

Impact of Highlighting Social Issues Through TV Dramas on the Audience

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ABSTRACT

The cultural activities and societal trends are described by the storytelling. The storytelling is possessed in human nature. The transformation of ideas can be carried out from any medium and its vital purpose is education, entertainment, and instilling moral values. The storytelling involves characters, plot and narrative point of views. In addition, the depictions of stories through characters are called drama, and the drama serial can change the attitude of people. In this research article, qualitative and quantitative analysis will be done to identify whether sensitive subject drama and societal darken issues leave an impact on people or not. Moreover, it will be identified whether they leave positive or negative alteration of perception. In the analysis, seven top-rated dramas will be studied in details, for instance, what time they were used to telecast and what idea storywriters tried to deliver. In addition, its practical application will be elaborated.

Keywords: Social Impact, societal issues, sensitive subjects drama, socially darken issues, Pakistani drama industry, the impact of drama, taboo, change in behavior,

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Introduction

The word drama is derived from Greek and Late Latin language, which refers to the composition of dialogues in presenting the idea that intended to act¹. The major purpose of the drama is to create a play for people so that they understand the reality or fictitious story more easily. Currently storytelling has expanded its form and diverged in many genres for instance, mythology, legends, fable, slasher, sci-fi, comedy, action, adventure, adult, fantasy, historical, biography, documentary, romance, thriller, film noir, horror, war films, crime, disaster film, mystery, and melodrama.

As the media is expanding, many other genres are evolving as per time. If the Pakistani drama industry is considered, it can be easily identified that most of the drama serials are based on sensitive subject dramas (SSDs) and other on socially darken issues (SDIs). Pakistani dramas are different from western ones based on their esteem or moral values while it is made for the people of Pakistan as per their psyche. Moreover, in Pakistan, dramas are created to make strong emotion and involvement with the audience. The middle-class melodrama, historical drama, comedy, rural romance, and teen drama (a new genre in Pakistan) are being performed².

The history of Pakistani dramas is derived from the history of Indian theaters. Those theaters used to transfer ideas through singing, examine and moving. After evaluation, old Indian theater changed to medieval ones, and then to contemporary Indian theaters. Khawaja Mueenddin, Sadat Hassan, Manto, and Khadim Mohyeddin are the one who focused on social issues and they performed their service in the area on theater³.

The major genre of plays were mostly social issues from the beginning, and from 1980, television dramas were started to focus on social change. In the '90s, indecent theaters had gone famous and a term called "Business Theater" was introduced. In the 2000s (after the introduction of private channels), a platform or stage was given to new talent to portray role on television as well as in theaters in which Humayun Saeed, Omair Rana,

¹ Jonathan, Walker, and Streufert Paul. *Early Modern Academic Drama*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008.

² Zia, Anjum. *Effects of Dramas of Pakistan Television on Youth*. 2014. [https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr22\(9\)14/16.pdf](https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr22(9)14/16.pdf) (accessed January 5, 2014).

³ Syeda, Tahira, Shah, and Khurshid Farhana. *70 Years of Theatre: A Flashback Through the Ages*. April 2014. http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/ier/PDF-FILES/6_39_1_17.pdf.

Hamza Ali Abbasi etc. were top actors. At that time, there was a huge influence of Indian drama on the people of Pakistan at that time but still, they have created a strong and positive perception on people because of their limited duration and are based on reality⁴.

Pakistani dramas have a vast audience and the drama serials are appreciated all over the world. The trend of watching Pakistani dramas has increased and if old drama serials are compared to the new ones, it can be easily defined that the major target audience is the women⁵. The social issues hit the interest of women especially housewives that is why drama producers and directors are willing to invest time and money on the subject of social issues and social change. Although in the initial stages, the Pakistani drama passed many hurdles, for instance, negative feedback from people, legal notice, and restrictions by PEMRA or other organization on SSDs yet they survived because of strong script and plotting. After 2010, the concept of SSDs and SDIs had started to use more and social change had started seeing such as tolerance level had increased and aggression decreased in people. The topics like injustices, honor killing, and taboos had created knowledge in public. Unfortunately, consideration of SDIs and SSDs had done already done before a few decades in the western world⁶.

In this article, it will be explained that whether Pakistani dramas promote only SDIs and SSDs or any other subject. The common or major issues that mostly repeats in every serial will be explained. In addition, it will be explained that on-air timing leaves the impact on people or not. There are many research articles regarding Pakistani serial and its impact on women but this research article is about social change in Pakistani drama for the betterment of society.

The sensitive subject dramas (SSDs) can be explained as those plays, which has crucial roles that discusses the controversial issues. It influences the people and their beliefs and it belongs to the social, cultural and ethnic background. While, socially darken issues are mainly taboos such as gays, dowry, second marriage etc.⁷.

⁴ Zia, Anjum. *Effects of Dramas of Pakistan Television on Youth*. 2014. [https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr22\(9\)14/16.pdf](https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr22(9)14/16.pdf) (accessed January 5, 2014).

⁶ Syeda, Tahira, Shah, and Khurshid Farhana. *70 Years of Theatre: A Flashback Through the Ages*. April 2014. http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/ier/PDF-FILES/6_39_1_17.pdf.

⁷ Zia, Anjum. *Effects of Dramas of Pakistan Television on Youth*. 2014. [https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr22\(9\)14/16.pdf](https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr22(9)14/16.pdf) (accessed January 5, 2014).

In 2012, there was a research conducted by Maria Rashid and Almas Kiani regarding the positive image of media of Pakistan, and the focus of researchers was on women because they are the one who watches television more as compared to men, and women empowerment are considered SDIs (as per religious values). They conducted a survey of three different media outlet. After the survey, they analyzed the SWOT, which concluded that media plays a long-lasting impact on women, media promotes women empowerment, but in some cases, they are still projected as a beauty symbol. Although, news channel is the most significant medium to promote or introduced any ideas to the women.

On the other hand, Anjuman Zia conducted a comparative study regarding the impact of cable television on women of Lahore, Pakistan in 2007 and the main idea of this research was about the greater exposure of TV, the greater impact would be left on women. That research shows that heavy television viewers are more involved in an unrealistic world, which results in a disturbance in their activities such as, exercising, shopping, and interaction with family and friends⁸.

Moreover, daily soaps break the stereotype by focusing on SSDs and SDIs, and they are the major source of women empowerment⁹. According to Dr. Mubeena Iqbal and Khairunnisa Abdar explained in their research paper (SOAP OPERAS: a tool of women empowerment) says, women are learning many things from daily soaps such as career choice, decision making and raise voice against injustice. The most influential time is prime time in which the whole family watches drama serial and they can easily depict gender discrimination and injustice. In many soaps, uneducated beautiful, thin women are considered as a positive character while the educated girl and out-spoken women are considered as evil or homewrecker. This is the prejudice in our society that the Pakistani drama industry keeps on performing for many years. This is the flaw in these operas and they are still failing to depict strong woman but somehow it triggers women empowerment and trains them to raise the voice in any case of injustice¹⁰. On

⁸ Zia, Anjum. *Effects of Dramas of Pakistan Television on Youth*. 2014. [https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr22\(9\)14/16.pdf](https://www.idosi.org/mejsr/mejsr22(9)14/16.pdf) (accessed January 7, 2019).

⁹ Khurshid, and Uzma. *PATRIARCHY, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE*. 2014. <https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/viewFile/3938/3730>.

¹⁰ Mubeena, Iqbal, and Abdar Khairunnisa. *SOAP OPERAS: A POTENTIAL TOOL FOR*. 2013. <https://www.globalsciencejournals.com/content/pdf/10.7603%2Fs40874-016-0002-z.pdf>.

the other hand, Mohammad Akbar Khan, Uzma Kayani and Mohammad Ajmal Khan concluded that Pakistani drama serial is based on patriarchal social culture and promotes male domination in house. This creates an attitude in people regarding inequality and status of women inferior as compared to man. However, the sophisticated use of language and influential plotting do not reflect the injustice that is portrayed in the story¹¹.

Above are the prominent researches regarding the drama industry of Pakistan and with the help of this secondary information, it was concluded that following theories are being applied to tell the story or promoting any new idea to the public. Spiral of silence theory is the mass media theory, which says individual will remain silent instead of raising voice against the majority, and if the SSDs and SDIs are focused, the story writes are trapped in the spiral of silence and have fear of isolation or rejection¹².

In this research article, further explanation will be done regarding this subject. The second theory that created the impact on people is hypodermic needle theory/magic bullet theory. It creates a direct and immediate impact on the mass audience. This theory plays an essential role in the transmitting the idea in people and make them act in a certain way, for instance, if the taboo topic (child abuse) is on-air, it will definitely hit interest of the women who have children and will do anything to protect their children. Although SDIs are not much common (due to limited effect paradigm)its education may leave an impact on people¹³.

The last theory is attitude change theory. This theory refers to the learning and attitude changing behavior that evaluates thing in a particular way. The alteration in attitude can be carried out regarding any event, incident, issue, and people. After portraying the story, attitude and behavior be changed based on how they perceive the subject (as per their experience) whether in a positive or negative way. The people who went through with bad events or experiences may get some relief and motivation to face the challenges or vice versa¹⁴. The research method to convey this article, both the qualitative and quantitative analysis will be done. This research method will help in the

¹¹ Khurshid and Uzma. *PATRIARCHY, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE*. 2014. <https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/viewFile/3938/3730>.

¹² Daniel, Miller, and Costa Elisabetta. *How the World Changed Social Media*. UCL Press, 2014.

¹³ James, Martin. *Mass Media: A Bibliography with Indexes*. Nova Publishers, 2014.

¹⁴ James, Martin. *Mass Media: A Bibliography with Indexes*. Nova Publishers, 2014.

investigation of research questions and their objectives. In order to analyze the qualitative research method, website articles and reviews will act as the secondary exploration. The target audience will be the focused group, observation, and personal interviews. The sample size will be small and respondents will be nominated to fulfill given quota. On the contrast, to analyze quantitative primary data, 7-drama serials, their subjects and timing will be observed. This quantitative research will help in identifying current trends of drama serials and their impact of SSDs and SDIs on the viewers.

Qualitative analysis and findings

Chup Raho (ARY) is another drama that was hyped among women of Pakistan¹⁵. According to the report of BBC NEWS¹⁶, around 900 or more women suffered from sexual violence and 1000 women died in 2013 (as per the annual report of honor killing 2013). Chup Raho highlights the issue of gender-based violence and gender discrimination. The preference of male superiority, slavery, and health risk has hit the interest of many women in Pakistan. Although the target audience of this drama was mainly women but it also inspires the many communities to protect the rights of women who suffer this violence. In addition, Maat and Durr e Shahwar are highlighting the same issue as Chup Raho¹⁷.

Maat (HUM TV) is about the competition among sisters who are living in a middle-class family. This drama serial shows that women not only face external pressure but also the habit of over ambition and competition can harm the feeling of other family members. In this drama serial, rudeness, and attitude teaches us what not to be like in real life¹⁸.

Durr e Shahwar (HUM TV) is also the prominent drama of Pakistan that highlights the main issue some females face after marriage. This drama is

¹⁵ Anwer, Zoya. *Three Pakistani dramas that dare to be different*. October 8, 2014. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1139857> (accessed September 5, 2014).

¹⁶ *Pakistan honor killings on the rise, the report reveals*. 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35943732> (accessed February 5, 2014).

¹⁷ Haider, Sadaf. *Review: Chup Raho suggests there's no honor in silence*. 2014. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1166309> (accessed March 15, 2014).

¹⁸ Faraz. *Maat Review*. 2014. <http://www.dramapakistani.net/maat-review/> (accessed 2014).

about winning the love of his husband. While, her daughter also, get affected living in that home environment¹⁹.

Firaaq (HUM TV) also disclose a case of mental torture by their own family members which aware women and men to keep an eye on their relative or any suspicious acts²⁰. This drama highlights the issue of misunderstanding, less communication, egos, and hiding secrets. This drama teaches that less communication and egos not only affect some people but the whole family.

These days many Pakistani dramas are coming up with different stories. Kash me Teri beti na hoti (Geo TV) is also included in those dramas which portray social darken issue. It teaches how to faces the challenges of surviving in narrow-minded society. While it will educate woman how to deal with this type of situation. This drama is based on lower-class family (faces financial constraints) forces her daughter to marry a rich man and give him a son and after fulfilling this clause, the family will get 20 lacs and wife get a divorce. This drama shows that some families use women as an asset, which is completely unfair, and against basic human rights²¹.

Kankar (HUM TV) discussed the subject of taboo and SSDs. It not only teaches the reality of society but unfair prejudice in the character of females can be seen even in the modern or educated family. This drama is about a love triangle between paternal cousins. This drama also highlights the struggle to win heart²².

Meri zaat zarra-e-benishan (Geo TV) is about the prejudice of society. This story tells no matter what a girl says but still, she considered as a culprit and has to sacrifice for the rest of life (included in social issue). There is two main lead of this drama, who faces the same problem being women in a so-called society. This drama talks about the sensitive subject topic²³.

¹⁹ Ahmed, Hareem. *Saying goodbye to "Durr-e-Shahwar"*. June 16, 2012. <https://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/12087/saying-goodbye-to-durr-e-shahwar/> (accessed 15 March 2014).

²⁰ www.reviewit.pk. *Firaaq – Happy Ending*. 2014. <https://reviewit.pk/firaaq-happy-ending/> (accessed December 2014).

²¹ www.reviewit.pk.com. *Pakistani Dramas that should come to an End!* December 2012. <https://reviewit.pk/pakistani-dramas-come-end/> (accessed October 2014).

²² www.hum.tv. *Kankar Plot*. 2014. <https://www.hum.tv/dramas/kankar/> (accessed 2014).

²³ www.harpalgeo.tv. *MERI ZAAT ZARRA-E-BENISHAN plot*. 2012. <http://harpalgeo.tv/program/meri-zaat-zarra-e-benishan> (accessed 2014).

Quantitative analysis and findings

To analyze the influence of SSDs and SDIs on viewers, 7 top rated Pakistani dramas were selected, which are mentioned above, only two of them used to telecast at 9:00 pm and the rest of them telecasted at 8:00pm. According to the “The Nation” prime time of Pakistan is 7:00 to 9:00 pm it mean, all the drama serial were used to telecast at prime time in order to influence the public.

It was concluded that the major subject of discussion in those dramas were women. Among seven dramas, all were women oriented, while and different issues were being used in it. On the other hand, the gender of SSD writers is 67% females and 33%, males. In addition, it was estimated that major SDI was physical violence and harassment on the women. Consequently, among 7-drama serial, two were focusing on major issues such as physical abuse and others were focusing on multiple issues.

Conclusion

This research article was about the impact of highlighting societal issues present in Pakistani dramas on viewers. It was concluded that due to telecasting these type of topic in prime time leads great impact (positive) on people (not only on women but also men because their careless attitude is the major cause of crime). The main idea of promoting these issues is to make discussion on the societal darken topics and to extirpate or eliminate culprits from the roots. On the other hand, women empowerment was observed. These type of dramas train the women to be brave and realize their basic human rights.

However, in many dramas serial, cases of the spiral of silence have seen. This indicates that in Pakistani society, people prefer to remain silent rather than take action on the major causes. The main reason for societal silence is the projection of the victim’s silence. If a victim acts bold and takes help of legislation, she would definitely do something good for herself as well as for society. This is the biggest reasons that most of the drama script in Pakistan is regarding social service and for teaching and character development. Moreover, stories regarding sensitive subjects hit the interest of the audience and somehow people still prefer to watch this content.

Some shows create a direct impact on people. The direct impact in the sense of practical implementation of situations and motivation by actors leads to awareness of the basic right. The direct impact is responsible for changing attitude and behavior in people. In 21 to 30 episode-based drama, people not only learn the societal behavior but also the experience opens up the dimensions of decision-making in every turn of life. It concludes that whoever controls the media controls the mind of people, and drama serial creates a direct and indirect impact on people. Therefore, topics like SDI and SSDs can create awareness in people. The recommendations regarding this scenario are explained below

- The script can become more effective if the writer gives solutions to the problems.
- Make male-oriented drama serials at a prime time.
- Make the character of female strong, educated and brave.
- Portray the image of in-laws friendly and cooperative.
- Make the plot of drama more realistic. For instance, highlight positivity as well.
- Writers need to study about other societal problems, such as politics, laborism, safety, rules and laws, children schooling challenges, street crimes, gangsters etc.

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