, the drama '*Zun Mureed*', (ZM) was aired on HUM TV in the first quarter of 2018. This drama furthered the discourse on DV and abused women's navigation through the patriarchal structures. The analysis of ZM herein draws from the mainstream media commentary and public debate on the issue of DV and WPB. This current study would attempt to divulge women's resistance and struggles against DV and patriarchal ideology through critical discourse and textual analysis of the dramas ZM.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The research is influenced by Zoonen's (1994, p. 41) claim that 'media [are] (social) technologies of gender, accommodating, modifying, reconstructing and producing [...] contradictory cultural outlooks of sexual difference'. In other words, media do not merely reflect reality, but construct reality through discourse. This study also assumes the position Judith Butler that 'gender is a verb', an active construction (Krijnen & Bauwel 2015, pp. 4-5), in which media plays an active role. Hence, gender in this paradigm is treated as a *discourse*, embedded in a specific time in history, and media are the sites where meaning is given to gender, through stereotypical representations, often underscored by competing ideological discourses, thus opening them up for interpretation and contradiction. Assuming this position; where ideologies are open to interpretations, offers an opportunity for imagining social change. This position is also consistent with Jackie Byars (1986, p. 2; cited in Suleman 1990, p. 90), that the contradicting and overlapping ideologies within the media texts are 'site(s) of imaginative possibilities without which we could ultimately be unable to try new models, new roles, new theories, new combination of behaviors'. Hence the objective of this research is two-fold. One, to study the ideological signifiers within the primetime dramas, including the themes, plots, narrative structures, characterisation, and audio-visual codes. Second, to examine the interaction of religious and socio-cultural ideologies within drama media texts and moments of resistance to derive a possible message for social change. This analysis draws linkages with real-life events, such as the discussion on DV after the passage of a historical piece of legislation in Pakistan for the prevention and redress of DV (Gabol 2016). Hence, this research provides an opportunity to understand whether popular media texts uphold the dominant socio-cultural and religious discourse on the subject of DV, or if they offer ruptures in these hegemonies.

This study aims to provide a textual analysis of the representation of DV in the Pakistani dramas and more generally, the portrayal of women. Before delving into the textual analysis of the drama texts, it is imperative to discuss the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological bases of this textual analysis, and the Western cultural theories used to read media texts. Furthermore, it is pertinent to understand specific concepts that are utilised to read the media texts of dramas to make sense of their underlying meanings. This study largely borrows from the work of Stuart Hall (1997), and on the theories of Foucault, Saussure and Gramsci. For

feminist perspectives on media, the thesis will draw from Van Zoonen (1994), Tuchman and others, largely presented by Rosalind Gill in her book 'gender and media' (2007).

According to Allen (2017, p. 2), '[t]extual analysis is a methodology that involves understanding language, symbols, and/or pictures present in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences'. Texts could be understood not only as written words 'but fabrics of knowledge that can be used as a reference, including oral texts, social texts and academic texts' (Hall 1997, p. 166). Furthermore, texts help us in decoding a message and facilitate in interpretations into more than one meaning. Hence, we can interpret texts in various media products like films, television programs, pictures, paintings, to understand how people, in a given time and culture, make sense of the world. Understanding cultural and social norms are imperative to understand media texts. Only a clear understanding of the time, place, culture and religious norms of a society can help in the meaningful reading of the text for its explicit (denotative) and implicit (connotative) meanings (Hall 1997). It also involves a certain level of 'guessing' about what people might have meant by producing these texts, or what meaning could be interpreted by consumers (Allen 2017). A textual analysis offers a more in-depth analysis of a text, that factors in the cultural, linguistic, temporal, and ideological aspects of a text.

Hall (1997, p. 15) suggests that, to cultural theorists, *representation* is a process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a given culture using language, signs and images which stand for or represent things. Representation connects meaning and language to culture through the language of signs and images, that enable us to refer to the 'real world', as well as in the imaginary realm (ibid). Representation of masculinity and femininity in media has been an important site of inquiry in feminist research for decades (Krijnen & Bauwel 2015; Gill 2007). According to cultural theorists, feminist media research works at two levels. First, it questions the re-presentation of men and women in the media and investigating the disparities in their numbers and or roles. The second question goes deeper in its inquiry of the 'portrayal' of men and women, masculinity and femininity and the meanings attached to such imaginations (Krijnen & Bauwel 2015). This is where textual analysis comes in. Cultural theorists were interested in understanding the implications of media representations on the social, cultural, and political meaning of gender, and whether there is a room for negotiation of meanings within these representations. Hall (2013, p. 40; cited in Krijnen & yil 2015, p. 42) argues that media texts, also produce 'subject positions', a place for the reader so that they are able to identify

themselves with the position constructed by the media discourse. A text is only meaningful if a reader feels addressed by that discourse and is able to relate to it. A discourse offers varying subject positions, which are often contradictory, thus providing readers (audience) an opportunity to read ‘against the grain’ and construct their own meanings.

Hall (1997) postulated the *constructionist approach* of understanding the relationship of representations with reality. He argues that meanings are created through language and practice. This is the position this thesis will take in examining the gender roles in drama texts. According to Hall (1997), culture can be understood as ‘shared meanings’, where the exchange of meanings can take place based on a shared understanding of the codes and conventions of the signs/language. Foucault on the other hand was more interested in the ‘production’ of knowledge, and not just the meanings in the language. Foucault called the production of meaning through language and practices *discourse*. In other words, discourse provides a way of talking about a particular topic through language, or ideas, or practice in a particular historical moment. Foucault believed that through understanding a discourse, we are able to analyse ‘how human beings understand themselves in our culture, and how our knowledge about the social the embodied individual and shared meanings comes to be produced in different periods’ (Hall 1997, p.43). Therefore, a discourse has a certain power, as not only does it dictate a way of speaking and practices about a topic, it also limits and restricts other ways of intelligibility of a topic. This is the main premise of this research, that is, to understand the dominant discourse on femininity, familial values, and the power struggle between the binary genders in dramas.

Another important concept used to understand the connection between cultural representations, meaning, and power relations, through the use of language (including the signs and images); and discourse in constructing and reproducing the social order is *ideology*. Thompson (in Gill 2007, p. 54) defines ideology as ‘the ways in which meaning is mobilized for the maintenance of the relationship of domination’. Gramsci believed that different social groups struggle in different ways, including ideologically, to gain a level of domination over other groups in terms of thought and practice. He termed this kind of power, *hegemony*, stating that ‘[h]egemony is never permanent and is not reducible to economic interests or to simple class model-of society’ (Hall 1997, p. 48). In other words, hegemony refers to cultural and ideological power, where one social group claims ‘leadership’ over the other social groups. It is important to understand

that Gramsci's notion of dominance, does not mean coercion or the overt use of power. Instead, it requires 'winning approval' from the other group/s, which is not permanent and is open to contestation (Gill 2007). Scholarship on Pakistan drama reveals similar ideological struggles in drama texts during various political regimes in Pakistan, where state heavily controlled media, and to some extent, media texts to propagate cultural, national, and patriarchal ideologies. This research explores the struggles between competing ideologies within the Pakistani dramas and investigates the dominant ideology that is closely aligned with patriarchy, or alternatively allows moments of resistance and imagining an alternative reality.

Work on gender and media has a long history that coincides with the western feminist movements. The absence of women's perspective, or a feminist inquiry in the earlier academic work on media incurred heavy criticism from the feminist scholars of the early 1970s (Zoonen 1994). Anglo/US feminist scholars in the 1970s were particularly wary of the representation of the male experiences as universal, rendering positive and authentic experiences of women mostly invisible or insignificant in the media, as well as in the scholarship. This led to the emergence of key research themes in feminist scholarship; like *stereotypes and social roles*; and *ideology*. The first theme, *social roles and stereotypes*, is concerned with the under-representation and stereotypical representation of women in the media (Van Zoonen 1994). Tuchman was among the first feminist scholars who have developed the theoretical framework to understand how stereotyping and socialisation of women in media functions (ibid). According to Tuchman, stereotypes are created, perpetuated, and sustained in the society in their attempt to 'pass on their social heritage from one generation to the next one' (Zoonen 1994, p. 16). Stereotypes are naturalised through communication, and media plays an important role in reinforcing these stereotypes, where television 'symbolically annihilates' women (ibid). According to Tuchman's analysis, media reflect society's dominant ideology and vilifies women either by making them invisible on the media, or portraying them in regressive, stereotypical roles, rendering them incompetent, or subservient to men (ibid).

The second theme, *ideology*, takes up a more holistic approach than the previous iterations by Gramsci and Althusser, and utilises it to critique normative ideas of gender/femininity. According to Althusser, media are also 'ideological state apparatuses' (ISA), like religion, politics, family, and culture in which we are interpellated (drawn in), and in which we perform the various ideological beliefs that serve the ruling class (and the state) (Krijnen & Bauwel

2015; Hall 1997; Zoonen 1994). Thus, media, like other ISA contribute to stereotypical gender roles. Furthermore, Althusser argues that ISA function in the favour of the dominant ideology, through translating it as common sense or 'natural'. For example, women are considered as 'intrinsically' caring and maternal, therefore, it is only 'natural' that they should remain within the domestic sphere, taking care of home and children. Men, on the other hand, belong to the public sphere as rational, ambitious subjects. Drawing together the concepts of *stereotypes*, *ideology* and *hegemony* (as defined by Gramsci), the feminist theory postulates that 'media are hegemonic institutions that present the capitalistic and patriarchal order as 'normal', obscuring its ideological nature and translating it into 'common sense' (Zoonen 1994, p. 27).

Whilst there is a scarcity of sophisticated academic research on dramas, there is much commentary available, mostly in the form of blogs and op-eds that provides a critique on popular culture. With the arrival of social media, audiences are more publicly engaged and vocal about their views of contemporary dramas. Like academics, audience and freelance journalists have mixed views about the content and representations of Pakistani society in popular culture. According to Ahmar, a veteran Pakistani journalist and the director of a media advocacy and monitoring organisation, Uks, 99.9% of dramas on Pakistani TV channels are 'sexist, repressive and regressive' (Sarfraz 2020). Given the presence of informal media commentary, this material will be used to substantiate claims about how DV is represented in Pakistani serials. It shows that media texts, like the dramas, create and preserve hegemonic ideologies about the 'good' and the 'bad' woman that are embedded in the representations of honour, tradition, and family values. The outcomes from this material are explored in a literature review that contextualises the drama genre in Pakistani media, especially in Urdu dramas and their typical portrayals of women.

Chapter 4: Literature Review

The literature reviewed herein is limited to the dissertations, journal articles and book chapters by South Asian authors who have studied the genre of soap operas, drama serials, and films in the South Asian region. It begins with a review of the development of a feminist critique of Pakistani drama that commenced in the 1980s in response to the popularity of dramas and feminist inquiry. The following is a brief discussion on the impact of successive government regimes on the media industry are discussed in light of their ideological influence on dramas. This influence has resulted in the creation of a binary ideology of good/bad woman defined by a code of honour, and gender roles, that is reviewed in the next section. Contemporary dramas have focused on a new heroine trope and one that reflects the impact of globalisation on the genre. Despite this more public female persona, the final category discusses how violence against women is represented within the genre. This review of popular drama texts reveals that they remain heavily engaged in the ideological discourse of honour that creates an on-screen identity of the good/ bad woman. Despite going through significant transformations, this ideology cascades through every aspect of a woman's life, including her personal, social, political, and religious life. This is mostly due to the rapidly changing political, economic, and social milieu in the country.

4.1 Representation of women in dramas

The majority of Pakistani academics focus on documenting the impact of the broader social, political and religious dynamics on the dramas, especially in the portrayal of the female protagonists during the military regime of Gen Zia Ul Haq (1978-1988), (Ahmed & Wahab 2019; Abbas 2018; Abbas & Jabeen 2013; Kothari 2005). This literature reveals some common trends and preferences in the selection of drama serials among scholars. For example, while accolading the content and quality of the dramas from the 1980s, and to some extent the 1990s, almost every author discusses dramas penned by the female writer Hasina Moin and a few other female writers. Moin's works include dramas like '*Thanhaiyan*' aired on Pakistan PTV in 1986, directed by Shahzad Khalil; and '*Dhoop Kinaray*', also written by Haseena Moin, and directed by Sahira Kazmi, aired on PTV in 1987. Other researched dramas from that period are '*Marvi*', which aired on PTV in 1993, adapted by Noor-ul-Huda Shah and directed by Sultana Siddiqui. Siddiqui launched her own private television network by the name of HUM TV in 2005, that

remains one of the most popular and most commented-on satellite network channels in the country (Dutoya 2018).

On the other hand, '*Hamsafar*' written by Farhat Ishtiaq and directed by Sarmad Sultan Khoosat; and '*Zindagi Gulzar hai*' (ZGH) written by Umera Ahmad and directed by Siddiqui are among the most analysed dramas from the satellite era from 2002. Both the serials were aired on HUM TV in years 2011 and 2013 respectively. Both the dramas have enjoyed significant overseas popularity, including in non-Urdu speaking countries where these dramas have been dubbed into local languages. *Hamsafar* was mainly popular because of the lead male and female protagonists, even though the serial received criticism for its stereotypical representation of the good/bad women (Qureshi 2016). However, ZGH mostly celebrated the emergence of a 'new heroine' who is both independent and an embodiment of the Eastern culture (Mehra 2018).

Most media scholarship is quite recent, published between 2000–2020. This could be attributed to the fact that gender and media studies are relatively new fields in Pakistan, with gender studies being recognised as an academic discipline only since 1989, with the post-doctorate degrees being offered since 2002 (UoK n.d). This explains an influx in gender and media-related research in recent times. Some of the seminal work quoted here is the work of Pakistani and other South Asian scholars studying in western universities. For example, one of the earliest (published) sophisticated feminist media analysis is provided by Suleman (1990) and she notes that most of the literature on media and gender, until the 1980s was commissioned by the then Ministry of Women Development, which was mainly focused on the representation of issues like is women's education, health, and workforce participation, and women's role within their cultural and religious lives. Suleman (1990) further argues that with the rapid evolution of Urdu dramas and their increased influence on social lives, it is imperative to expand the scope of analysis to consider the representation of more sophisticated issues to show the insidious nature of female stereotypical representations.

The other most significant piece of seminal work was carried out by Suchi Kothari (1997; 2006), where she examines the many ways in which the production, textuality and reception of dramas opens up discursive sites where women negotiate, resist and transgress their prescribed limits in an Islamist patriarchal society during the 1980-90s (Kothari 2006, p.289). Kothari ((2019) also interviews the three most celebrated women drama writers; Moin, Bajjia and Shah

who, even though did not identify themselves as feminist writers, created strong feminist on-screen protagonists. The dramas penned down by these writes have attracted much of academic interest, as they offered diverse feminine subject positions, and spaces for a new social imagination, unlike the dichotomous representations of good/bad (women). According to Moin, she creates a bold female character to as a ‘counterpoint’, to the male writers who depict women as ‘eternally self-sacrificing, nurturing’ subjects, even if their husbands are not worthy of it, referring to the stereotypical gender representations of men and women in dramas (Kothari 2019, p.228).

The third most nuanced feminist analysis of dramas was done by Virginie Dutoya (2018), in a chapter in the book titled; ‘Rethinking new womanhood. Practices of Gender, Class, Culture and Religion in South Asia’. The book provides a nuanced re-definition of the contemporary Asian woman, which ‘break[s] away from western discourse and rhetoric on feminism and womanhood within South Asia’ (Srivastava 2019 p.482). Dutoya’s chapter (2018, pp. 71–93), discusses the representation of women in dramas by analysing four popular drama serials aired on Pakistani on cable tv between 2012-2015 and throws light on gender roles and expectations in the Pakistani society and how they are projected on television. The key argument that Dutoya (2018) makes is that the discourse on women’s rights has been redefined to present a progressive role model for urban middle-class women. This new normative role is in contrast with the stereotypical ‘westernised’ upper-class women and the ‘backward and oppressed’ lower-class women.

This literature review of material since Suleman’s (1990) thesis, reveals some overlapping common themes that are the hallmark of a South Asian traditional society. These overlapping themes are honour, Islamic notions of piety, *chador and chaar* deewari, motherhood, and the notions of the good/bad (woman). For accessibility, the literature review is divided into four themes based on the findings. These broad, often overlapping themes are the impact of various governments on the dramas; discourse on honour and the representation of the good/bad woman; globalisation and the emergence of ‘the new heroine’; and violence against women. The history of Pakistani dramas shows how these stereotypes have developed over time.

a) Impact of various government regimes on Urdu dramas

Academic scholarship reveals that Pakistani television has undergone various paradigm shifts in response to the changing political milieu of the country, progressing from General Zia's Islamic sharia-based policy (1978-1988) to Gen Pervaiz Musharraf's liberal policy for the television introduced in 2000 (Abbas 2018; Haque 2016; Ahmad 2016; Huma 2015; Abbas & Jabeen 2013; Kothari 2005). Kothari (2005) provides a sophisticated and nuanced analysis of the transformation that occurred in Pakistani dramas between the 1980-90s, the era that is marked with the Islamisation project of the military regime of Gen. Zia. She argues that Zia's dictatorship was unprecedentedly damaging for women due to the discriminatory laws and practices, but also due to propagation of misogynistic ideologies about women in the media. According to Dutoya, 'television programs depicted women as the root cause of corruption, as mercenary consumers who forced poor men into accepting bribes, smuggling or pilfering funds, all in order to satisfy the insatiable female desire for clothes and jewellery' (Dutoya 2018, p. 291). However, there were some writers like Moin, Bajiya and Shah who broke away from the stereotypical portrayals of women and depicted resistance, through their treatment of religion, ethnicity, and religion. A few others (Qaiser and Jabeen, (2008; Abbas and Jabeen (2013) also concur with Dutoya's analysis of dramas penned by the three female writers discussed above, and argue that the dramas during Zia's era were increasingly political and treated bold subjects like violence against women, and feudalism (ibid).

During Zia's dictatorship (1977-1988) the visual entertainment industry, both television and films, were impinged by the strict censorship policy that banned overt articulations and depictions of romantic intimacy (Kothari 2005; Ahmed 2016; Zubair 2016). In a recent study, Ahmed and Wahab (2019) provide a content analysis of the drama texts during the political regime of the female prime minister, Benazir Bhutto (1980-90s), arguing that even the female leadership did not improve women's representation in media, as the dominant ideology of the ruling class was still based on patriarchy. Even though female protagonists were shown to have some autonomy and subjectivity, female supporting actors continued to play stereotypical roles consistent with a patriarchal society. Kothari (2005, p.290) argues that the 1980-1990s are marked with state-sponsored, ideological subjugations of women, '[t]he medium of television, with its domestic address and context, intensifies and complicates the relationship between the private and public, the very fault line that causes patriarchal Islamism so much anxiety'. In other words, dramas provided space for female writers to negotiate an alternate

imaginary for women, distinct from the one prescribed by the state-sponsored Islamic injunctions. Consequently, we see that even with the more liberal and moderate policies of the democratic governments during the 1990s to date, television remains the site of struggle between patriarchal hegemonies and feminist agenda.

b) Discourse on honour and representation of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ woman

Scholarship mostly concurs that Pakistani dramas are highly gendered and cultivate ideological hegemonies about honour, familial values, motherhood, and good/bad woman (Fatima 2019; Ashfaq & Shafiq 2018; Abbas 2018; Ahmad 2016; Mehra 2019). Within this discourse, women’s bodies, sexuality and mobility were regulated by the rhetoric of *chador and char deevari*, both in real life and on the screen (Fatima 2019; Ashfaq & Shafiq 2018; Abbas 2018; Ahmad 2016; Suleman 1990). This was especially the case during Zia’s Islamisation period in the 1970s and later in the 1990s when Nawaz Sharif’s government tried to revive Zia’s legacy, where any woman appearing on the television or engaged in public services was mandated by the government to cover her head in an attempt to propagate a singular interpretation of Quranic teachings (Kothari 2005; Zubair 2016; Haque 2016). Evidence shows that nearly all drama texts tried to vindicate women’s ventures outside the protection of her house through some extraordinary circumstances like seeking a livelihood in case of parental loss, broken homes, or any other predicament (Suleman in 1990; Ashfaq & Shafiq 2018; Ullah & Nisar 2011; Khothari 2005).

In contemporary dramas, career women are still often portrayed as hateful and manipulative (Fatima 2019; Ashfaq & Shafiq 2018; Abbas 2018; Ullah & Nisar 2011). This is also evident by the dichotomisation of the private and public life in the dramas, where women are overrepresented in the former, as the obedient daughters of patriarchy, and custodians of cultural and family values (ibid). Ashfaq et al. (2018) use Deaux and Lewis’s model to appraise the representation of women against the four virtues of ‘piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity’. They suggest that domesticity is essentialised and naturalised in the drama representations, whereas masculinity is celebrated as productivity, subjectivity, and heroism. Thus, there is an over-representation of women in domestic settings, while men were seen to inhabit public domains, as ambitious, rational subjects (Abbas 2018; Ullah & Nisar 2011).

Contrary to the dominant viewpoint, some scholars have argued that the modern-day representations of women in dramas are not always regressive or repressive. In her thesis, Haque (2016) notes a dearth of feminist analysis of the Pakistani dramas. She argues that available scholarship has mostly focused on the dichotomous representations of the female protagonists in the dramas and has overlooked various modes of resistance that women enact within private and domestic spheres in these drama serials (ibid.). Haque (2016) appraises two popular dramas, *Dastaan* (2010), based on the novel *Bano* by Razia Butt, and *Humsafar* (2011/12), both aired on HUM TV, to demonstrate how female protagonists embody 'silence' and 'madness' to engage in resistance against patriarchy. She states that 'by breaking away from the hegemonic languages of sanity, patriarchy, and nation' female characters resist stereotyped images of themselves as victims (Haque 2016, p. v). According to cultural theorists, changes occurring in the social world provide popular genre (like dramas and soap operas) new storylines so that they remain relevant (Hall 1997). This has been noted in the representations of women in dramas as the women's role change in the Pakistani society

c) The 'new heroine' amidst rapid globalisation

Both Indian and Pakistani scholars provide multiple, often contradictory, interpretations of drama representations of women and put forward the concept of a 'new heroine' or 'new womanhood'. Hussein (2018) has compiled one of the most significant scholarly works by prominent feminists from South Asia. Hussein (2018) conceptualises the representation of contemporary South Asian woman in the media and literature and the 'new woman' within the context of the neoliberal economy. Hussein asserts that 'new womanhood' is 'self-constructed' and not 'imposed by patriarchal powers'...[i]t has a unique intersectional identity and agency of its own' (Hussein 2018, p.2). For example, Hussein argues that the new woman stands for equality and freedom of choice and that she 'assert['s] her rights without being dogmatic about it and recognize that not all liberties are good for Pakistani women' (Hussein 2018, p. 82). Same views are expressed by Dutoya (2018), in her chapter in Hussein's book. Here she postulates evolution of the 'new Pakistani woman' in contemporary dramas and argues that a discourse of women's rights has been redefined to present a progressive role model for urban middle-class women on the cusp of modernity and tradition. The new woman of the 1980-90s is a 'modern homemaker and consumer, aspiring to a better future for her family and the development of her nation' (Dutoya 2018, p.75). This new woman is being constantly

‘renewed’ by her embodiment of traditional values, while at the same time having a progressive outlook, without compromising on her identity. Given this status, she is entrusted with the responsibility of bridging the gap between the classes while maintaining the status-quo of the upper and lower class, or between the traditional gender roles (Dutoya 2018). The key argument here is that the contemporary representations of modern Pakistani women in dramas allude to a sense of empowerment and choice by these women, which stands in stark contrast with dichotomised representations of the ‘traditional/backward’ and ‘western/modern’. These new heroines are both traditional and forward-thinking and (apparently) have chosen to be so. However, I argue that even these representations *are* informed by patriarchal ideologies. On the surface, it appears that women have ‘chosen’ tradition over modernity. Yet, this is in fact reflective of underlying cultural and patriarchal hegemonies that still create an onscreen identity of the good/bad woman.

Zubair (2016) studies the influence of globalisation in redefining Pakistani women’s gender roles on television, mostly in popular dramas. Her paper focuses on women’s media representations within the international development discourses on women’s financial, social, and political empowerment and autonomy. The paper appraises the changing landscape of media representations on TV and evaluates the interpretation of such changing identities by women themselves through focus group discussions (ibid). According to Zubair (ibid), the participants of the FDGs attempted to engage in Hall’s ‘othering discourses’, in defining their own identities, as distinct from the western imagery portrayed in the media. Zubair (2016, p.30) concludes that young Pakistani women construct their own unique identities based on their specific ‘inter-related and asymmetrical cultural relations of power within patriarchal structures’, as the conscious audience who are able to take media narratives on the face value but are also able to separate them from reality.

Alongside the growing sanguinity over, and celebration of the ‘new heroine’ of the silver screen, a small cohort of conservative Pakistani scholars express dissatisfaction with the morality and cultural deviance of social themes excessively discussed in prime-time Pakistani dramas. This disquiet relates to issues including extramarital affairs, bigamy, and divorce. They interpret these issues as contradictory to Pakistani societal values (Arafat et al. 2020, Rehman et al. 2019; Shabbir et al. 2013; Huma 2015; Malik 2017). For example, Manzoor et al. (2018) have studied the impact of ‘liberalism’ on drama serials between 2016–2018. Their study maintains that contemporary dramas are heavily invested in liberal ideology, that they measure

in terms of the depiction of physical intimacy, modern dressing styles, and using the English language, breaking of taboos and stereotypes. Modern-day dramas texts portray liberal ideologies, which, in the authors' view, are not aligned with Pakistani culture and moral values, and should be addressed by the government. Hence, there is an ambivalence expressed by scholars about the representation of the 'modern Pakistani woman', which they believe is embedded in the western ideology of modernity and individualism. This view is consistent with Mehra's (2019 p. 628) observations that the majority of dramas present women 'at the crossroads of east-west cultures, struggling with patriarchy, expanding their gender capacities, and initiating behaviour change'. I argue that in this kind of a narrative, a modern Pakistani woman is encouraged to embrace neoliberal ideals of legal equality and a position in society, while also maintaining traditional roles that align with heteropatriarchy.

4.2 Representation of Violence against Women

Most media scholars focus on the representations of women in dramas, and by doing so, touch on reasons and ideologies that have led to women's oppression and/or subordination. For example, female characters who are found deviant from the cultural norms and familial values are often shown to receive wrath from their husbands, brothers and/or fathers. Likewise, women who leave the sanctity of their homes without 'legitimate reasons', are depicted as falling prey to lecherous men and are exploited sexually or otherwise. Two separate studies carried out by Pervez et al. (2009; 2010) investigate the portrayal of violence on the dramas. Both are quantitative studies and employ the *cognitive theory of aggression* to study violence. The 2009 investigation studies the representation of psychological violence against women in seven dramas across 106 scenes. It concludes that most psychological violence is perpetrated by male blood relatives inside a domestic setting (ibid). The study investigates the ascribed⁸ and achieved status⁹ of both the violent and the victim characters in Pakistani drama serials. This study evaluates the ratio of violence among 1,060 characters in the five serials telecasted on PTV during one quarter (Pervez et. al. 2010). It concludes that violent males and female victims are both of ascribed status, for example, they have blood relations with the victims.

⁸ The terms 'ascribed' and 'acquired' are used by the authors to describe the relationships between victims and perpetrators. 'Ascribed' refers to a relationship that is assigned at birth, for example, blood relations between perpetrator and victim whereas 'acquired' describes a relationship in which the subjects are connected by marriage or economics.

Assigned at birth

⁹ Acquired based on merit

Furthermore, the study shows that female characters with ascribed status are more prone to fall victim to violent male characters of ascribed status (ibid). For example, by fathers and brothers. Another finding is that, the female proponents of violence, despite being in a lower percentage, are represented to have an achieved status by virtue of their relationship with the patriarch (e.g. mother in law), or through the economic agency (e.g. working women, or entrepreneur). Even though the study does not offer an in-depth analysis of the correlation between the achieved status of women and violence, there is significant evidence that this correlation could be made in conjunction with stereotypical female representations. That is, women who have a significant level of economic autonomy are displayed as unkind or self-indulgent, and incapable of compassion.

4.3 Conclusion

This literature review shows that media texts, especially dramas, have been controlled by the ruling elite in the past, especially during the military regimes. They are used both as a propaganda tool and as a means to influence the dominant discourses around nationalism, tradition, and religion. Hence, media texts from that dictatorship-era are charged with class and cultural hegemonies, as well as, to some extent resistance against them. There is also strong evidence that the representation of the female protagonist in dramas between the 1980-90s was bolder, more independent, and acutely aware of the socio-political struggles of class and gender around her.

Researchers see the evolution of dramas as inevitable, but not always positive or desirable, as some conservative scholars are expressed their concern over the cultural impacts of such 'liberal' portrayals of the Pakistani family (Arafat et al. 2020, Rehman et al. 2019; Shabbir et al. 2013; Huma 2015; Malik 2017; Manzoor et al. 2018). For example, some researchers have critiqued the representations of the modern-day family and women for their digression from the Pakistani cultural, traditional, and Islamic values (ibid). They largely attribute this to the liberalisation of the airwaves and introduction of satellite channels. At the same time, there is a substantial body of literature available that appreciates the emergence of the 'new heroine' (1980s onwards) who is modern and independent and is at the cusp of modernity and tradition, and more aligned with global trends. However, her emancipation and choices are curtailed in the pursuit of upholding traditional family values, which do not offer any reimagination of the gender roles for women in popular media texts.

This current study focuses on the representations of domestic violence in contemporary dramas while investigating the underlying cultural and ideological hegemonies. It questions whether the dominant discourse offers new subject positions to the victims of abusive marriages or reinforces cultural and religious ideologies to discourage any such struggles. This investigation begins by briefly mapping the trajectory of television in Pakistan and the progression of the genre of Urdu drama serials.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Zun Mureed

5.1 Pakistani Television and the genre of Urdu drama serials

Pakistan's first television network, PTV was introduced by the military regime of General Ayub Khan in 1964, to project Khan as a moderniser, and benefactor of the development of Pakistani society (Sulehria 2017; Hashmi 2012). Sulehria (2017) maps the trajectory of PTV since its inception, describing its initial struggles vis-à-vis its economic sustenance. This is when PTV introduced the genre of drama serials, to generate revenue through advertisement, which became its zeitgeist from the 1970s through to early 1990s. Sulehria (2017) notes that these dramas quickly gained popularity in Asia and beyond. After the rapid globalisation and emergence of Information and Communication Technology, it was impossible to keep a state monopoly over the airways through a single national television network. Therefore, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government, headed by Benazir Bhutto in 1989, took the first step in liberalising the electronic media. Paradoxically, the true liberalisation of the television system in Pakistan occurred during the military regime of General Musharraf (1999–2008) as a political and military strategy to counter the Indian media propaganda, and the increasing influence of Indian content in Pakistan's media (Hashmi 2012).

General Musharraf was a great proponent of what he called 'moderatism', which meant he removed restrictions on media ownership which led to a proliferation satellite and cable channels both in Pakistan and nearby Gulf states (Hashmi 2012). However, Musharraf did not provide unlimited or unchecked freedom to media and instated the Pakistani Electronic Media Authority (PEMRA), which besides giving licence, heavily monitored the content that was aired to 'ensure that this broadcasting sector [was] not used against the state, the masses, and the public, and it [did] not instigate religious factions' (Brigadier Shakeel Ahmad, Head of Cable TV at PEMRA 2007; cited in Hashmi 2012, p. 515). This is important to understand so that one is not misled into thinking that the government no longer controls the television. However, it cannot be likened to the strict censorship policy in place during Zia's regime that declared performing arts 'un-Islamic'; directed the women appearing on the television to cover their heads, and banned any overt articulations and depictions of romantic intimacy (Kothari 2005; Ahmed 2016; Zubair 2016). This legacy continues to date as in both, real life and media, women's sexuality is controlled, and their desirability is measured by their adherence with societal norms of femininity. Mernissi (1987, p. 15; cited in Fatima 2018, p. 10) argues that

‘[characteristics of] modesty and dignity are part of Muslim society’s ‘specific vision of female sexuality’, which sets them apart from the sexual objectification portrayed in western pop culture. Whereas in Pakistani dramas, ‘women are objectified as being the holders of modesty, dignity, religiosity, and beauty’ (ibid).

5.1.1 Urdu Drama Serials

The genre of soap opera was first conceptualised by advertising agencies in the 1930s as a daytime radio program to reach out to a female audience by the advertising agencies in 1930 in the USA (Hall 1997). Soaps, therefore, could be understood as representatives of women’s culture, not because they provide a purely feminist perspective, but because of the ‘subject matter’, that is centred around women’s lives (Hall 1997). Pakistani dramas have traditionally enjoyed the popularity and loyal viewership of women since the inception of Pakistan’s first national television network in 1964 (Kothari 2005; Dutoya 2018; Malik 2017). Kothari (2005) likens dramas to ‘zanaana’, a secluded female-only space (inside the house), where women feel liberated and can exercise a certain level of freedom, especially the freedom of expression. In a focus on the work of the prominent female drama writers of the 1980-90s, Kothari (2005) evaluates how this female sphere brought the domestic and public realms together and dismantled patriarchal Islamisation through media representations. In Kothari’s (2005, p.303) words ‘[i]t is in this zanaana, where faces are unveiled, where voices are liberated, where women chatter and laugh ... that I situate [dramas] in Pakistan’. Nonetheless, I argue that this view fails to recognise the heteronormative visual culture that prioritises patriarchal hegemonies, contributing to the naturalisation of women in subservient positions.

5.2 Zun Mureed – textual analysis

The analysis of ZM revolves around issues pertaining to DV in a heteronormative middle-class household. It will focus on the prevalent, and often competing discourses and ideologies regarding men and women’s roles in a heterosexual marriage, and how myriad economic, social, political, cultural, and religious ideologies converge to curb a woman’s agency in pursuing a legal struggle against DV. In order to carry out a more nuanced analysis of the media texts, this analysis is divided into the following themes to understand the underlying cultural connotations and representations of gender roles, norms and behaviours that lead to or reinforce a husband’s dominance and violence against his wife in a marriage. These themes include:

1. The Title '*Zun Mureed*': Cultural and Ideological Significance
2. Gender roles, relationships and norms
3. Gender and class: power and stereotypes
4. Discourse on Domestic Violence
 - 4.1 Ruptures and opportunities for social change
 - 4.2 Compulsory heteronormative resolution

This material will provide a textural analysis in line with Hall's (1997) key concepts. This includes an analysis of the narratives driven from the 'real world' situations; where they have the power to create social meaning; and where meaning is created using commonly understood language techniques and cultural practices. This assessment begins with an understanding of the ZM story-line.

5.2.1 The Story

ZM is the story of Tabassum, a dutiful wife, a working woman, and a mother of two young children, Bobby and Zoya. Her husband Sajjad is an archetypical Pakistan man, who is the head of the family and enjoys all the perks of being a man in a patriarchal society. For example, he can be irresponsible, and insensitive, but no one ever questions his shortcomings. Instead, his wife is expected to make up for his shortcomings by being extra organised, extra dutiful, and extra efficient. Any shortfalls in this 'ideal wife' role are met with disapproval, disdain and even ostracisation, mostly by the other female characters of the family in the pursuit of a 'patriarchal bargain' (Kandiyoti 1988). Sajjad's mother Bi Jan¹⁰ is bed-ridden due to a stroke, and unable to speak properly. She is a doting mother, who is extremely fond her daughter Merium, but mostly resentful of her daughter-in-law (for no apparent reason). Merium and her husband Abid are a happy but childless couple, who are often found arguing over Merium's over-indulgence of her mother who, in Abid's view, should be Sajjad and his wife's responsibility. Abid's role oscillates between the negative and positive, however, being the husband of Sajjad's elder sister, his character commands a certain level of authority and respect. Tabassum has an elder brother, Rauf, who lives with his wife Anila, their twin daughters, and a younger sister Fari. Rauf is a man who is easily manipulated by his wife, and she is spiteful of her husband's two sisters. This spite is based on her quest to retain her position

¹⁰ A pronoun for mother in Urdu

as the ‘lady of the house’. Anila is always shown hatching plans to pitch her husband against his sisters, who undertakes her demands in an unquestioning manner. Fari is an intelligent young woman, who is aware of her sister-in-law’s malicious intentions but has no agency to counter her, owing to her singlehood and tender age.

Tabassum and Sajjad are apparently a happy couple, and Tabassum is portrayed as an educated and intelligent, albeit meek woman, who does not question her mother-in-law’s unexplained and unjustified hatred towards her or her husband’s nonchalant behaviour towards her needs and feelings. Sajjad’s role is a mixture of sensitive and insensitive husband, who enjoys his status as the patriarch of the family but knows how to win his wife’s heart by his occasional expression of warmth and appreciation, for which he earns the title ‘*Zun mureed*’ which translates in English as uxorious or ‘henpecked husband’. Sajjad is frequently lazy, and often unambitious, but his character is generally not violent or abusive. However, he is a product of a patriarchal society, which gives him certain privileges and status that he is not willing to forfeit. Moreover, masculinist hegemonies derived from a religious and cultural discourse based on (male) honour, and role in society, eventually lead him to exhibit a rather violent and narcissistic behaviour towards his wife. All supporting characters from both, Tabassum’s family, and Sajjad’s family drive the couple’s actions in line with the traditional societal mores about gender roles. Yet, there are a few instances when these cultural hegemonies are interrupted by external factors within the drama. For example, the passing of a new law on DV and the discourse around punishing abusers, or an upcoming international seminar on DV, that provides opportunities to discuss the underlying factors that lead to, and sustain, unequal power dynamics in heteronormative marriage. However, these moments are limited, and the prevalent narrative is consistent with patriarchal ideology, where a woman is subservient to man.

The story of ZM centres around the competing discourses about a woman’s role as a wife and mother, which is put to the test when she is faced with physical abuse from her apparently affectionate husband. Tabassum, having been emboldened by a newly passed DV law, seeks police protection, but ends up being banished from her husband’s house and forced to live with her brother. The ‘elders’ in Sajjad’s family, motivated by their personal agendas and insecurities, try to forge reconciliation between the couple, where Tabassum being the female, bears the pressure disproportionately. She has but one ally in her quest to fight for justice, her younger sister Fari. Others, on the other hand, are more invested in upholding the familial traditions and preserving the sanctity of the family. The discourse oscillates between complete intolerance towards DV, and ‘how much should be tolerated’. Tabassum’s resistance to social

norms shows that the onus is put on a woman to keep her family from disintegration, and the backlash she faces in her concessions reveal invaluable insights into the workings of Pakistani's patriarchal society. This ambivalence portrayed in ZM is consistent with Kothari's (2005, p. 296) observations that '[the] hegemonic limitation of a woman's agency is both celebrated and critiqued by Urdu serials, providing viewers with both identification and escape'.

5.2.2 The scene - episode 4

The key incident that leads to Sajjad hitting Tabassum starts with a family dinner at their house in episode 2. Everyone seems to be impressed by Tabassum's homemaker skills of immaculate cooking and arrangements, despite also being a full-time working woman. At one point, one of Sajjad's male work colleagues, and close friend Riaz says, 'Sajjad you are very lucky to have such a wife', to which Sajjad replies, 'my wife is so good, I wish I had two of them', (denoting bigamy as a male prerogative) — and everyone laughs in reply. Anila teasingly tells Tabassum about her husband's 'intentions', and Tabassum feels utterly humiliated and gives a rebuttal by saying; 'Indeed bhabi¹¹... even Sajjad is so nice, I wish I had two of them'. Dramatic music plays, and closeups of everyone's shocked faces are shown. Bhabi again entices, 'what are you saying Tabassum.... two men.... ???' Tabassum contends, 'why Bhabi?... when he said that you never stopped him or had any objection?'. Tabassum exits the party, leaving a flustered Sajjad and gaping men and women behind.

Later, when the guests leave, Tabassum and Sajjad engage in a heated argument, where Sajjad ends up pushing, hurting, threatening Tabassum. When Tabassum regains her composure, she calls the police and tells them that she needs protection against her husband who is abusive. The police come and take Sajjad into custody, and this ensues a never-ending rhetoric on what are acceptable or justified acts for a man and woman in society, where a husband is considered the 'head of the house', and a wife is expected to be subservient to him.

5.2.3 The Title 'Zun Mureed': Cultural and Ideological Significance

Language is one of the tools through which meanings are produced and communicated (Hall 1997, p.15). Evidence shows that almost in every culture, language plays a key role in

¹¹ Pronoun for sister-in-law in Urdu

perpetuating gender ideologies, where folk wisdom is disseminated through proverbs and maxims, often in the form of metaphors and similes. Khan and Awan (2019, p. 2) in their seminal work investigate the sexist nature of proverbs in traditional societies, and argue that the ‘patriarchal societies [...] sustain the hegemonic and authoritarian social order which appoint men as producers and caretakers of social information and the shrewdness of their partners (females) are just considered incapable’. The axiom *Zun Mureed* also carries deep-rooted patriarchal and cultural connotations about the role of men and women in Pakistani society. A ZM would be understood as an uxorious person who is perceived to be too available or willing to please his wife. In patriarchal cultures, men are expected to maintain a certain level of control over their wives, including, through avoiding any overt expressions of love and care, to keep women ‘in their place’ (Zakar et.al. 2013). *Zun mureed* or *run mureed* (in Punjabi) is a proverbial tool to police a man’s masculinity, and not just by other men, but also the women of a patriarchal society. As Zakar et.al. (2013, p. 252) argue, ‘[t]o be dominant, and commanding is a desirable cultural role for a man. In Pakistani culture it is difficult for a husband to be known as run-mureed’. Furthermore, in line with Hall’s (1997) recognition of social constructions in cultural practices, the original soundtrack, of ZM bears poignant messages of desolation and unfulfillment of one (a female) without the significant (male) other:

‘main wo duniya houn jis main kami hai teri saaiyan’ (I am that world where your presence is missed oh my lord); *Meri ankhone main judi ki nami hai sayian* (my eyes are teary due to the severance)

This song plays in the background for both male and female protagonists, yet the word *saaiyan* (my lord) is masculine and always used for a man. Hence, the song denotes the ‘emptiness’ or ‘loneliness’ of a female subject due to her separation from her ‘*saaiyan*’ the male partner.

5.2.4 Gender perceptions, norms, and masculinist hegemonies

Consistent with gender ideology in any patriarchal society, in Pakistan, men’s and women’s roles are clearly demarcated, where men are considered the ‘head of the family’, as prescribed by Islamic religious texts, which demands the subordination of the women of the house, especially his wife/ves. Women’s primary role belongs behind the (protection) of the *chador and char deevari*, as carers and nurtures. Even though there is a proliferation of women in the public sphere, this traditional gender ideology remains intact with an ever-growing expectation

for Pakistani's to adhere to the traditional norms of decency and morality (Jafar 2005). Throughout the course of ZM, gender stereotypes and norms are (re)constructed and reinforced in interpersonal relationships, as well in broader societal settings. A woman's role is perceived and internalised as that of a nurturer and custodian of the familial honour by exhibiting the traits of a subservient wife, daughter, and/or sister. A woman in all these roles is expected to be attuned to the demands of the patriarchs in the family, as an acquiescent subject. A mother-in-law commands a certain level of authority and respect through her achieved status. Other women, as represented by the characters of Anila and Merium in ZM, are seen to be afforded with some level of authority by way of extension of their relationship with the patriarch of their family. Women are thus seen engaging in 'patriarchal bargain' Kandiyoti (1988), as they uphold the patriarchal norms and oppress those with less or no power.

Misogyny and unequal power relations are upheld by use of proverbial axioms, symbolic humiliations and in the use of similes. For example, Bi Jan often uses the phrase 'twist her braid', and Anila is seen warning Fari about mending her defiant ways, lest she would be pulled her by her braid, or she will be thrown out of her (husband's) house by her braid. Here, references to woman's hair braid denote their position in the patriarchal society, where braid or '*choti*' is a symbol of femininity, and therefore, weakness. These notions are repeatedly reinforced in different conversations among almost all characters. For example, when Bi Jan throws a tantrum, or when Bobby tries to be authoritative towards the maid Razia, she retorts, 'I am a servant, not anyone's wife...I can only tolerate such behaviour from my husband' (episode 3). These exclamations naturalise the demeaning attitude of a husband towards his wife while implying that even a 'servant' has a better status than a wife.

Gender roles and identities are also explicitly denoted by children's behaviour. For example, as the boy, Bobby is shown to be ill-tempered, irresponsible, assertive, and aware of his masculine identity. Likewise, the girl Zoya is tame, responsible, and sensitive. When they learn about the fight between their parents, and the fact that their mother has had their father arrested, Bobby is noticeably agitated and expresses his displeasure about his mother's actions, whereas Zoya seems to be empathic towards their mother. When children are living with their mother at their maternal uncle Rauf's house, Bobby is often easily irked by his cousin's teasing and responds aggressively. At one point, he even pulls one of his cousin's ponytail and threatens to break her legs. Bobby also gets suspended from school for his rash behaviour (episode 20). Zoya, on the other hand, is mostly portrayed as insecure and more vulnerable than her brother.

Tabassum often expresses her concern over her daughter's future, as being of the feminine gender, she is at a greater risk of bearing the brunt of their parents' marital issues, especially in case of a divorce. The same concern is voiced repeatedly by Anila, underscoring long-lasting consequences on the future marital prospects of the girls of the house, (i.e. Fari and her twin daughters) given the shame divorce brings to a family. However, no one seems to be worried about Bobby's upbringing as a male child, and the challenges he might face in the absence of a stable family or his prospects in finding a wife. Even though his rash behaviour is often attributed to his father, no remedial actions are suggested in the narrative. Sajjad blames his abrasive behaviour on his mother's neglect. Zoya, being a girl, is expected to carry on the caring work at home which includes preparing breakfast for the bedridden grandmother. Zoya herself has internalised her gender role as she says in episode 16, '*main larki houn esleye mujhe hi yeh kaaam karna hay*' ('I am a girl that's why I have to do these chores'), as she attempts to boil milk for breakfast. Altogether, no moments of rupture are presented in the dominant gender ideologies of drama narratives where masculine and feminine identities are represented as a part of the 'natural' order.

Women in ZM are always pitted against each other, except for those who are related by blood. For example, both sisters-in-law (Anila and Merium) are shown as unkind women who are all too happy to put Tabassum down. Likewise, Bi Jan is full of contempt for her daughter-in-law, despite her obedience and nurturing. This portrayal is consistent with a patriarchal culture where women are divided in their pursuit of gaining access to power within patriarchal structures, and no support is offered by female friendships. These women are, or have, dispossessed themselves at some point in their life, therefore their ire is turned towards other women who may be in a weaker position. Hence, we see Merium command a certain authority over Tabassum as the elder sister of her husband, while Anila, being fearful of the same dominance (by her sister-in-law) is seen concocting plans to undermine Tabassum's position in front of her brother (Anila's husband). As discussed earlier, for Eastern Muslim women, their desirability does not lie in their sexuality, but their piety, and steadfastness to tradition and family values. Therefore, we see Anila using her agency by means of manipulation, under a pretence of having the best interest of the family on her mind. However, a closer look at both Anila and Merium shows that they are as vulnerable as Tabassum is, therefore, they navigate this treacherous path of patriarchy through negotiation with patriarchy itself, at the expense of other women.

Meirum is a childless woman, which subliminally suggests that she is—weak or not a ‘real’ woman’. Although there is no active discourse about Merium’s infertility, her husband believes her overindulgence with her brother’s family and Bi Jan is due to the void in her own life. In the last episode of the series, Merium comments about her burden as an infertile woman, who had to bear the brunt of childlessness and loneliness in life. She further adds, ‘there is no law to protect against the mental torture borne by women like me. A law that could decide who’s fault it is (infertility)’.

These representations reinforce the hegemonies of gender and leave no, or very little, space for rupture or social imagination. The three patriarchs, Sajjad, Rauf and Abid, are portrayed as authoritative figures, who may be amenable to their wives mostly, but they hold and maintain the position of power in the family, and in society at large. Both Merium and Anila exercise their agency as ‘good wives’, to gain access to power and position, but both are acutely aware of their subservient positions.

5.2.5 Gender and Class: Power and stereotypes

ZM textual reading offers an insight into the stereotypical representations of both gender and class. Characters belonging to both the middle and the lower class have preconceived notions about members of the other class, which is a gendered understanding. The only thing that remains consistent in both classes is hegemonic notions about masculinity, a woman’s position in society and honour. Tabassum’s actions (of seeking legal measures against DV) cause moral panic across the class spectrum, where individuals of both classes are wary of the repercussions of her actions. For example, the vegetable vendor and the neighbourhood watchman, while discussing the new DV law in episode 8, call it the ‘amusements’ of rich women which might lead ‘their’ women astray. Furthermore, like the dominant discourse of ZM, they trivialise the issue of DV, as the watchman says, ‘my wife needs a little bit of beating almost every day, or she will not stop her rant about my mother and sister’ (episode 8).

The maids working for the middle-class are also always looked on with suspicion, as they are deemed as greedy and untrustworthy by their wealthy employers. They are represented as loud, nagging imbeciles, who always try to take advantage of their employer’s predicaments. Rubina, the nanny that Merium hired to take care of Sajjad’s children and Bi Jan after Tabassum’s prolonged absence from the house, is a portrayed as a cunning, promiscuous woman who has

come with mala fide intentions. Not only does she regularly lie and steal from the family, but she also fabricates stories of *jins* and black magic to intimidate the children. When her treachery is exposed, she turns the tables by blaming them (Abid and Sajjid) of sexual assault and ends up having both put behind bars (episode 25). This provides an example of working class-cunning. However, the upper class is also portrayed as exploitative of their domestic help, as well as of the other members of that class who serve them. They are mostly paternalistic, aggressive, and tight-fisted when it comes to paying them for their services. Class division is sustained through the dichotomy of the oppressor and the oppressed, where the oppressed negotiate through their treachery and deceit. However, members of both classes, seem to be interdependent on each other and vulnerable due to their unique circumstances.

ZM offers another interesting textual reading vis-à-vis class and DV. DV is represented differently for different classes in ZM. For example, Razia, Tabassum's maid, is often abused by her husband, however, she seems unmoved by it, as she too 'returns the favour in the same coins'. For instance, after having been hit by her husband, Razia proudly tells Tabassum that she too has hit him back and left for her parent's house (episode 2). Her husband came back in the morning to patch-up, and not only did he apologise, but also brought her some sweet treats. Evidence suggests that women from the middle and elite class are often more inclined to remain silent due to the family honour obligations, whereas women from the lower strata of society are found to be more vocal about abuse. In comparison, these women often have more freedom of mobility, mainly due to their economic circumstances where they often work outside the house, including in fields with men (Murshid 2019). Nonetheless, this is not to suggest that DV does not affect women from lower-middle, and poor classes, or that they have more options to escape abusive relationships. On the contrary, DV takes a more insidious form for women with fewer means to end, and their limited agency because of their lower social and economic status. The point that I make here is, their strategies to deal with DV are often different from women from the upper class. They are often portrayed as being more resilient and having different priorities. This includes their need to focus on strategies to reduce poverty, over strategies to reduce violence for the benefit of their children (Murshid 2019). Likewise, their husbands are more inclined to 'make up' with them as the income brought home by their wives is crucial in the sustenance of their family. However, in ZM this could give a different message altogether. After hearing Razia, Tabassum is led to question her a rather extreme action of calling the police when Sajjad hit her. She is led to consider that she has overreacted in the circumstances.

This message is further reinforced by moving the camera to Bi Jan who continues to cry helplessly for her son suggesting that she has done something sinister.

As evidenced in the literature review, working women must be justified by some extraordinary circumstances to undertake these public roles in traditional society (Fatima 2019; Ashfaq & Shafiq 2018; Abbas 2018; Ullah & Nisar 2018). For example, these situations include death or illness of parents or spouse or abject poverty. Anything falling short of this is met with suspicion, criticism, and much policing by family members and society in general. Moreover, in respects of working women, there is an implicit understanding of ‘necessity’ of their motivation to work instead of it being driven by a desire for a career. This indicates that paid work is a means to an end and only secondary to women’s primary roles as carers, wives, or mothers (Milestone and Meyer; cited in Fatima 2019). For example, in the case of Tabassum, who has a husband who is decently employed, her working is regarded as ‘shirking of her domestic duties’, or simply as an act of self-gratification. Throughout the course of the serial, there are different discourses regarding her choice to work. Some even judge her through a moral lens. For example, in the family dinner scene when Sajjad’s friends commend Tabassum’s efficient ways of managing a house and work, and being a perfect hostess, his wife comments:

Actually, working women know the art of dealing with men, that’s why she (Tabassum) can talk to everyone and keep them happy. I cannot even talk to my male relatives. (Mrs. Riaz, episode 4)

This refers to their perception of a working woman, who is believed to be ‘forward’, and one who has a desire for being the centre of attention. Another narrative that is prevalent in ZM is that working women cannot be ‘controlled’ by their husbands, as they have a bargaining chip (their money) in the relationship. Furthermore, a working woman’s husband is often a ZM, as he becomes a slacker and wife appeaser because of her financial support. Characters seem to shift their positions with regards to Tabassum’s working status. For example, Merium believes she is not involved in any worthwhile occupation, and whatever she earns, she spends to satisfy her own vanity. Abid thinks that economic viability has granted a certain status to Tabassum, therefore, she could not easily be challenged or ‘thrown out’ of the house, and women who earn money should be appeased and not challenged. In short, a woman’s choice to enter

employment is met with ambivalence, myths, and perceptions. She is regarded as the ‘other’ among her non-working female relatives, who are both envious and suspicious of her status.

There is no single narrative on the double or triple burden of working women from other characters, except for Tabassum herself when in episode 6 she talks about her double burden as both a full-time working woman and carer. There is another competing discourse in ZM about her role as a nurturer and therefore, not being capable of demonstrating efficiency and commitment like a man. For example, Tabassum’s boss, Jamil, often admonishes her for her repeated requests for leaving early or coming late, as she had to take care of her domestic obligations. He says, ‘you women want to have an equal pay as that of men’s, but when it comes to performing like men, you always come up with excuses’ (episode 2).

5.3 Discourse on Domestic Violence

The narrative on DV in the ZM is problematic at various levels and there are two competing ideologies that are at play here. Firstly, DV is trivialised and not deemed worthy of a legal action. Secondly, women are expected to tolerate such ‘trivial’ issues to uphold the sanctity of a family. And thirdly, if a woman does involve outsiders (the police, court, or media), then the blame shifts the victim. She is morally judged by her peers and family and is often ostracised by them. When Tabassum is forced to leave her house after the incident and she goes to her brother’s house, Anila says:

*Shareef ourtain apnay mardoun k hathoun mar jati hain or aik lafz moun say nahi nikalti
or tum nay aik zara si kharash pay police bula li*

(pious/decentful women die at the hands of their husbands, but never utter a single word, and you called the police for a mere scratch) (Anila episode 5).

The role of other family members in perpetuating the power imbalance between couples is highlighted throughout the serial. A husband’s superiority and wife’s subordination is reinforced through proverbial references, peer and family pressure (on the wife for reconciliation), and the rhetoric of *izzat* (honour). As discussed earlier, in a traditional society, honour is for men, and shame is for women (Fatima 2019).

Another problematic issue with the representation of DV is, pathologising the perpetrator. For example, there are several instances where male abuse is termed a '*bimari*' (sickness). Tabassum's boss Jamil is believed to be suffering from the disease of 'violence against his wives'¹² and Tabassum worries about what would become of her daughter if she happened to be married to such a '*bimar*' (sick) person. Even though in some instances, the discussion is about misogyny, it is presented as a sickness, where men tend to intimidate the 'weaker gender'. However, terming it as a sickness, suggests that it is something out of the control of the abuser (man). This kind of narratives obscures the systematic and structural basis of DV that are rooted in patriarchy and misogyny. Instead, ZM takes an individualistic approach to the issue. Discussions about patriarchal norms and attitudes deeply entrenched in the formal and informal institutions of society are largely occluded by an overlapping discourse on the legitimisation of a husband's use of abuse when enraged, and trivialisation of DV as an accepted norm. The entire discourse on the women's protection bill revolves around it being a western ideal and propaganda by NGO women or '*mombatti mafia*' (the candle mafia, referring to the candlelight vigils that are often observed by the feminists).

One of the other problematic narratives that are presented in ZM regarding women's legal protection is, its perceived 'misuse'. For example, one narrative suggests that all this talk about women's law is merely the propaganda of a group of 'divorcee women', who could not make adequate homes for themselves, and now they want every woman to go astray like themselves. There is a perceived misleading notion that homes are broken, not because of the DV, but due to such delusional laws that are just a 'politically-correct' sham. The other undermining discourse is that such women's protection laws, including sexual harassment, are like a loose cannon that malicious women use against unsuspecting men. This message is driven home when, in episode 25 Rubina (the new nanny) falsely accuses Abid and Sajjad of a sexual assault when caught for theft, and both the men are sent to the lockup. In a conversation with an estranged Sajjad inside the lockup, Abid says 'times have changed... now even women's lies are being heard ... gone are the days when no one paid heed to a woman's truth even' (episode 25). Furthermore, while telling Anila and Fari about the incident, Razia tells them that Rubina has had the police charge Sajjad and Rauf for a case. Upon asking what kind of charge, she says 'the same charge that this kind of women put against men', referring to the sexual harassment charges, leaving a subliminal message regarding the legitimacy of such charges (episode 26). In such kind of narrative, the burden of proof always lies with the women to

¹² He has three wives, out of which two are divorced and the third one (Sidra) is living separately.

legitimise her demands for protection, even at the stake of ostracisation. Like in the example of Tabassum, she is shunned from her own home, forced to abandon her children as well as her job, and is treated as a ‘contagious disease’ (in her own words) by her brother.

5.3.1 Ruptures and opportunities for social change

Although the bulk of the text of ZM is full of cultural and traditional hegemonies, there are a few moments of rupture in the dominant ideologies regarding woman’s roles in society. The lead protagonist Tabassum, her younger sister Fari, and her male colleague Jahanzeb, as well as her friend, the school’s principal Sidra (Jamil’s wife), are all seen engaging in discourse that questions the existing power imbalance between men and women, especially in a heterosexual marriage. At times, the ongoing television commentary on the new DV law, and discussions between various characters allow opportunities to recognise the structural barriers to women’s access to safety and reprieve. Tabassum’s continued resistance against patriarchal norms and ideology that tends to trivialise a man’s violent behaviour towards his wife, and societal expectations of reconciliation, offer a new social imaginary. Tabassum is adamant that when she asked for the ‘state’s protection’ against violence, which carries a revolutionary message that reaffirms women’s equal citizenship. The key narrative that Tabassum’s character presents is:

Main nays sirf apnay tahafuz k liey awaz nahi outhai balkay aagay aanay wali nasloun k tahafuzz k liey awaz outhai hai.

(I have not raised my voice for my own protection only, rather I have raised my voice for the future generations) (Tabassum, episode 7).

Likewise, this message is reiterated when while arguing about Tabassum’s action of involving the police, Sajjad’s friend tells him that: ‘This is the right given to her (Tabassum or any woman) by the state – we marry women to give them the protection of the four walls and the veil, and when we fail to give them that protection, then state is ought to intervene’. (Riaz episode 9). These messages offer a unique way of imagining women’s relationship with the state, that breaks away from the traditional discourse on women, where they are only intelligible by virtue of their kinship with the males of the family. The discourse that tends to

frame DV as pathology is also ruptured when Sidra, who is married to Jamil, Tabassum's boss, (but lives separately due to his abusive behaviour), tells Tabassum that abusing women is not a disease. She contests that: 'our society provides a conducive environment to foster men's bad behaviours' (Sidra episode 16).

This statement provides an opportunity to recognise the systematic nature of DV, and society's role in cultivating toxic masculinities that lead to violence against women. Fari and Jahanzeb often discuss the role of the formal (judiciary, media), as well as the informal (family, marriage, religion) institutions in sustaining DV and how lack of awareness or sensitivity towards the issue leads to further marginalisation of the victims of DV. For example, the insensitive reporting and interference of the media exacerbate hostility against Tabassum, as the entire family is scandalised on television. Both, media and the police are driven by their own agendas of garnering publicity out of this 'unprecedented' case. At one point when after Sajjad does not let Tabassum enter the house after she gives in to her family's pressure for conciliation, Fari says that the law should make provisions to include women's ownership in the house (episode 15). A woman invests an equal amount of time, money, and energies in building a house, and because of not having her name on the ownership document, she is dispossessed of her house in DV issues. This is one of the biggest deterrents for a woman in trying to leave abusive households. For example, in the case of Tabassum, she is forced to stay at her brother's house, where she is constantly pressed for reconciliation. If she had the option to stay at her home, she might have been less inclined to reconcile, as it unfolds in the later episodes. Shelter homes are only a temporary solution and bear a lot of stigma for the residents. The discourse in ZM points out to these structured barriers in a nuanced manner.

5.3.2 Compulsory heteronormative resolution

ZM's textual offers a polysemic reading with regards to women's agency and 'choice', the zeitgeist of Western popular media, which is heavily invested in neoliberal ideology. One might be led to believe that Tabassum's 'agency', as a young, educated, able-bodied and employed woman, might offer her an array of opportunities afforded by her apparent agency. There are in fact some instances when Fari and Tabassum discuss possibilities where she could live a dignified life with her children away from her husband. However, there is always scepticism regarding these choices, considering the financial burden of keeping two children. Ironically, there is no allusion of asking the father of the children for maintenance, although the Pakistani legal system, as well as the Sharia law have provisions for this. Nevertheless, Tabassum is

determined to move in with Sidra, which is interrupted by an unpleasant incident (episode 25). Her boss and Sidra's husband, Jamil is seen barging into Sidra's house and manhandling her while threatening to kill her or burn her with acid to teach her a lesson for asking for a divorce. Tabassum, who follows him intervenes and knocks him out with a vase and calls the police. In a later scene, there is a conversation where Sidra tells Tabassum that she is not safe anywhere in the world other than in her husband's house. Tabassum asks about Jamil's other wives who have managed to leave him (after the divorce). Sidra contends that they were living with their fathers and brothers, underscoring the fact that a woman can only be safe within her paternal or marital house and by conforming to the rhetoric of the *char deevari*. She reiterates her message by saying that no matter how much humiliation or interference she has to face at her brother's house, she should never leave if she is to stay safe from the '*bheriye*', (wolves). The wolf analogy denotes the barbaric and callous nature of men, which is consistent with patriarchy where men are dehumanised within the discourse of toxic masculinity. Furthermore, Sidra also creates a dichotomy of sick/normal men, where Jamil is a sick or psychotic man, and Sajjad belonged to the other group. She urges Tabassum to 'end Sajjad's punishment', as (normal) men like him are 'like innocent children who get spoiled by our (wives) attitudes... a man has a certain pride and ego in him, and when this ego is hurt, they behave like a child' (episode 26). This example engages in the 'boys will be boys' narrative as justification for abusive behaviour, and again puts the onus on the wife for this.

In my view, this was the single most detrimental narrative offered in ZM. It attenuates any other narratives that could have offered an alternate imaginary to the issue of women's struggle against escaping DV. First, it naturalises men's abrasiveness by equating them with 'innocent children' having a 'tantrum'. Secondly, it undermines any agency that a single woman, with or without children, could foster in her pursuit to live a dignified life away from her paternal or marital home. Sidra, who has been a role model for Tabassum, a trope of resilience and independence, upholds the cultural and patriarchal ideologies about a woman's place in the society. For example, she advises Tabassum that: '*ghar say muqaddas koi jaga nahi. Apna ghar na tootnay dena, chaahay iss k liey tumko apna gharoor apni anaa sub kuch qurban karna paray*' (there is no more sacred place than one's house. Do not let your house break even if you have to sacrifice everything you have, including your pride and your ego) (Sidra episode 26).

Meanwhile, Abid and Sajjad have a conversation in the lock-up after Rubina's accusations and Abid reasons with Sajjad once again to let go of his 'false ego' and have Tabassum back. Her

presence beside him will help in the restoration of his honour, lest malicious women like Rubina will keep crossing his path (episode 25). Here Rubina is pitted in direct opposition to Tabassum in a dichotomous representation of good/bad, where Tabassum is the ‘good woman’, by virtue of her acquiescence, and Rubina, is an immoral woman, who has no regard for her own honour or those who come in her way. Furthermore, her act of ‘speaking up’ against (in this case false) sexual assault is depicted as ‘dishonourable’. According to Abid: *‘jab tum jaisay mard Tabassum jaisi ourat ki qadar nahi kartay tou rubina jaisi ourtain saamnay aati hain.* (When men like you do not value women like Tabassum, then they have to deal with women like Rubina) (Abid episode 26).

Sajjad remains unmoved and adamant, albeit thoughtful, and insists that he will not consider reconciliation with Tabassum as she humiliated him. In episode 25, still shaken by the past incidents, Bi Jan writes a message for Tabassum and sends Bobby to give it to his mother. As a defeated Tabassum returns from Sidra’s, Bobby meets her and hands her the message from his grandmother. The message reads ‘Tabassum we have made a big mistake, please forgive us and come back. Naseem Bano. Retired. Principal’. Bobby also tells Tabassum about the incident with Rubina and that Sajjad and Abid were in the lock-up. He pleads with her to come back home. Tabassum, who has already been overwhelmed by the incident at Sidra’s place, and the conversation that she had with Sidra, leaves with Bobby to her house. At the house, Sajjad (who has been released after a monetary settlement with the Razia), seems to have succumbed to the perils of life and confesses in front of his mother and sister that he has made a grave mistake (by hitting Tabassum). Yet, at the same time, he absolves himself of his abrasive behaviour saying Merium and their mother never taught him to respect a woman. Here he states: *‘main nay jo kuch kia wo jhooti anaa or ghalat tarbiyat ki waja say kia’* (whatever I did that I did under the influence of the false ego and bad upbringing) (Sajjad episode 26).

Sajjad continues his confession with some endearing words for Tabassum, as she listens to it from the doorway and a sense of relief and gratitude washes over her. The episode ends there and there are no scenes to capture this ‘reunion’ as such. While a coded message might be read suggesting that Sajjad has realised his misdoings with Tabassum, he never says that to her face. Once again, it is Tabassum who forgoes her pride and supposed ‘stubbornness’ and comes back to the sanctity of her home and family. The masculinist ideology of a patriarchal culture is upheld. Sajjad is saved by his mother’s wisdom and Tabassum’s graciousness, and he did not have to ‘bow down’, as he kept reiterating throughout the course of the serial.

On the surface, the last two episodes give a positive message that Sajjad and other men in the serial have realised the insidiousness of toxic masculinity and that DV is a malice act that leads to the disintegration of the home. However, the underlying covert message is one that is consistent with patriarchal ideology. It is the women's primary duty to uphold the integrity of the home, and a 'good woman' is one who overlooks any 'mundane' abrasiveness of their husbands that only occurs in the 'heat of the moment'. Furthermore, a woman's value is measured against her (unpaid) care work and nurturing, and not as a human subject worthy of respect and love in her own right. The entire narrative of ZM that leads to this 'heteronormative resolution', is built around the 'inconvenience' and chaos that befalls a house in the absence of a (good) 'mother'. Children are best nurtured under the care of a (selfless) mother, who puts the welfare of her children above all else. The role of a father is limited to that of a financial provider, he is absolved in the upbringing of his children. Caring for children is always considered to be a woman's duty, as we see in ZM, in the absence of the wife Tabassum, either the Aunt Merium, or the housemaids are tasked with this duty. Although Tabassum shoulders an equal financial responsibility, she is only recognised for her nurturing role. Within this discourse, a woman is commodified under a capitalistic ideology where their unpaid care work provides surplus for the capitalist economy (Mohanty 1988; Pilcher & Whelehan 2017), as 'unwaged work [...] reproduces human beings and communities' (Fraser et al. (2018, p. 119). Even the apparent recognition by the male protagonist in ZM that a woman should be respected, is also for her role as a mother and homemaker, and not because she is an equal. This is consistent with neoliberal notions of women's equality, which works to maintain the status-quo between the genders without disrupting the existing social order.

Chapter 6: ZM Conclusion

Feminism in Pakistan has been reinvigorated in recent years as crimes against women and children are on the rise. Pakistani society has been jolted to its core by several heinous crimes against women and children, ranging from gang-rapes to child pornography and murder (DW 2018; DW 2019; Qureshi 2020). These issues have led to an animated discussion on feminism and women's right both in the mainstream and social media. Whilst such discussion has broadened divides in an already polarised society, it has also allowed the people of Pakistan a moment of retrospection. Pakistani dramas have always been influenced by larger social and political discourses in the country, especially regarding women's lives. With the advent of globalisation, rapid urbanisation, and increased educational and employment opportunities, women's roles are also changing in Pakistani society. Dramas have largely attempted to represent these changes while upholding the hegemonic discourses on women's role in a traditional society. The trajectory of dramas can be loosely traced along three distinct lines; prior to the 1970s, the 1980-90s and post-2000.

Early dramas, before 1977, 'dealt thematically with mainstream social problems, or were melodramatic adaptations of popular Urdu novels' (Jafar 2005, p. 41). As Zia set his Islamisation project in motion in 1977, drama texts and representations of women became more aligned to his doctrine on women that saw them as repositories of nationalist and cultural values, embedded in the discourse of honour, that had to be regulated by both, state and society. Jafar (2005, pp.47-48) summarises this state-sponsored discourse on women as:

- (1) women's sexuality is a negative, destructive, and omnipresent force that must be curtailed,
- (2) women are repositories of family (more specifically men's) honour, and,
- (3) women are men's property.

Hence, the dramas during Zia's regime, and even after that, represented a dichotomous vision of women, where a 'good woman' embodied the state prescribed traditional values that were built around honour, piety and family. Alternatively, a 'working woman was often depicted as the cause of society's moral decay' (Jafar 2005 p.41). However, this era was also marked with

struggles and resistance, where some female drama writers conceptualised strong female leads, who were active in illustrating social subjects and offered an alternate imaginary of women's role outside the *chador and chaar deevari*.

The dramas between 1980-1990s depicted both the hegemonic discourse about nation, tradition, and Islam, as well as the struggles against patriarchy and feudalism. Scholars note a paradigm shift in the narratives of dramas after the advent of private and satellite channels, liberalisation of media policy, as well as globalisation (Zubair 2016; Arafat et al. Huma 2015; Sulehria 2017; Rehman et al. 2019; mehraya 2018;). Since the 2000s conception of the ideal housewife has been interrupted by a modern, independent career woman, who negotiates both roles within patriarchy and the class system. However, frequently these interruptions were undermined in dramas to preserve 'heteronormative visual culture [...] for satiating the patriarchal norms and misogynist ideologies using the androcentric gaze; thereby identifying women in terms of their relationship to men' (Yaqin 2016; pp. 59-60; cited in Mehra 2019, p. 632). So, while an increasing number of dramas productions are being claimed as feminist projects, feminism remains a contested concept.

Traditionally, women's movements in Pakistan have been centred around the pragmatics of pro-women legalisation and political participation. Jafar (2005) argues that the long-drawn legacy of Zia and the discriminatory practices during his regime kept the feminist movement engaged with the state which largely obscured the non-formal institutions like family and culture. According to feminist scholars (Shaheed 1999; Khan 2000; Bari & Khattak 2001; cited in Jafar 2005, p.52), the women's movement in Pakistan steered away from questioning the functions of the family and religion as the primary sites of women's subjugation to protect their vested interests. For example, feminists sought to protect their own relationships and families and to claim legitimacy within a traditional, Muslim society. Hence, feminist inquiry into the analysis of family, religion and culture has been largely limited to the analysis of popular media texts (Jafar 2005), which is again, quite recent, and less than extensive

Moreover, as Pakistani media continues to be controlled by ruling elites and the state, there are different versions of reality represented in dramas that send mixed messages about contemporary understandings of women's roles. Primarily, the literature review reveals that dramas have always been a site of struggle between the dominant state-sponsored, patriarchal,

and nationalist ideologies, embedded in cultural imperialism and ethnocentrism; and competing emancipatory ideologies for a more gender and class just social system.

Dramas from the 2000's onwards conceptualise a 'new heroine' who is embroiled in tradition *and* emancipation. This new heroin embraces neoliberal concepts of economic empowerment, but her choices are always curtailed by traditions, family honour and motherhood. However, this new heroin is offered some level of subjectivity as she is portrayed to have 'chosen' her traditions over modernism, piety over vanity, and family over a career all of which constructs her onscreen identity as a 'good woman'. Thus, the existing dichotomy of good/bad is further bolstered in media representations, albeit differently from earlier media iterations. With this dichotomy of good/bad, also comes the dichotomy of private/public, where good women are ideally located within the confines of the private, and bad women are those who choose to leave the sanctity of their '*chaar deevari*', in indulgent quests for self-gratification. Within the paradigm of the new heroine, the protagonist is represented as a modern, forward-thinking female subject, who is a good homemaker, and utilises her skills and intelligence to build and maintain a family unit. Thus, concluding narratives always support that of heteronormative family values.

Drama producers and writers, both from the early days of PTV, as well as from the recent times, who have been acclaimed as champions of women's rights, are more inclined to disassociate themselves from the title 'feminist'. For example, in a 2016 interview, Momina Duraid, the acclaimed 'feminist' and CEO of a production company that has produced numerous highly celebrated dramas, said;

I believe that behind every successful woman there is a man. In our dramas we show both kinds of men, who are supportive as well as malicious. I won't say that women should rebel because God has made them this way—compromising. But at the same time, they mustn't be completely submissive," (Anwer 2015 p. cited in Haque 2016 p. 39).

Given such commentary, it could be argued that both writers and producers of dramas have consciously and unconsciously reverted to sexual reductionism and naturalised patriarchal ideologies in their work. On the surface, it is perceived that they are acting as emancipatory advocates for women. At best, most dramas, especially those from the year 2000 and onwards

could be called 'pro-women' due to their treatment of women-centric themes and issues, albeit not necessarily promoting genuine feminist ideals.

In ZM, the lead protagonist engages with the patriarchal value system that subjugates her into maintaining a subservient position within traditional marriage. She exercises her legal rights as an equal citizen of the state to receive protection against DV. Nonetheless, they are curtailed due to societal pressures and her own 'intrinsic' motherhood. Hence, despite offering competing discourses on women's agency and women's role in society, ZM's text ultimately maintains the status-quo between the genders. It could be argued that overall, ZM's text proves counterproductive to any imagination of social change. Another argument could be made that ZM's text sheds light on the myriad of structural barriers facing women who seek protection against DV and aspire for a dignified life outside a (heterosexual) marriage. It could also be claimed that ZM played a passive, or even no role in the reinterpretation of gender roles, instead, upholding the traditional patriarchal gender order. This message is further reinforced in the last episode, when Fari's character, which mostly has been portrayed as progressive and animated, attempts to negotiate her choices between pursuing a career or marrying with 'the knowledge and permission' of her brother, her custodian as ordained by society and cultural expectations.

These conscious and unconscious attempts to remain consistent with dominant ideologies could be attributed to the same discursive approach adopted by the feminist movements in Pakistan who have shied away from questioning religion, family and traditions. While more ethnographic and audience reception studies are needed to validate these claims, it can be recognised that dramas offer a site for a significant feminist inquiry into Pakistani domestic and family structures. They are sites where patriarchal ideology is perpetuated as well as resisted. I have argued that by critically analysing dramas it is possible to understand the interplay of culture and family traditions to uncover patriarchal ideologies, power imbalance and gender inequality in Pakistan. These disparities that are sustained in popular media representations offer opportunities to envision an alternate image of contemporary Pakistani society.

This study offers both intended and oppositional reading of the media texts of Pakistani popular culture. However, these claims can only be substantiated through audience reception studies that seek to ascertain whether audiences are able to see the encoded messages about traditional,

stereotypical gender roles, conceived out of a patriarchal gender order or whether they can engage in oppositional reading. I conclude that Pakistani drama texts offer an engagement with myriad societal issues pertaining to women, and offer a space for debate, if not solution, to age-old challenges that women continue to face in a male-dominated environment.

References

- Abbas, S 2018, 'Conventional Female Images, Islamization and its Outcomes: A study of Pakistani TV Dramas', *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 20–38.
- Ahmed, B 2015, *Old but not forgotten: Top 10 Pakistani dramas to re-watch now*, Dawn.com, Dawn Media Group, viewed 20 November 2020, <<https://www.dawn.com/news/1169324>>.
- Ahmad, S 2016, 'Sexualised Objects and the Embodiment of Honour: Rape in Pakistani Films', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 386–400.
- Ahmed, S & Wahab, JA 2019, 'Paradox of Women Empowerment: The Representations of Women in Television Dramas in Pakistan', *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, vol. 9, no. 10, pp. 1–21.
- Ahmed-Ghosh, H (ed.) 2015, *Asian Muslim Women: Globalization and Local Realities*, State Univ Of New York Pr.
- Ali, K 2016, *Religious parties reject women protection bill*, DAWN.COM, DAWN Media Group, viewed 29 August 2020, <<https://www.dawn.com/news/1243896>>.
- Ali, M 2015, 'Decentralized Governance Initiatives in Pakistan: Post 18th Amendment Perspective', *Pakistan Perspectives*, vol.20, no.2, pp. 67-81.
- Allen, M 2017, *The SAGE encyclopedia of communication research methods*, Sage, Los Angeles.
- Arafat, Y, Sial, N & Zafar, A 2020, 'A Study of Extra Marital Relations in Urdu Dramas: A Qualitative Analysis', *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 251–271.
- ARY digital network 2019, *Mere Paas Tum Ho*, <https://arydigital.tv/>, viewed 9 November 2020, <<https://www.arydigital.tv/videos/category/meray-paas-tum-ho>>.

Asher, S 2020, 'Aurat March: Pakistani women face violent threats ahead of rally', *BBC News*, 7 March, viewed 18 November 2020, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-51748152>>.

Ashfaq, A & Shafiq, Z 2018, 'Contested Images of "Perfect Women" in Pakistani Television Dramas', *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 45–63.

Baloch, SM 2019, *Pakistan authorities record a dozen cases of 'honour' killing in a fortnight*, *The Guardian*, Guardian News & Media Limited, viewed 20 November 2020, <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/may/17/pakistan-authorities-record-a-dozen-cases-of-honour-killing-in-a-fortnight>>.

Bandyopadhyay, M & Khan, M 2013, 'Loss of face', in LR Bennett & L Manderson (eds), *Violence against women in Asian societies: Gender Inequality and Technologies of Violence*, Routledge, London; New York, pp. 61–75.

Basir, S 2018, *Aurat March 2018 — the rise of sisterhood*, *The Express Tribune*, The Lakson Group, viewed 19 November 2020, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1654953/1-aurat-march-2018-rise-sisterhood>>.

Boone, J 2014, *Indians to get peek into daily lives of Pakistanis with new soap opera channel*, *The Guardian*, Guardian News & Media Limited, viewed 23 September 2020, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/23/indian-tv-channel-show-pakistani-soaps>>.

Burki, SK 2015, 'The politics of misogyny: General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization of Pakistan's legal system', *Contemporary Justice Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 103–119.

Chughtai, A 2020, *Pakistan's Women's March: Shaking patriarchy 'to its core'*, *aljazeera.com*, Al Jazeera Media Network, viewed 19 November 2020, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/3/8/pakistans-womens-march-shaking-patriarchy-to-its-core>>.

Craig, T 2016, 'Pakistani husbands can "lightly beat" their wives, Islamic council says', *Washington Post*, 27 May, viewed 19 November 2020, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/05/26/pakistani-husbands-can-lightly-beat-their-wives-islamic-council-says>>.

Dutoya, V 2018, 'The new heroine? Gender representations in contemporary pakistani dramas', in N Hussein (ed.), *Rethinking New Womanhood Practices of Gender, Class, Culture and Religion in South Asia*, Algrave Macmillan, Cham, springer international publishing, pp. 71–93.

Fatima, A 2019, 'Representations of Women's Role in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis through Drama Serials', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 3–16.

Fraser, N, Bhattacharya, T & Arruzza, C 2018, 'Notes For A Feminist Manifesto', *New Left Review*, vol. 114, no. 1, pp. 113-34.

Foundation, TR 2018, *The world's five most dangerous countries for women 2018*, poll2018.trust.org, Thomson Reuters Foundation, viewed 19 November 2020, <<http://Poll2018.Trust.org>>.

Gabol, I 2016, *Punjab Assembly passes Protection of Women Against Violence Bill*, DAWN.COM, Dawn Media Group, viewed 19 November 2020, <<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241626>>.

Gill, R 2007, *Gender and the media*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Gulzar, F 2020, *Pakistan: Director Khalil-ur-Rehman abuses journalist Marvi Sirmed on air for supporting #AuratMarch2020*, gulfnews.com, viewed 19 November 2020, <<https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistan-director-khalil-ur-rehman-abuses-journalist-marvi-sirmed-on-air-for-supporting-auratmarch2020-1.1583324764909>>.

Hadi, A 2017, 'Patriarchy and Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan | European Journal of Social Science Education and Research', *European Journal of Social Science Education and Research*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 297–304.

Hall, S 1997, *Representation - Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage Publications & Open University, London.

Haque, M 2016, 'Silence and madness: resistance in Pakistani drama serials', Master of Arts thesis, Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin.

Hashmi, M 2012, 'At the limits of discourse: political talk in drag on Late Night Show with Begum Nawazish Ali', *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 511–531.

- Huma, Z 2015, 'Analytical Study of Television Drama Narratives', *Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism*, vol. 05, no. 08, pp. 1–7.
- Hussein, N 2018, *Rethinking new womanhood: practices of gender, class, culture and religion in South Asia*, Switzerland, Cham.
- IMDB 2019, *Meray Paas Tum Ho*, IMDb, viewed 25 October 2020, <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11357100/>>.
- Inam-ur-Rehman, S, Arafat, Y, Sial, N & Hussain Shah, B 2019, 'Framing of Urdu Drama Serials: From Social Religious Values to Family Catastrophe', *Al-Qalam research journal Punjabi university Lahore*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 44–67.
- Jafar, A 2005, 'Women, islam, and the state in Pakistan', *Gender Issues*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 35–55.
- Kandiyoti, D 1988, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', *Gender and Society*, vol.2, no.3, pp. 274–290.
- Khan, A & Hussain, R 2008, 'Violence against Women in Pakistan: Perceptions and Experiences of Domestic Violence', *Asian Studies Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 239–253.
- Khan, MI 2016, 'Why is a Pakistani bill to protect women unpopular?', *BBC News*, 17 March, viewed 30 August 2020, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35811180>>.
- Khan, S 2004, 'Locating the Feminist Voice: The Debate on the Zina Ordinance', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 660–685.
- Khan, S 2018, *Pakistan honor killings haunting young women | DW | 22.10.2018*, DW.COM, Deutsche Welle, viewed 18 November 2020, <<https://www.dw.com/en/pakistan-honor-killings-haunting-young-women/a-45985192>>.
- Khan, S 2019, *Violence against women on the rise in Pakistan | DW | 23.09.2019*, DW.COM, viewed 10 November 2020, <<https://www.dw.com/en/violence-against-women-on-the-rise-in-pakistan/a-50550672>>.
- Khan, LA, Awan, MS & Hussain, A 2019, 'Oral cultures and sexism: A comparative analysis of African and Punjabi folklore', *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, vol.26, no.2, pp.105–126

Kothari, S 2005, 'From genre to zanaana: Urdu television drama serials and women's culture in Pakistan', *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 289–305.

Kothari, S 2019, 'A Rebel With a Cause: A Conversation With Haseena Moin', *BioScope South Asian Screen Studies*, vol.10, no. 2, pp. 225-33

Krijnen, T & Van Bauwel, S 2015, *Gender and Media: Representing, Producing, Consuming*, Routledge, London.

Mahmood, S 2002, 'Jinnah's Vision of Pakistan', *Pakistan Journal of History & Culture*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 1–18.

Majid, A, Habib, Z & Hamid, A 2014, 'Genesis of the Two Nations Theory and the Quaid-e-Azam', *Journal of Pakistan Vision*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 180–192.

Mohanty, C 1988 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 61-88.

Malik, IH 1996, 'The State and Civil Society in Pakistan: From Crisis to Crisis', *Asian Survey*, vol. 36, no. 7, pp. 673–690.

Manzoor Butt, K & Shahid, J 2012, 'Position of Pakistani Women in 21st Century: A Long Way to Go', *The Journal of Political Science GC University Lahore Pakistan*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 69–98.

Manzoor, S, Jabeen, S & Hanif, A 2018, 'Depiction of Liberalism in Pakistani Urdu Drama: A Cultivation and Feminist Analysis', *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 92–105.

Maqsood, N 2020, *The Aurat March Ushers in a Radical Feminist Movement in Pakistan*, womensmediacenter.com, Women Media Center, viewed 20 November 2020, <<https://womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/the-aurat-march-ushers-in-a-radical-feminist-movement-in-pakistan>>.

Mehra, J 2019, 'Analyzing Portrayals of Modern Women and Popular Culture in Television Soap Operas of Pakistan', *Media Watch*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 628–644.

Moghadam, VM 1992, 'Patriarchy And The Politics Of Gender In Modernising Societies: Iran, Pakistan And Afghanistan', *International Sociology*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 35–53.

mquran.org n.d., *The Miraculous Quran - Translation by Chapter*, mquran.org, viewed 20 August 2020, <<http://mquran.org/content/category/2/4/4>>.

Murshid, NS 2016, 'Microfinance Participation, Control Over Resources, and Justification of IPV: Results From a Nationally Representative Sample of Women', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 475–495.

Nasim, R 2018, *Zun Mureed all set to question the society from 2nd March on Hum TV*, Oyeyeah, Alliancez PTE limited Karachi, viewed 29 August 2020, <<https://www.oyeyeah.com/drama/zun-mureed-set-question-society-2nd-march-hum-tv/>>.

Nasrullah, M, Haqqi, S & Cummings, KJ 2009, 'The Epidemiological Patterns of Honour Killing of Women in Pakistan', *The European Journal of Public Health*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 193–197.

National Institute of Population Studies - NIPS 2018, *Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018*, National Institute of population studies, Islamabad, pp. 1–573, viewed 20 October 2020, <<https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR354/FR354.pdf>>.

Pervez, MA 2010, 'Mass Media and Women: A Study on Portrayal of Status and Violence', *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 133-140.

Pilcher, J & Whelehan, I 2017, *Key concepts in gender studies*, 2nd edn, SAGE Publications Ltd.

Sarfraz, M 2020, 'The “good” and “bad” women of serials: How a Pakistan show has triggered debates on depiction of women on television', *The Hindu*, 15 February, viewed 19 April 2020, <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/the-good-women-and-bad-women-of-serials/article30831052.ece>>.

Tribune 2019, *Writer Khalilur Rehman Qamar says 'women should rape men if they want equality'*, The Express Tribune, The Lakson Group, viewed 18 September 2020, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/2090507/4-writer-khalilur-rehman-qamar-says-women-rape-men-want-equality>>.

Pakeeza, S 2015, 'Domestic violence laws and practices in Pakistan', *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 46–49.

Parveen, S & Nawaz Bhatti, M 2018, 'Freedom of Expression and Media Censorship in Pakistan: A Historical Study', *Journal of Historical Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 1–21.

Parvez, MA & Roshan, R 2010, 'Mass Media and Women: A Study on Portrayal of Status and Violence', *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 133–140.

Parvez, MA, Roshan, R, Riffat, S & Qasim, Z 2009, 'Psychological violence against women as depicted in pvt Urdu dramas', *Global Media Journal Allama Iqbal Open University*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 1–17.

Price, S & Sultan, A 2020, *Aurat March placards turn up the heat against Khalilur Rehman*, The Express Tribune, The Lakson Group, viewed 19 November 2020, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/2172262/4-aurat-march-placards-turn-heat-khalilur-rehman>>.

Qaiser, SA & Jabeen, F 2008, 'Portrayal of Women's Issues in PTV Drama Serials: An Overview', *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 211–218.

Qureshi, A 2016, *Here's Why 'Zindagi Gulzar Hai' Is Not A Feminist Show*, Feminism In India, FII Media private limited, viewed 16 November 2020, <<https://feminisminindia.com/2016/09/09/why-zindagi-gulzar-hai-not-feminist>>.

Qureshi, S 2012, 'Legislative Initiative in the Area of Domestic Violence in Pakistan: Gender Approach to the core provisions of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2009', *Journal of Pakistan Vision*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 200–223.

Qureshi, Z 2020, *200% increase in crimes against women in Pakistan in January-March*, gulfnews.com, viewed 19 November 2020, <<https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/200-increase-in-crimes-against-women-in-pakistan-in-january-march-1.71455870>>.

Reda, N 2019, 'The Qur'an and Domestic Violence: An Islamic Feminist, Spiritually Integrative Reading of Verse 4:34', *International Journal of Practical Theology*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 257–273.

Robertson, JA 1996, 'Contesting a coercive islam; "women living under Muslim laws" and Pakistan.', Master of Arts M.A. Thesis in Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University Canada, pp. 1–174.

Saeed, M 2018, *Aurat March 2018: Freedom over fear*, www.thenews.com.pk, Jang Group, viewed 19 November 2020, <<https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/instep-today/290411-aurat-march-2018-freedom-over-fear>>.

Safina 2020, *Khalil-Ur-Rehman Explains Concept Of Mere Paas Tum Ho*, Reviewit.pk, viewed 16 December 2020, <<https://reviewit.pk/khalil-ur-rehman-explains-concept-of-mere-paas-tum-ho>>.

Saigol, R 2019, *The past, present and future of feminist activism in Pakistan*, Herald Magazine, Dawn Media Group, viewed 24 September 2020, <<https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398878>>.

Sarfraz, M 2020, 'The "good" and "bad" women of serials: How a Pakistan show has triggered debates on depiction of women on television', *The Hindu*, 15 February, viewed 19 April 2020, <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/the-good-women-and-bad-women-of-serials/article30831052.ece>>.

Sarwari, A 2020, '10 Problematic Things About "Meray Paas Tum Ho"', *Naya Daur*, viewed 20 November 2020, <<https://nayadaur.tv/amp/2020/01/10-problematic-things-about-meray-paas-tum-ho/>>.

Shah, Z 2020, *Why the Aurat March is a revolutionary feat for Pakistan*, DAWN.COM, Dawn Media Group, viewed 30 August 2020, <<https://www.dawn.com/news/1394385>>.

Siddiqui, MK 2016, 'The Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016: A Legislative Review', *LUMS Law Journal*, vol. 3, no.1, pp. 100-118.

Srivastava, P 2019, 'Rethinking new womanhood: Practices of gender, class, culture and religion in South Asia', *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 482–485.

Staff 2018, *These posters from the Aurat March say everything you wish you could*, images.dawn.com, Dawn Media Group, viewed September 2020, <<https://images.dawn.com/news/1179620>>.

Sulehria, F 2016, 'DD and PTV as victims of media globalisation', *Asian Journal of Communication*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 97–112.

Sulehria 2018, *Why Turkish soap operas are a hit in Pakistan*, trtworld.com, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), viewed 18 September 2020, <<https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/why-turkish-soap-operas-are-a-hit-in-pakistan-20418>>.

Suleman, S 1990, 'Representations of gender in prime-time television : a textual analysis of drama series of Pakistan Television', PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin Madison, pp. 1–466.

Sultana, A 2012, 'Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis', *Arts Faculty Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 1–18.

Tanwir, M, Fennell, S, Lak, HR & Sufi, S 2019, 'Not Accepting Abuse as the Norm: Local Forms of Institutional Reform to Improve Reporting on Domestic Violence in Punjab', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 20, no. 7, pp. 129–153.

Thomson Reuters Foundation 2018, 'Factbox: Which are the world's 10 most dangerous countries for women?', *Reuters*, 26 June, viewed 14 October 2020, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-women-dangerous-poll-factbox-idUSKBN1JM01Z>>.

Tribune 2020, '*Meray Paas Tum Ho*' finale to be screened in cinemas across Pakistan, The Express Tribune, The Larkson group, viewed 20 November 2020, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/2137415/meray-paas-tum-ho-finale-screened-cinemas-across-pakistan>>.

Ullah, H & Nisar, H 2011, 'The Reinforcement Of Public And Private Domains Through Television In Contemporary Pakistan', *Journal of Gender and Social Issues*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 1–6.

University of Karachi n.d., *Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies*, Uok.edu.pk, University of Karachi, viewed 22 June 2020, <http://www.uok.edu.pk/research_institutes/cews/index.php>.

World Economic Forum 2016, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2016*, World Economic Forum, Geneva, pp. 1–391, viewed 14 October 2020, <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR16/WEF_Global_Gender_Gap_Report_2016.pdf>.

Zakar, R, Zakar, MZ, & Kraemer A 2013, 'Men's Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in Pakistan', *Violence Against Women*, vol.9, no. 2, pp.246-268.

Zia, AS 2009, 'the reinvention of feminism in Pakistan', *Feminist Review*, vol. 91, no. 1, pp. 29–46.

Zia, AS 2020, *The contrite gender formula of Meray Paas Tum Ho and the portrayal of women in cultural scripts*, DAWN.COM, Dawn Media Group, viewed 14 November 2020, <<https://www.dawn.com/news/1531866>>.

Ziring, L 1984, 'From Islamic Republic to Islamic State in Pakistan', *Asian Survey*, vol. 24, no. 9, pp. 931–946.

Zoonen, LV 1994, *Feminist Media Studies: (Media Culture & Society series)*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.

Zubair, S 2016, 'Development narratives, media and women in Pakistan: shifts and continuities', *South Asian Popular Culture*, vol. 14, no. 1–2, pp. 19–32.

Yilmaz, I & Ahmed, ZS 2018, 'Islam and Women Rights in Pakistan', *Social Science Research Network*, pp. 11–18.

The United Nations Development Programme - UNDP 2017, *GENDER EQUALITY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: Pakistan Case Study*, United nations development programme, New York.