

## Critical Analysis of Stereotyping Trends of Women Portrayal in Pakistani Dramas

**Abstract:** *This paper investigates the comparison of how Pakistani women are stereotypically portrayed in Pakistani dramas with how they actually fit into society. The research follows the mixed-method approach. In the media industry, the portrayal of women all around the globe has been a subject of stereotypical agendas. These motives are discussed, considered, and pondered over. This is not the case in Pakistan. The topic of basing conventional narratives is still a well-known culture. In order to support this claim, this paper looked into the discrepancies between how Pakistani women are typically portrayed in Pakistani dramas and where they fit into the community. With the current affairs in Pakistan, Pakistani women are taking a stand for themselves and their rights, be that as it may, dramas still ponder over them being victims of society. This delineated outline will probe over the representation of women in dramas compared to society; is this the proper characterization of women, or not?.*

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**Key Words:** Dramas, Stereotypical Portrayals, Working Women, Housewives

### Introduction

The consumption of media has been a paradigm for absorbing information and entertainment at a local, national, and global magnitude. What we see is what we believe, visualising things has a massive impact on the viewers. The portrayal of a man is what creates an idea or stereotype of their reputation in the long term. (Hardt, 2004; Morgan, 2009)

Women are achieving more than they ever have in these last few decades. They are excelling in fields they were once criticized for. Contributing tremendously in every route they

take, women are not holding back in fields of education, sports, politics, medical, engineering, journalism, etc. The ratio of women to men may be less, but they are there and are presenting themselves in all shapes and forms. Women excelling in their field of choice is ultimately helping the nation move towards betterment. In 1940, at Islamia College for Women, the founder of our country Mr. Jinnah gave a heartfelt message to the young girls by saying “I have always said that no country that doesn't include its women alongside its males can ever be considered worthy of existing. Without women

\* Senior Lecturer, Department of Media Studies, Bahria University Karachi, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

Email: [sarimsajid94@gmail.com](mailto:sarimsajid94@gmail.com) (Corresponding Author)

† Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies and Communication, Sindh Madressatul Islam (SMI) University, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

fighting alongside men, no cause can ever be won". No struggle can ever succeed without women, participating side by side with men". Nevertheless, what we see on our screens is hardly ever true. Reality is never depicted and we are prone to believe what is told to us. There is a fine line between the current role of women and how they are shown in dramas. Women are designated specific roles in dramas. Either they are restricted to being an immoral mother-in-law living in metropolitan areas or controlling minds steering stay-at-home women who will destroy everything that tends to stand in their way. This specific extreme gender prejudice is what we find in our day-to-day drama series. In reality, women are delivering work in their specific domains with ease and diligence, so why is this dispute in between matters? Media is a sailing boat for an organized revolution. It has the competency to change narratives and our school of thought. Before the uprising of feminism and its agendas, women were not included in settings. They were excluded from almost all fields of media. Women are deemed to be an integral part of our lives, the thing that catches our eye foremost is how they are represented in all mediums of the media industry in current times (Ahmed, Amber 2015).

Women's rights are solely an objective that we desperately need to dwell on. It depends on the woman herself whom she wants to marry, what she wants to do, and which decisions she needs to make toward a better future for herself. The stereotypical analysis is what our women have to face on a daily basis. The concept in our minds says a woman who is independent and self-sufficient can never settle in and be an adequate wife. There are two types of women shown in Pakistani screenplays: one who does not say a word, listens to her in-laws, covers her head, and the other who is a rebel, prioritizes herself, and in most cases seeks divorce when feels oppressed.

Almost 60 years ago our survival and source of entertainment were in the hands of PTV and STN. The scope of the theatres at that period was fully concentrated on household life and their instants of joy and gloom. Dramas were based on the benefits of joint families and respect for all sorts of affinities was displayed. We scarcely use to see any antagonistic or despairing role of women pictured in dramas with very few

peculiarities. According to the experimenter, almost all of the multiplexes in Pakistan are currently screening Indian films despite the fact that it is harming and destroying the culture of Pakistan as Indian films in a rapid sequence of time gained vogue (Juni, 2014) then, as a byproduct of the ethnic invasion, Indian culture and ideology were reintroduced to Pakistan and, for the most part, replaced the culture of Pakistan. Since then, the role of women has evolved dramatically. At the turn of the century, we first noticed this change in how women are being subjected to roles that are extreme to one's liking.

Pakistani dramas always have this one woman who maintains a career or is portrayed as someone who chooses her professional life over other aspects. Eventually, the woman ends up losing her husband. The message is that women shouldn't involve themselves in any career and should stay at home instead of working, and if they do otherwise will get divorced. Also, society perceives them as an antagonist and have a negative view of them. For example, Naveen Waqar, a working woman with steady employment in Humsafar drama is portrayed as an antagonist, suggesting that a woman with a profession is usually a bad guy.

### **Objective**

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1. To observe various roles that female characters are given in Pakistan.
2. To investigate whether the characters are accurate portrayals of Pakistani women.
3. To comprehend the motivation behind the casting of particular characters in Pakistani drama.

### **Hypothesis**

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1. The characters depicted in Pakistani dramas are accurate portrayals of Pakistani women.
2. Viewers want to see women as feeble and weak characters.
3. Negative characters of working women in Pakistani dramas harm the perception of employed women in real life.

### **Problem Statement**

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In our drama industry, a woman is often characterized as powerless and frail lacking the

ability to acquire a position of courage and strength, if not powerless they are recurrently painted as evil masterminds with corrupt agendas. Seldom if and when a woman is represented as a fierce and sound gender they are then frowned upon and deemed as negative, lacking morals. As Laura Mulvey mentions in her book "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inaugurated as the theory of the "Male Gaze", it is of her opinion that a woman is repeatedly painted as a lesser gender who is a sufferer of the world at large. Representations of women and concern to other women are on average for the most part associated with men and on numerous occasions "the content of the media distorts women's status in the social world" (Tuchman, 1979, p. 531)

### **Limitation**

I would only be obtaining a few selected directors' and writers' viewpoints for my report, I may only have a limited understanding of their points of view. The fact that only a small proportion of Karachi-based women will be questioned considerably confines the perspective and negatively impacts due to the fact that only a select few women's opinions will be revealed.

### **Literature Review**

The means for conducting this analytical research were obtained through a television station named Hum Tv. Over the period of 90 days, 15 ongoing drama serials were closely observed, out of the 15 tv serials observed no less than 8 tv shows had underlying tones of injustice against a principal female character portrayed through means of domestic abuse, manipulation, deceit, corruptive behaviour, and dishonesty. Notable tv show mentions of this observation include Daldaal, Dar si jati hai Sila, Khamoshi, Mai maa nahi banna chahati, Sammi, Who ek pal, Yaqeen ka safar, Pagli. A woman in relation to a positive role is depicted by means of behavioral characteristics pertaining to religious morality moreover she is made accommodating to family and harmfully compliant, a quiet woman that answers when spoken to a woman that performs her housekeeping proficiently while remaining in the enclosure of the house provided to her. In contrast, a woman that is individually financially

stable and maintains a sound role in society is defined as negative and as an individual that has cynical objectives. Generally, the latter is shown as an individual unfit for marriage and due respect, someone who is not to be taken seriously for marital claims whereas the former is preferred amongst all and lauded as maritally acceptable amongst society. The idea of a good woman presented above despite being highly outdated and intrinsically misogynistic is still applauded in Pakistani cinema albeit a global revolution surrounding women's rights and equal opportunities and our industry is bound on forcing women into some form of patriarchal injustice to gain the standing of a good woman in a Pakistani drama serial for the pleasure of our societies viewers. (Notable mentions of ideas presented above: Khirad in Humsafar, Aiman in Maat, Durre Shahwar in Durre Shahwar. Examples of bad women: are Sara and Fareeda in Humsafar, and Saman in Maat (Mujahid, 2013)

In retrospect, a noteworthy mention of a woman being displayed in a positive manner is recorded in In Dhoop Kinare aired on PTV in 1987, through the character Dr Zoya Ali Khan (Marina Khan). Shown as an educated spirited medical professional who is full of life and brings joy to her and those in her surroundings. But it seems that ever since we have regressed into a downward spiral instead of progressing positively upwards. Instead, the major percentage of themes revolve around women being unfairly and wrongly treated, one might stop to ask how much would it simply take for an individual to receive basic human rights in a society poisoned by the male gaze. A few recent dramas that were broadcast on Hum TV during prime time all portrayed women as helpless, weak, or cunning vixens, including Sila, the lead character in Dar si jati hai sila, who is depicted as the victim of harassment. Naeema, the lead character in the drama Khamoshi, is constantly putting obstacles in the way of her sister out of jealousy. The lead character Gulrukh in the drama Pagli is portrayed as a football player with psychological problems. In the drama Who ek pal Unaiza (main character) is a housewife, a widow with a child, who marries her husband's murderer and becomes pregnant. When she learns that she is pregnant, she

ultimately decides to have an abortion (Batool, [2015](#)) The stereotyped, predominately male-dominated culture and its own traditional idea are intended to be conveyed through this media representation of women. The media fabricates a woman's image in order to publicize, advertise, and use her to market and promote its own goods. Less is thought to be worth representation when it comes to more significant concerns facing women in their daily lives. (Morris, 2006).

Researchers had given evidence that in every three women and girls at least one has faced violence in their life. (Krug et al, 2002) , this is the reason why women find dramas that have elements of emotion attractive and take it on a personal level.

Numerous forms of violence against women exist in Pakistan, including rape, gang rape, forced marriages, acid throwing, stove burning, Karo Kari and Wannu customs, domestic violence, sexual harassment at the workplace, and honor killings. However, cases requesting urgent redress for victims drag on for months or even years. Occasionally, parties withdraw cases during this time due to threats they have received from the opposing party (Ebrahim, 2007). This demonstrates that proving real answers to women's problems has little to do with how women are portrayed in the media. In Pakistani society, discrimination against women persists. (Rabia, Saira, 2015).

For generations, the underlying foundation of Pakistani society has been a patriarchy. In society, men are viewed as having a superior position. Women tend to be more obedient, so they hide behind the domestication facade. There is an unspoken understanding that women are in control of household matters while males are in charge of outdoor affairs. Women in Pakistan have only recently taken the initiative to leave their homes, pursue education, and establish careers, thanks to the recent advent of feminism and the few of its rays that have managed to break through this thick layer of patriarchy. (Ahmed, Amber 2015)

Globally speaking, Pakistani women are distinct from women in other nations. There is some degree of discrimination against women everywhere. The information distributed through these channels doesn't suggest that women

should be superior in any manner, rather it paints an image of women who can advance and develop to the point where they may improve their own life. (Roy, [2016](#)).

## **Methodology**

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The primary reasoning may be concluded as an attempt to quantify the primary roles provided to women in Pakistani television serials, whether these character roles are accurate representations of a Pakistani woman, and examine the primary causes pertaining to allocations of these roles, means of method conduction are both quantitative and qualitative.

There are two predominant aspects that need to be explored. The first theme is to determine the reasoning behind the portrayal of a woman as a lesser being to the other gender, injustice against women e.g them being denied basic education moreover shown to have a lack of interest in it, and the hypothesis behind the common portrayal of vicious stereotypes against women characters. The second aspect that needs to be examined is to obtain firsthand authentic views and opinions of women themselves in our society and whether the common woman agrees with these misogynistic roles being provided to them in Pakistani television The entirety of Pakistan shall not opt for this research. Karachi, the most populated metropolitan of Pakistan, has been selected for this study. Means of data collection for evaluation include questionnaires, detailed interviews, and textual and critical analysis to achieve precise and faultless results.

## **Methods**

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An array of dissimilar procedures was used to obtain results via two contrasting facets.

## **Qualitative**

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The initial point in observation is the negative portrayal of women in cinema (i.e social and domestic injustices). Method to obtain analysis; contacting notable drama and film writers/directors.

Content analysis was conducted in which notable prime-time dramas were selected. Their contents were studied and a pattern has been drawn. Steps being taken include comprehensive

thorough questionnaire interviews to deduce reasonable data to provide clarity on women's negative roles in television while comparing to the contrasting reality of women present in educated positions and noteworthy feats competing with men alike. Well-known directors and drama writers were approached to gather insights regarding content development.

### **Tool**

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Maxqda software is used to analyze the interviews with the respondents.

### **Quantitative**

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Findings obtained via qualitative research will be assessed and evaluated through quantitative testing.

### **Instrument**

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The survey instrument was used in the study together with a random sample method. The following questionnaire has been constructed by means of former interviews.

### **Sample and Sample Size**

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The questionnaire was assessed through two definitive groups of women. Total of 200 respondents was targeted from different areas of Karachi.

### **Classification 1:**

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unemployed housewives (Age range 30-50 years).

### **Classification 2:**

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Employed working women (Age range 30-50 years).

Primary selection reasoning of two groups to acquire non-identical viewpoints of individuals present in contrasting scenarios

The methods provided will assist in solidifying interview results and questionnaires that have been provided to both data sets. End results; conclusion of the accuracy of the portrayal of television roles being provided to women compared to bona fide test subjects.

### **Tool**

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SPSS software is used to analyze the data.

### **Analysis and Findings**

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#### **Qualitative**

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To gain their opinions on the way women are portrayed in dramas in Pakistan, authors and directors were questioned using the qualitative method mentioned above. The insight gained from the open-ended discussion, which led to the structured questions, is extremely interesting, and they all agreed on a few issues that were universal. The first and most significant of them was regarding the target audience, they emphasized the fact that the majority of dramas are made for women and especially housewives, they are the fundamental factor and the most essential key for the drama industry, the majority of dramas are made solely for them thus basically the tale of the drama has to be connected with their personal lives, that is why most plays are family oriented with various difficulties of every household and the woman is engaged.

#### **Objective 1**

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The point that was brought up was somewhat stereotypical in and of itself, but it brought up the fact that women are naturally very sensitive, so the more suffering the female lead character in the drama experiences, the more popular and successful the drama becomes. The antagonist can be anyone, whether they are members of society or those in her own family. The authors chose to depict these stories because they believe that every woman has experienced profound effects from someone in her life. She may have been heartbroken, sacrificed her needs and feelings for the approval of her family, or been taken advantage of by those she most trusted the main reason why dramas like "Humsafar" or "Meri zaat zarra e benishan" have historically been among the most popular dramas in Pakistan is that when all these points are depicted in dramas, women can identify with them.

#### **Objective 2**

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Women typically identify with these stories, which is the key factor. There were a few other

topics that came up during this discussion, and they related to women's feelings. Since our society forbids group discussions or the sharing of problems with a psychologist in order to receive better solutions, most people believe that women are enslaved by social mores and restrictions and are therefore unable to express their feelings, choosing instead to live with these issues for the rest of their lives. For these reasons, if we keep our problems to ourselves, we will not find better solutions.

### Objective 3

Women want to see these types of roles as they believe that there are a lot of women who suffer but their voices can't be heard in any manner. When they see women in these roles they feel that their voices have been heard and society is raising their issues in this field of TRPs, or television ratings, are ultimately what matters. From their point of view, dramas are more popular when women are represented to be suffering. Women prefer a female protagonist who is weak, helpless, and a victim of society rather than one who is competent.

### Quantitative

After gaining these insights from the interviews conducted, it was time to put these raised issues to the test. Next, a quantitative method was used, and a single questionnaire was created for both categories of women to complete.

The data came from a survey that used a random sampling methodology and gathered

responses from almost 200 respondents. The Chi-square approach is used to access the categorical and nominal data, as Chi-Square test is a factual technique used by researchers to examine the contrasts between unambiguous elements in a similar population.

The information was acquired from 200 respondents in a survey that employed a random sampling process. Since the Chi-Square test is a factual method used by researchers to analyse the contrasts of clear elements in a similar population, the Chi-square methodology is utilized to access the categorical and nominal data.

### Hypothesis Testing

The study aimed to reveal the reality about the weak and unfavorable portrayals of women in dramas and their effects on the broader audience. The researchers have chosen three hypotheses to investigate the actual circumstances surrounding women characters in Pakistani dramas. Because our data are nominal, a statistical analysis of the data is performed using the chi square approach.

### Hypothesis No. 1

- H1:** The characters depicted in Pakistani dramas are accurate portrayals of Pakistani women.
- H0:** The characters depicted in Pakistani dramas are not the accurate portrayals of Pakistani women.

Table 1

Contingency Table				
		Do female characters depicted in pakistani dramas accurately portrayals of pakistani women?		Total
		yes	no	
Do female characters depicted in Pakistani dramas accurate portrayals of pakistani women?	yes	37	18	55
	no	124	21	145
Total		161	39	200
Chi-Square Tests				
		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square		175.369 a	1	.000

**Interpretation**

To examine the portrayal of female characters in pakistani dramas and their true depiction, a chi square test was performed. The outcome indicates that the significance value, i.e. P value is shown to be 0.000, which looks to be too little for the null hypothesis to be valid. The null hypothesis cannot be supported by the P value of 0.000. Thus, the result suggested that the female

characters depicted in the pakistani dramas are the accurate portrayal of pakistani women.

**Hypothesis No. 2**

- H2:** Viewers want to see women as feeble and weak characters.
- H0:** Viewers do not want to see women in feeble and weak characters.

**Table 2**

**Contingency Table**

		Do viewers want to see women as feeble and weak characters?		Total
		yes	no	
Do viewers want to see women in feeble and weak characters?	yes	6	57	63
	no	41	96	137
Total		47	153	200
Chi-Square Tests				
		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square		163.964 a	1	.000

**Interpretation**

A chi square test has been performed to asses the demand of the viewers of whether they want to see women in feeble and weak characters in pakistani dramas or not. P value, or significance value, is calculated and comes out to be 0.000 which is less than 0.05. As  $P < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is disproved and the alternative hypothesis is retained. This result shows that viewers want to see women in weak characters in

pakistani dramas.

**Hypothesis No. 3**

- H3:** Negative characters of working women in Pakistani dramas harm the perception of employed women in real life.
- H0:** Negative characters of working women in Pakistani dramas do not harm the perception of employed women in real life.

**Table 3**

**Contingency Table**

		Does working women in dramas in a negative light will harm the perception of employed women in real life?		Total
		yes	no	
Does working women in dramas in a negative light will harm the perception of employed women in real life?	yes	80	14	94
	no	6	100	106
Total		86	114	200
Chi-Square Tests				
		Value	df	Asymptotic Significane

Pearson Chi-Square	163.249 a	1	(2-sided) .000
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### Interpretation

The results of chi square technique shows the insignificant value of P i.e. 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This insignificance rejects the null

hypothesis and the alternative hypothesis has been accepted. This clearly shows that the negative characters of working women in Pakistani dramas will harm the perception of employed women in real life.

### Housewives

Questions	Yes	No	Sometimes/Maybe
Do you watch Pakistani dramas?	72%	3%	21%
Are women victims of society?	65%	11%	22%
The role of women which drama portrays, are they also like the same in reality?	60%	17%	21%
Are women restricted to do jobs by their family in our society?	69%	8%	21%
Dramas portray women in roles like weak and feeble. Do you agree in comparison to reality?	60%	16%	22%
Working women is mostly portrayed as negative character in dramas, will it affect the perspective of working women in real life?	72%	5%	23%
By portraying women as victims of society or weak, will grab more target audience?	65%	7%	27%

The straightforward nature of the questions allowed for a conclusion as to which theory would be accepted. In order to determine if women actually watch drama or not, I asked 70% of housewives if they do, with the remaining 30% responding that they occasionally do. The most crucial question was then posed: Why do they watch these dramas? The results were fairly predictable, with the majority stating that they become emotionally invested in the characters as they play out their roles and the minority stating that they watch it for entertainment and to learn about the ongoing events in society. The following question asked participants if they believed that women were victims of society. More than half of them responded "yes," while the remainder said "maybe," and the least number of participants responded negatively. When asked if the role of women in dramas is similar to how they are in reality, more than 80% of respondents said that they are, while the remaining 20% said that it might be, and only a handful said that they are not. When posed the following question—do women in our culture have limitations placed on their ability to work by their families—the majority of respondents gave an affirmative

response, while the remainder gave a negative response, indicating that these limitations exist. More than half of the respondents said yes, plays accurately show women in roles that are weak and frail when compared to reality, while the remaining respondents said maybe and a minority said it negatively. This was the central question on the questionnaire. Next, the question is why don't dramas portray women who work as pilots, businesswomen engineers, and in other professions? The qualitative research's findings suggest that women are emotional and they become personally attached when they witness a woman become a victim of society, the majority of respondents selected this option; the minority of female respondents who preferred a different option did not want to see these types of women's roles since they did not add to the popularity of dramas.

The following question was whether the fact that working women are frequently portrayed negatively in dramas would have an impact on how they see themselves in real life. The majority of respondents—more than 60%—selected the yes response, while the remaining respondents selected the no response.

### Working Women

Questions	Yes	No	Sometimes/Maybe
Do you watch Pakistani dramas?	72%	13%	15%
Are women victims of society?	44%	31%	24%
The role of women which drama portrays, are they also like the same in reality?	67%	26%	7%
Are women restricted to do jobs by their family in our society?	72%	18%	10%
Dramas portray women in roles like weak and feeble. Do you agree in comparison to reality?	62%	32%	6%
Working women is mostly portrayed as a negative character in dramas, will it affect the perspective of working women in real life?	76%	5%	19%
By portraying women as victim of society or weak, will grab more target audience?	80%	13%	7%

The same questions were posed to working women as well, but on several occasions, their answers varied from one another. When asked again if they watched Pakistani dramas, the bulk of them—more than 60%—responded with a yes response. When asked why they watched Pakistani dramas, the majority said it was for amusement purposes exclusively, while the remainder said it was to stay informed about social issues. The question was, "Are women victims of society?" The majority of the respondents said "Yes, they are," while only a small number said "Maybe." The following query was, "Are women's roles in dramas similar to those in real life?" The majority of respondents responded negatively, while the remainder said that they might be. The following question inquires as to whether or not women are constrained from working for their families in our society. The majority of respondents responded with the word "maybe", indicating that although they encounter difficulties when working for their families, they ultimately succeed in doing so. The remainder of the respondents responded equally with answers of yes and no. The next question was, "Do you agree that dramas often portray women in roles that are weak and feeble in comparison to reality?" Surprisingly, only 50% of respondents said no; the remainder chose "yes," and a small number said "it may be," indicating that some working women believe this is an accurate representation of women in drama. Why don't the dramas portray women in this role given that they work as pilots,

businesswomen, engineers, etc.? was the second last question. The response was in the line with the conclusion reached by the housewives, according to which the majority of women agree that since women are emotional, they become personally attached when they witness women become a victim of society. The remaining women claimed that women don't want to see these types of roles because casting women in these roles is bad for drama series and there won't be more viewership. The final question was whether the negative portrayal of working women in dramas would change how they see themselves in real life. The majority of respondents said yes, while a minority said it might not.

Even though the two categories are completely different from one another, they frequently and sometimes completely agreed with one another. Housewives believe that the role that the drama's portrayal of women as feeble and weak is indeed the true portrayal of women in real life as well, but more than 30% of working women also agreed with this response. They also agreed when asked whether women are victims of society and that portraying working women in dramas in a negative light will undoubtedly harm the perception of women in real life who are also employed. These are the few issues on which both categories of women could agree, so my hypothesis—that Pakistani dramas portray a small number of women in roles that correspond to their reality in society—was found to be accurate when compared to actual societal norms.

## **Conclusion**

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This study summarizes the criticisms made by many people regarding the stereotypical portrayal of women in Pakistani dramas. Women are typically portrayed as victims of society and their families, who prevent them from working and making important life decisions because they believe that our culture is patriarchal. It has now been proven to be so. The mother-in-law or sister-in-law are commonly presented as manipulative vixens and occasionally a widow is shown to be battling to survive. Women want to see these characters because they suggest that regardless of how strong a woman is, she will eventually have to deal with these problems in her life, and also because this is the brutal reality of our society. These few carefully chosen parts

completely portray them as a victim and these dramas also succeed because they are a realistic portrayal of reality that appeals to women. A woman who is from the working class can also somewhat agree with this statement because they must also struggle to obtain everything.

## **Recommendations**

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Current dramas should be evaluated and studied to find out that still, the pattern is the same or if the story perspective is changed and a new paradigm or problems are being depicted. Women should be cast in different roles which are not old school and they should be shown as educated and play a vital role in building up society.

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