

## DECONSTRUCTING PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN PAKISTANI TELEVISION: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

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### ABSTRACT

Investigating how women are portrayed in Pakistani dramas is the goal of the study. The analysis's primary goal is to clarify how the drama upholds and encourages gender hierarchies and patriarchy in the program. According to the research, Sar-e-Rah depicts patriarchal gender roles in which women are limited to becoming wives, mothers, or housewives, and men are shown as dominating individuals who utilize language to restrict women's movement. The research also shows that people are penalized by society for defying the roles that are assigned to them in conventional gender norms, which makes it plausible in the real world. Despite this, the drama contains certain elements that reinforce gender stereotypes by exposing the archetypes of strong women and sensitive males simultaneously.

**Keywords:** Conventional gender norms, gender stereotypes, patriarchy, gender norms..

### INTRODUCTION

Media has become a vital part of human societies. The term 'media' covers a wide range of communication setups, including, informing and entertaining audience (Danesi, 2014). Other than print media television (TV) is very common, widely approachable media in modern world of communication. It is one of the media which is considered at top level shaping public opinions (Bajwa, Bajwa, & Kidwai, 2021). The platform of TV features a broad variety of programs, including news, plays, discussion shows, and entertainment enactments (Savolainen, 2022). For centuries drama has been staged but with the invention of TV, it has evolved into a new sort of dialogue based discourse (Dixon, 2015). Dramas around the globe have become a source of the reflection of society and its culture. Drama is the most efficient and straightforward mode of communication for social and cultural issues (Turner, 2018).

Pakistani dramas are famous for their narrative range of topics. The TV industry is well known for its drama production; South Asian countries like India, Nepal, and Bangladesh a big fans of Pakistani dramas. Pakistani dramas are famous for the age range of teens to elderly people. Adults especially, prefer to keep themselves updated on norms, values, clothes, cuisine, and marriage customs (Iftikhar, Aziz, Sarwer, & Sagheer, 2024). Alongside many topics, numerous drams are portrayed on gender issues: for example, Udaari (2016) Child abuse, women's empowerment, Sammi (2017) Feudalism, patriarchy, women's rights, Kankar (2013) Domestic violence, marital issues, female independence, Zindagi Gulzar Hai (2012) Women's struggles, family dynamics, social class, Aakhri Station (2018) Women's experiences, mental health, societal pressures, Churails (2020) Feminism, domestic abuse, women's liberation,

Ehd-e-Wafa (2019) Women's roles, societal expectations, empowerment, Ruswai (2019) - Rape culture, victim-blaming, justice, Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan (2010) Women's identity, family, social norms, Dastaan (2010) Women's rights, social justice, partition.

Dramas highlight issues like kidnapping, stalking, toxic masculinity, working women, rape, sexual harassment, sexism, the unfair treatment of women in the home and workplace, domestic abuse, the physical, psychological, and emotional torture of women, marital problems like forced marriages, pressure from society to keep marriages intact at all costs, and cultural expectations and other stereotypical ideas (Leonardi Bison, 2024). On the other side, a few female characters exhibited empowerment, self-sufficiency, and defiance. These characters are shown to challenge the status quo (Lima, 2022). This research focuses on the analysis of dialogues from a Pakistani drama "Sar-e-Rah". The rationale for the selection of this drama is that it reinforces the stereotypical concept of womanhood prevailing in society. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is applied to look at how language is used in the social context. The present research looks at some of the stereotypes that reinforce these ideas and shows how the play upholds and reflects the gender dynamics of power that are common in Pakistani society.

### **Background of the Study**

Television was first broadcast in Pakistan in 1964. Pakistan Television (PTV) was the first channel introduced (Waris Khan & Aziz, (2021). Later on, it developed a prestigious history of televising well-known dramas on morality, families, and socioeconomic matters. In the 1970s and 1980s, PTV gained prominence (Riaz, Mehmood, Abbas, Alamzaib & Hameed, 2015). As the 1990s went on, private TV channels entered the market, such as HUM, Geo, ARY, Ajjak, and others (Kaustubha, 2021). These channels brought modernity and unprecedented fame to the theatrical industry. They treated it like a business and worked on shows that showcased modern narrative techniques that reflected how society was evolving (Mulla, 2021). ARY Digital's drama serials capturing audience's attention by the way it addresses contemporary concerns of gender, poverty, race, class, and so forth. The drama is directed by Ahmad Bhatti, aired on ARY Digital Channel on February 4, 2023. It

tells the stories of women suffocated by gender discrimination, victims of underage marriages, and daughters' incompetence. It was directed by Ahmad Bhatti and aired on ARY Digital Channel on February 4, 2023. It tells the stories of women suffocated by gender discrimination and victims of underage marriages. Saba Qamar's lead character Rania, breaks societal norms by becoming a taxi driver after her father's illness. Despite her education, she faces societal criticism and obstacles. Rania's character embodies empowerment, highlighting the complexities of society through her interactions with passengers. Dr. Muzna, a dedicated doctor, struggles to balance her career and social expectations. Despite being married for six years and having no children, she faces taunts from her mother-in-law and society. Her mother-in-law blames her for not having a child, while her husband is unable to father a child, pressuring her to keep his condition secret. Rameen Haider, a young influencer, challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. After a viral video went viral, she faced pressure from her family and was forced to delete her accounts. Despite facing obstacles, Rameen continues to defy social expectations and demonstrate women's capabilities, highlighting the ongoing battle for gender equality. Maryam, a passionate female character by Harem Farooq, faces challenges in her career due to male colleagues harassing her and blaming her for flirting. Her character explores the psychological upheaval and compromises women make to achieve professional and personal fulfillment. The drama features energetic and determined women characters who face numerous challenges due to gender and societal expectations. The study aims to assess societal stereotypes about married women and explore the challenges they face in their profession. The study aims to analyze, the societal perceptions of independent working women, particularly in male-dominated fields, and the societal perception of women who join the media and the potential impact on their family honor. Research questions are as: How do societal norms and cultural values influence perceptions of independent working women in male-dominated fields in Pakistan? What are the common stereotypes and biases associated with independent working women in Pakistan's workforce? This research examines the impact of Pakistani television dramas, specifically 'Sar-e-Rah', on

gender dynamics, highlighting stereotypes, workplace struggles, and cultural attitudes towards single women.

### **Literature Review**

TV dramas in Pakistan significantly impact cultural norms and societal attitudes. Plays in Pakistani culture not only entertain but also reflect societal traditions and stereotypes, reinforcing conventional standards and gender roles through language and stories. Rasool, Ali and Khan (2022) analyzed the language used in three dramas, "Mere Pass Tum Ho," "Dil Ruba," and "Muhabbat Tujh Alvida," revealing that dramas portray women negatively, as materialists and greedy, perpetuating societal stereotypes. Stereotypes in Pakistani TV dramas often portray women as emotional or illogical, dependent on men for protection, and responsible for caring for others. These stereotypes are shaped by cultural and societal norms, leading to misconceptions about women's competence, responsibility, and role in society. Misconceptions about women's leadership abilities in professional settings restrict their opportunities and perpetuate gender-based discrimination (Eagly, & Kite, 1987). Pakistani TV dramas, analyzed by Ashfaq and Shafiq (2018), reveal stereotypes of "Perfect Women" and "Bad Women," with perfect women conforming to family orders and bad women being liberal and ambitious. TV dramas, particularly in Pakistan, often portray women as solely responsible for family and household chores, with 73% of advertisements depicting women performing conventional duties. The portrayal of women as domestic workers perpetuates traditional gender roles, impacting young girls' future responsibilities and potentially limiting their career success and self-reliance. TV dramas often depict women experiencing abuse, including physical, emotional, and psychological violence, despite fulfilling social expectations. This is often due to patriarchal systems that view women as less human and use this as an excuse to dominate them. Javed's (2023) analysis of Pakistani TV dramas "Muqaddar" and "Kaisi Teri Khudgharzi" revealed harmful gender roles and violence against women, reinforcing the patriarchal mindset. Akhter (2021) highlights the portrayal of physical and verbal abuse against women as normal, justifying patriarchal attributes and glorifying psychological abuse, rather than addressing violence prevention.

South Asian dramas often depict violence as a symbol of romance, with male characters causing physical, verbal, and emotional harm to females, showcasing their intense passion and deep care. The portrayal of abuse as a normal part of healthy relationships, blurring the line between abuse and love, reinforces toxic dynamics and perpetuates harmful stereotypes. Zulfiqar, Hafeez & Aziz (2023) found that Pakistani TV dramas often portray violence and misogynistic behavior as romantic gestures, affecting women's relationships and dignity. Industry experts surveyed 18-35-year-old women, arguing that this portrayal is problematic, but some see it as societal norms or entertainment. TV dramas often portray women as a stereotype stemming from traditional gender norms. Women's success in these narratives often depends on their ability to maintain their marriage despite physical, mental, or emotional challenges. A survey of 100 men and women found that Pakistani TV dramas often portray women negatively, highlighting their extraordinary efforts and pain to save their marriage, blurring Islamic values (Tabassum & Amin, 2020). Media and television dramas often portray women as imperfect, implying they must achieve excellence in all aspects of life to be considered worthy, a concept that is unjust and impossible. A stylish and attractive woman may neglect her household duties or not meet the expectations of a "good" wife or mother. Beauty products often exploit women, implying flaws and suggesting they should be used to correct imperfections or enhance their beauty and wrinkle-free appearance (Iqbal, Danish & Tahir, 2014). TV dramas often depict a patriarchal society, with men dominating power and authority, reinforcing gender discrimination. Men are seen as natural leaders, while women are seen as followers or caregivers, reinforcing this gender disparity. Khan (2021) found that Pakistani dramas often reinforce traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms through heteronormative visual culture, with some exceptions like "Zun Mureed" introducing new heroines.

Women's characters are often misrepresented, with careers often seen as secondary to family responsibilities, perpetuating idealized gender roles and patriarchal reinforcement. Professional women often face challenges due to the assumption that their family responsibilities are prioritized over their professional aspirations, leading to

perceived neglect of familial responsibilities. TV dramas often portray women as selfless and sacrificing for their families, implying that those who don't fit these norms are less deserving. Studies like Zaheer's (2020) "Humsafar and Zindagi Gulzar Hai" show women are emotionally and financially dependent on men, prioritizing family over careers. Roy (2016) found that Pakistani TV dramas like Numm, Humsafar, and Zindagi Gulzar hai portray educated women Kashaf Murtaza and Kharid, facing gender-based discrimination and unique challenges. In "Zindagi Gulzar Hai," Kashaf faces challenges due to her gender and societal expectations, while Kharid, a powerful woman, faces obstacles due to patriarchal structures. The play portrays Kharid's struggle to navigate a male-dominated society, despite her education and independence, highlighting the societal view of female independence as a threat or subset.

Pakistani TV dramas significantly influence cultural norms and social attitudes, often perpetuating old-fashioned prejudices by portraying women as materialistic, reliant, and restricted to home duties. Dramas often portray men as dominant, while women are subservient due to ambition, normalizing violence and inequality. Women rebel against the status quo, while those fulfilling traditional roles are appreciated. These portrayals blur the lines between abuse and love. Dramas often portray men as dominant, while women are subservient due to ambition, normalizing violence and inequality. Women rebel against the status quo, while those fulfilling traditional roles are appreciated. These portrayals blur the lines between abuse and love. Research on gender stereotypes in Pakistani TV dramas highlights a gap in understanding how modern plays like "Sar-e-rah" challenge societal dynamics and empower female characters, despite prior studies focusing on traditional gender roles. Research on "Sar-e-rah" dramas reveals female empowerment and traditional hierarchies, examining language and dialogues to challenge existing power dynamics and understand gender norms.

### **Research Methods**

Creswell (2014) defines research methodology as the systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data using mixed, qualitative, or quantitative techniques, ensuring they align with the study's goals. This research utilized a qualitative approach under the CDA paradigm, as described by Creswell (2017), to explore and understand the meanings individuals attribute to social or human issues. The qualitative method is employed to analyze gender representation in media, specifically through the drama "Sar-e-Rah," focusing on deeper narratives, power dynamics, and cultural contexts. Qualitative research interprets media's representation of societal gender norms and ideologies, revealing both overt and covert messages about gender roles, expectations, and identities. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary method that examines how language and discourse contribute to the formation and maintenance of societal power and ideologies. CDA, introduced by Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak, focuses on the link between language and social power in the late 20th century. CDA examines how language, as a social practice and communication tool, is shaped by social structures like identities, opinions, and power relations. CDA uncovers societal ideologies, power dynamics, and cultural narratives in the Pakistani drama "Sar-e-Rah," analyzing gender representation and stereotypes. The Fairclough (1989) three-dimensional Model of CDA is utilized in this research to enhance understanding of gender roles and stereotypes in the drama "Sar-e-Rah."

### **Theoretical Framework**

Fairclough (1989) introduced a three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model, as discussed in his book "Language and Power". Model is a crucial framework in Critical Discourse Analysis, providing a comprehensive approach to analyzing the interplay between language, power, and ideology. The model, consisting of three dimensions: Textual analysis, Discursive practice, and Sociocultural practice, aims to understand the connection between language and society (Fairclough, 2013). Fairclough Model is effective for this research as it considers dialogue content, production, consumption, and social implications.

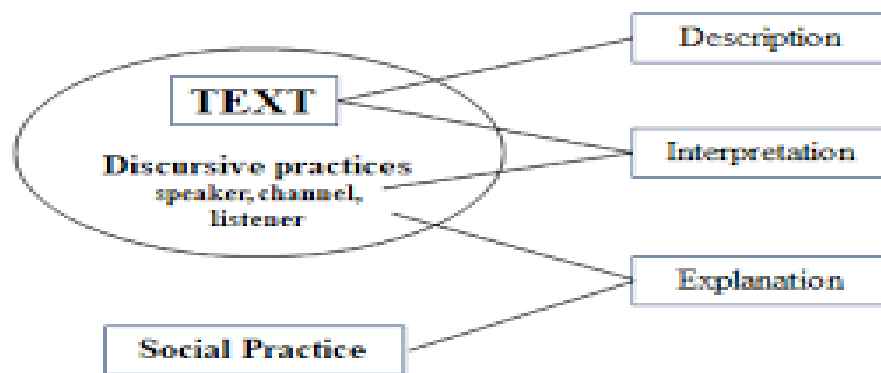


Figure.1: Fairclough Three-Dimensional Mode

The Fairclough Model's first dimension, Textual Analysis, examines the linguistic elements of a text to understand how meaning is created, communicated, and maintained. The textual analysis of "Sar-e-Rah" examines how male characters' express gender roles and stereotypes, revealing power dynamics and societal attitudes towards gender through word choice and tone. The play analyzes language patterns, phrases, and themes to understand how they support or contradict gender stereotypes, making it easier to comprehend gendered identities and roles. Discursive practice is a field that studies the use of language in specific social and cultural contexts, categorized into three subcategories: Production, Distribution, and Consumption. Fairclough Model's production sub-dimension focuses on text creation and production, considering language use, media producer choices, and societal norms influencing content. Distribution analysis examines text circulation methods, platforms, audiences, production channels, and routes, focusing on how these methods contribute to the dissemination and reinforcement of power and ideology beliefs. The discursive practice examines the production, distribution, and consumption of "Sar-e-Rah" drama, considering societal norms, audience expectations, and the intentions of writers, directors, and producers. It examines how these practices influence the drama's gender representation and viewers' beliefs. Fairclough's approach's third dimension, social practice, explores the impact of historical, political, and economic structures on discourse, highlighting how individuals communicate and think about

topics. Sar-e-Rah, a Pakistani drama, explores gender-related issues and power dynamics, highlighting women's career obstacles and social pressure to conform to gender conceptions. Purposive sampling was used in this research to analyze episodes and dialogues from the Pakistani drama "Sar-e-rah," focusing on themes of gender representation, power dynamics, and societal norms, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the play's portrayal. This research examines hidden ideologies and societal stereotypes related to women in the Pakistani drama "Sar-e-rah" through dialogues from six episodes. The data collection is based on dialogues, the dialogues were analyzed for their potential to reveal stereotypes, power dynamics, and gender roles, and their translation into English was done using official subtitles. This research explores themes like gender inequality, empowerment, societal pressure, and identity negotiation within cultural traditions through dialogues.

#### Data Analysis

The analysis of the Pakistani drama "Sar-e-rah" reveals societal and cultural beliefs about women, revealing hidden gender inequalities and societal pressures they face. This research examines gender expectations, gender restrictions, and traditional roles of women through Fairclough's three-dimensional Model, revealing underlying ideologies and their processing within sociocultural contexts.

### Selected Dialogue One

Mother-in-law to her Daughter-in-law

“Jo larki ghar sy jahez ni ly ky jati na os ki susral my koi izzat e ni hoti”

“The girl who did not bring dowry from her parents' house does not have any respect at her in-law's house”. (Episode 1, 4:16).

### Textual Analysis

This dialogue uses simple language to show a clear cause and effect, inferring that not furnishing dowry leads to a lack of respect, which is a strong, conclusive argument. Dowry (Jahez) and respect (Izzat) are veritably culturally significant terms in numerous South Asian countries, establishing a clear relationship between a woman's tone of regard and the financial riches she brings into her marriage. This dialogue shows a judging tone and conveys a negative meaning with the word "no" (Ni), showing that a girl who does not give dowry is not respected by her in-laws.

### Discursive Practice

Through a character who still adheres to traditional beliefs, the drama Sar-e-rah highlights the conventional rule that a girl's regard depends on her dowry. This exchange exemplifies the traditional wisdom that holds that a woman's regard for her in-laws depends on receiving a dowry. Those apprehensive of witness the dowry system may regard this as an underpinning of current societal forces, while others may view it as a critical reflection of accumulative morals.

### Social Practice

This dialogue is based on the social custom of dowry, which is popular in numerous South Asian associations, including Pakistan. Dowry has always been considered a means of maintaining a woman's status and reference in the marital home. The social concept is that a woman's value and status after marriage depend on the dowry she brings. This tradition also exposes gender inequality as it throws a financial burden on the bride's family and perpetuates exploitation and abuse against women. It supports patriarchal evidence of women's commodification, seeing them as profit-making products rather than as fundamentally valuable personalities. It perpetuates the myth that women's references and

values are conditional and can be measured in actual material terms.

### Selected Dialogue Two

Brother to her Sister

“Chup chap ghar my betho! Khabardar tum ny taxi chala ky pury muhally ky samny hamny zaleel krwany ki koshish ki tu”

"Sit quietly at home! Do not humiliate us in front of the neighborhood by driving a taxi."

(Episode 1, 16:48).

### Text Analysis

Words like "Khabardar" and related terms and "Chupchap" reflect the command and domination of the person speaking. The tone of this dialogue suggests that a forceful command is made. His younger brother appears rather obsessed with people's opinions concerning the words "humiliate" and "entire neighborhood."

### Discourse Practice

Such notions convey the central cultural idea of women's conduct being related to maintaining family dignity and respect. Similar comments could be made by a character who is the bearer of conservative views in "Sar-e-rah." The dialogue reveals that it is wrong and disgraceful to shift from these traditional views, for example, a woman being a taxi driver. Loud Speech deliveries often reinforce the hierarchical mechanisms operating based on gender or class by selecting the male individual to assert dominance over the female speaker. It may be a characteristic of the represented culture's patriarchal or authoritarian system where one is expected to adhere to particular roles and behaviors, and any departure from the norms is met with scorn and embarrassment.

### Sociocultural Practice

In the context of the play 'Sar-e-Rah,' this statement might be enacted by a character of conventional ideology showing the norm that women should act by family honor. The dialogue emphasizes that such roles are imposed for a reason, and any such nonconformity, such as a woman being a cab driver, will bring disgrace-ed sinks in such crap. The dialogue also illustrates the emergence of control, where men perceive that they are entitled to rein in women's movements to maintain their respectability. It demonstrates a level of patriarchal

mindset where the actions of women are regarded as the aura of men and therefore limits women's self-sufficiency only when it's necessary.

### Selected Dialogue Three

A random older man to Rania (Taxi driver):  
"Ab larkiyān chālāin gin taxi! Qayamat ki nishani hai"  
"Now, girls will drive a taxi! It's a sign of doomsday."  
(Episode 1, 23:48)

### Textual Analysis

The exchange is plain, containing simple words and expressions such as "girls will drive a taxi" or "a sign of doomsday," which denote astonishment and negativity. Even in plain speaking, using "Qayamat ki nishani," which is translated as "doomsday's sign," is melodramatic, as it implies that such events when women become taxi drivers are far-fetched or even shocking. People's thoughts, in that case, trump sarcastic and scornful undertones towards the opinion that women are given a chance to drive taxis. It becomes obvious from the older man's vocabulary that this is unacceptable; something terrible has gone amiss.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue originates from a society with certain cultural practices prohibiting women from engaging in what is considered men's domain, such as driving a taxi. In a drama named 'Sar-e-Rah,' an old man may speak such a line due to the gap in era and traditions regarding women's rights. Men and women are still encased in stereotyped roles within society that define what it is appropriate for them to do or be.

### Social Practice

In the dialogue, there is a depiction of a society that is changing its Gender systems but has not fully accepted the new cultural changes. The notion that women should not drive taxis stems from issues to do with gender and the idea that some professions are meant for men only. This belief is against women's freedom and upholds traditional women's roles in society. This held the beauty and freedom of women to the cage of societal dictates as to what was acceptable for a woman. When the speaker uses the phrase "This is the sign of doomsday" concerning women driving taxi cars, it means that

women's independence and going against the norms of society is a threat to society's morality. This is a capture of a patriarchal culture that wants to control women's decisions.

### Selected Dialogue Four

Rania's fiancé's mother to her mother  
"Do laga kar betha na tha ghar par! Awal ye ladkiyon KO nokri vokri ka shouq charhna e Ni chahiye agar charh b jaye to Kisi school wakool my kar lain"  
"You should have slapped her and asked her to stay at home! First, girls should not think about doing a job; if they want to, they shall do the job of a school teacher in some school."  
(Episode 1, 33:51)

### Textual Analysis

The dialogue contains many elements of verbal abuse, such as 'should have slapped her' and 'stay at home,' that indicate a desire for domination and shaming of women. The terms 'ladkiyon,' meaning girls, and 'nokri vokri,' meaning job, signify that women's employment is insignificant and unworthy. The phrase "school wakool" is referred to here and used rudely, which means that teaching is all that can be expected of women; the rest is not good enough. It is highly authoritative and condescending; the author condemns women who work outside the home. There has been noted the use of hypothetical statements like that of 'should have slapped her,' which speaks of power and spanking.

### Discursive Practice

In the drama Sar-e-Rah, such a line could be delivered by a character who embodies conservative society's prejudice against women, their autonomy, and their freedoms in terms of choosing their careers. It shows an idea that women are inferior to men and should remain in limited roles or those considered less demanding or more caring, such as teaching.

### Social Practice

The dialogue presents a view of society that wants to keep women only on jobs suitable for them or at home. The statement carries the obvious connotation that women should be submissive and whatever propriety they have should be tamed by force, that women in the sphere of work should

only be hard-working teachers and not anything more. The dialogue reveals confidence and the absence of choice for women. It proposes a rather rigid model of how women should behave, working in some occupations but not others. This mentality perpetuates gender inequality, as, firstly, there are no promotions for women in the workplace, and secondly, it is based on violence and control over women's choices.

### Selected Dialogue Five

Dr. Muzna to Rania

"Ak ki b maa ni hon, pichly 6 saal sy sirf tany sun rai hon or maa banny ka intzar kar rahi hoon"

"I am not even a mother of one. I have been listening to taunts for the past six years, and I am waiting to become a mother."

(Episode 2, 7:36)

### Text Analysis

The dialogue employs words and phrases that are plain and straightforward to convey a real-life situation. This can be seen from such words as 'maa' meaning mother, 'tany' meaning taunts, and 'intzar' meaning waiting, showing the social pressure that comes with childlessness. The phrase "sirf tany sun rai hon" goes on with emotional suffering and feeling judged by society. Nothing is happy or cheerful, and the style reflects a degree of helpless despair most of the time. The words selected by the speaker represent a personal problem and the suffering of receiving a continuous barrage of criticism. Being 'waiting' can be interpreted as holding on to hope, simultaneously suggesting helplessness and inability to influence something.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue is produced in a cultural context that frowns at any woman who does not have children or one who is childless against her wish. Saying this, in the drama 'Sar-e-Rah,' there is a drama scene presented through a woman who is pressured to give birth to a child. It gathered social beliefs that locate a woman's value and selfhood primarily on their capacity to procreate. The conversation also reveals the physical and mental stress that such social standards place on women who fail to meet these standards.

### Social Practice

Indeed, the conversation represents a culture that emulates motherhood as an essential component of the female spirit and value. Barren women are considered outcasts, have low self-esteem, and are even stigmatized by society, hence becoming emotionally unstable. This societal demand perpetuates gender roles, which make women only valuable as child bearers. Therefore, the dialogue reveals important relations between power and knowledge in which oppressive social norms and values govern individual spheres of people's lives and establish pressure on women particularly.

### Selected Dialogue Six

Dr. Muzna to her husband

Fault tum my ni hai. My shayad kabi b tumhy aulad Na Dy sakon. Tum to maa ban sakti ho lakin shayad my kabi b baap Ni ban skta. Lakin tum meri biwi ho, meri dost, mera labas or meri razdar. Is liye tum ye bat Kisi sy Ni kro gi.

There is no fault in you. Maybe I will never be able to give you a child. You can become a mother, but perhaps I can never become a father. But you are my wife, friend, hide, and secret keeper. That's why you will never tell anyone this.

(Episode 2, 14:12)

### Text Analysis

In the dialogue, it employs terms that refer to close relationships; terms like "maa" (mother), "baap" (father), "biwi" (wife), "dost" (friend), "labs" (hide), and "radar" (secret keeper). Such terms imply confidence and familiarity between the speaker and the person being addressed. That is accompanied by a state of total comfort as captured by the phrase "there is no fault in you," Conversely, there is a sign of self-blame as captured in the "maybe I can never become a father." The phrase "you will never tell this to anyone" emphasizes concealing and shyness and putting pressure on his wife that you held it a secret.

### Discursive Practice

Perhaps this dialogue originates from a certain culture where childbearing is considered as part of marriage and a female's purpose in life. In the 'Sar-e-Rah' Drama, spoken by a husband turns to his wife, frightened of being infertile. It portrays the societal pressure that has been placed on men to be given children and the shame of being unable to



provide, the discriminative issue of male infertility, but the woman is supposed to bury it and accept to take the fall for it.

### Social Practice

The dialogue depicts a society where infertility, especially male infertility, is considered shameful and a taboo that should be concealed. The cultures that require a man to father children put a man in a dilemma in case he cannot, and this puts him in a shameful position. When the man promises to keep this a secret, he embodies what society expects of it, to pretend and maintain an ideal façade that nobody has to know about such issues. On this note, dialogue shows the power struggle between the couple, whereby the husband wants to grab the reins of the narrative by encouraging his wife not to disclose his barrenness. It also stresses the role of the wife as a doctinaire and a keeper who is supposed to protect her husband's weaknesses from exposure.

### Selected Dialogue Seven

Dr. Muzna's Mother-in-law to her husband  
Char saal ho Gaye hain tumhari shadi KO, agar is sy bacha ni ho raha to bata dy tu, teri dosri shadi krwa doon gi

It's been four years since you were married. If she cannot give you a baby, ask her to tell me so that we can have your second marriage.

(Episode 2, 16:54)

### Textual Analysis

The dialogue is assertive and authoritative, with expressions such as bata dy tu (ask her to tell me) and dosri shadi karwa doon gi (She can do your second marriage). These phrases express a certain degree of power and mastery of the situation. Bacha ni ho raha (cannot give you a baby) emphasizes the incapability of having a child, casting it as an issue to be solved. The word "if" here is also conditional and implies that there is no possibility of continuing a marriage unless one can give birth.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue is being done in a cultural background where childbearing is regarded as the primary wifely responsibility or the main purpose of marriage. In the drama Sar-e-Rah, this line might be said by a family member who doesn't approve

of a second marriage or divorce and thinks that infertility is just an issue that can be solved by having a second marriage. This statement is a clear indication that a woman is merely useful or wanted in a marriage if and only if she bears children.

### Social Practice

The kind of conversation depicted in the drama truly mirrors the social reality where infertility is considered to be a severe problem that the woman should microscopically analyze. The expectation is that a woman must be a mother; if she cannot, many others will take her place. This attitude shows gender discrimination and supports the belief that women are useful solely to bear children. It depicts the social relations and control in marriages, especially in the decisions of second marriages and continuities of families, where others make the decisions, often by masculine people or seniors. To some extent, it is consistent with an ideology of gender that holds that women are readily interchangeable. They generalize a patriarchal view about women, which creates and sustains gender-based discrimination and control of women.

### Selected Dialogue Eight

Dr. Muzna to her Mother-in-law

Shadi KY bad ladkiyo ko shohar or susral walon ki zaruraton ka khayal rakhna chahiye, itni si baat samajh me nahi aati tumhare

After marriage, a girl should take care of her husband and her family's needs, don't you get it?

(Episode 2, 22:57)

### Text Analysis

It employs direct and imperative language, which says ladkiyo ko (girls should) and shohar ka khayal rakhna chahiye (should care for the needs). Terms like "shohar," which means a husband, and "sural walon," which implies the husband's family, particularly describes women's roles after marriage. Only the phrase "itni si baat samajh me nahi aati" can be translated as "don't you get it" and can express frustration or disappointment in the expectation.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue is created with the cultural lens of marriage, where men are supposed to hold the mantle of leadership. The drama 'Sar-e-Rah' is said

by a character who believes in tradition, where women must not work outside their homes. It portrays discourses familiar in many South Asian communities where women are expected to abide by the needs of their husbands and in-laws. It further continues the belief that a woman is only fit for caregiving, especially after marriage, and that her role is mainly to serve her new husband's family.

### Social Practice

The dialogue gives the social roles assigned to women in society after marriage, where their responsibilities are restricted to home activities only. This expectation perpetuates the culture of patriarchy that tends to devalue the woman's role in society by limiting her duties to the husband and his family. Such norms can result in women being expected to neglect their own needs, career paths, or even their self-development to cater to others, which perpetuates gender disparities and marginalization of women.

### Selected Dialogue Nine

Dr. Muzna's Mother-in-law to her  
Mard my aaib ni hota, kami khali aurat my hoti hai  
There is no problem with a man. Only a woman has a problem  
(Episode Two, 31:32)

### Text Analysis

The dialogue is assertive and emphatic with expressions like "mard my hota aaib NHI ni" (there is no problem in a man) and "kami khali aurat my hoti hai" (only a woman is problematic). It is an initially declarative structure where the given statements are presented as absolute truths. The words "again," which means flaw or defect, are used concerning women only and denote their inherent fault or lack of some quality. In contrast, "kami," which implies deficiency, applies only to women and completely exonerates men from any deficiency.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue is generated from a cultural setting where power lies in the hands of the male and where the latter dominates women. In the drama "Sar-e-Rah," it is said by the character who fully supports the patriarchal nature and thinks that men are superior to women. It perpetuates negative roles

that give a message that whenever things go wrong, women are to blame while men are protected.

### Social Practice

It depicts a society where men are assumed to be flawless, and any problems with relationships, marriage, or family problem-solving are thought to be attributed to women. This is a belief system that fits the patriarchal Model where men are perceived to be strong, competent, and infallible while women are incompetent, emotional, and error-prone. Such norms as women are seen as being responsible for the relationships and social order contribute to gender inequality, falsely assuming that women are responsible for ensuring that relationships are good as well as social order.

### Selected Dialogue Ten

Rania to Dr. Muzna  
"Hamari society my ak akeli aurat khas tor par shadi shuda aurat, kiya faisly akela kar sakte hai? Lar sakti hai, kayal kar sakti hai, mana sakte hai, kisi b bat py ghar walon ko shohar ko lakin faisla akele ni kar sakti"  
"In our society, can an alone woman, especially a married woman, decide alone? She can fight, convince, appease her family and husband on any matter, but she cannot make decisions alone."  
(Episode 2, 33:02)

### Text Analysis:

The dialogue employed rhetorical questions, and assertiveness conveyed a message about a woman's place in society. Words such as "ak akeli aurat" for "an alone woman" and "faisla akele ni kar sakti" for not being able to make a decision alone represent some of the limitations put on women. Remember that such terms as "shadi shuda aurat" (married woman) and "ghar walon ko shohar ko" (family and husband) add more emphasis that these requirements are even higher for married women. The dialogue does not depict any anger or rebellion, but it represents a degree of acceptance that women do not have control over their decisions.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue exists under a cultural context where women, most especially married women, are regarded as inferior to the males of their family and their husbands respectively. The dialogue perfectly depicts how most cultures in traditional societies

are in that women are barred from making key decisions without consulting a male figure.

### Social Practice

The dialogue under analysis also outlines the social practice of restricting women in terms of their decisions, especially in matters concerning marriage. This is because a married woman is expected to be subordinate to her husband's decisions and follow her family's directions, limiting her actions. This still holds today because societies remain deeply patriarchal and respect the family and collective decision-making of people instead of the individual, especially women. It continues the tradition that no matter how much posturing a woman can do, she can argue, bargain, persuade, or negotiate all she wants, but in the end, the man must approve the final decision.

### Selected Dialogue Eleven

Rameen to her Fiancé

"Hum jesi middle class families ki larkiyan na ye media, showbiz, fashion in cheezon my ni a saktin"

"The girls like us belonging to a middle class family cannot come into media, fashion and showbiz"

(Episode 3, 12:04)

### Text Analysis

The dialogue maintains rather a clear terminology with no explicit terms, such as intermediate, for example, the terms "middle-class families" and "media, showbiz, fashion" to mean some circles. The term "Larkin" (girls) is used particularly for women from these families, and "ni a satin" (cannot come into) reflects a restriction or ban.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue depicts a specific approach towards social stratification and social class distinction. In the drama 'Sar-e-Rah,' this line might be uttered by the protagonist's sister, who thinks that her status hinders her career path. Such words in the dialogue depict perceptions that media, fashion, and showbiz are industries that anyone from a higher social class easily enters for reasons such as financial might, contacts, and privilege. It supports the notion that class does matter when it comes to getting a job or a particular profession.

### Social Practice

The dialogue focuses on the social norm set, invoking one's class to bar one from practicing certain fields or getting a particular job. It echoes the social environment in which media, fashion, and showbiz are associated with the higher circles and, therefore, available mainly to people with proper means. This exclusion perpetuates class systems and thereby allows employment prospects for only a few of those belonging to the middle-class or lower-class categories.

### Selected Dialogue Twelve

Cab driver to Maryam

"Aby choi moi hai tu ghar my beth bahir nikaly gi tu ham dekhain gy"

"If you are so delicate, then sit at home! We will stare at you if you come outside."

(Episode 5, 8:20)

### Text Analysis

The dialogue also uses authoritative language with statements such as "ghar my beth," which means sit at home, and "ham dekhain gy," which means we will stare at you. Lastly, the word 'choi moi' translates to 'delicate.' This is used in negative language to downgrade the other person's strength or capacity. The dialogue is stative as it instructs a person to remain home and promises negative repercussions if a girl disagrees.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue is produced in a background that most of the cultural practices, such as gender roles and social policing, are dominant. It embodies society has culture regarding women or those who fail to meet the expected norms in the society as fit to be punished or laughed, supports those unworthy, and tries to force others to obey them with threats and pressure.

### Social Practice

The dialogue raises dominance issues in a way that demonstrates how one person or a group gains control over the other through intimidation and influence. They represent an ideology of power over others by threatening people's populations into compliance or forcing them to change by using authorities that assess and penalize them for not being normative. This serves to maintain gender

and social inequalities because power is vested in those who uphold the normative culture.

### Selected Dialogue Thirteen

Maryam to Rania

“Hamari Jo society hai na os my ladkiyo KO ek baat sikhai jati hai larka ni hoga tu tum incomplete ho, tum akele kesy khari ho skti ho, tumhein sahara chahiye blah blah...”

"In our society, girls are taught one thing: you're incomplete if you don't have a guy's support, and how can you stand alone? You need support blah blah..."

(Episode 5, 20:58)

### Text Analysis

Crude and contemptuous language is employed with sentences such as 'tum incomplete ho' and 'tumhein sahara chahiye,' which suggests that women need a man for completeness. For instance, "ladkiyo" (girls) refers to the expected behavior in ladies, while "larka" (guys) relates to what is expected from a man in society. The final repetition of blah blah implies disdain for those old-school thoughts, thereby portraying irritation or disdain at the idea that women cannot be self-sufficient and need a man to complete them.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue is produced within a culture that continues to uphold male domination and expects women to be dependent on men. It carries on social dialogue where women are encouraged to look for a man to be complete or lacking something. In the drama Sar-e-Rah, this dialogue is said by a character who observes or judges these oppressive social norms. It exposes one of the ever-pervasive social beliefs that is detrimental to women's chances of attaining a resolve to be single.

### Social Practice

The dialogue shows an example of dominance where women are made to feel incomplete and helpless and hence depend on the men. It is in line with the ideology that men are placed on the pedestal of authority while women are seen as needing the help of men to be complete. This belief system continues to perpetrate gender disparity, given that it portrays women as inferior to men and in a desperate search for affirmation from the latter.

### Dialogue 14

Maryam's colleague to her

“Kash! Hamary b lamby bal hoty, yeh again hotel, nail paints hoty. Yeh khurdari dhari na hoti balky lipstick hoti tu crore ka ye project ham b win kr lety, hammy b sab ye mubarikbat japan papaya duty.”

"I wish I could have long hair, this attitude to attract someone and nail paints. I wish not to have this rough beard; instead, we should have lipstick. So, we should have won the billions project. Everyone would have congratulated us and hugged us."

(Episode 5, 39:37)

### Text Analysis

The dialogue reflects a desire to possess feminine attributes like "long hair," "attitude," and "lipstick," but not a "rough beard" and "khurdari dhari," which means a rough look. In particular, the expression "croon ka ye project," which can be translated as "billions project," indicates that succeeding by following the ideals of femininity was possible and could bring fame. The dialogue contrasts superficial success with real success, suggesting that society values physical attractiveness.

### Discursive Practice

This dialogue emerges from a context that satirically looks at beauty and feminine attributes as a means to success. It mirrors the speaker's anger toward a society that assigns value and success to body beauty. Thus, in 'Sar-e-Rah,' it is assumed that women gain success because of their beauty and look.

### Social Practice

It also depicts society's views on beauty and the gender expectations of people in society. It raises the voices of how social norms envelop one's accomplishments and how this causes aggravation when people feel they must live up to these expectations to get ahead. This belief system continues to promote the premise that success is about compliance with society's aesthetics and femininity norms.

### Selected Dialogue Fifteen

Rameen's brother to her:

“Tum jesi behan ho tu paida hoty e jan sy maar dena chahiye”

“A sister like you should be killed as soon as she is born.”  
(Episode 6, 37:04)

### **Text Analysis**

The language of the dialogue is not sophisticated and contains severe and unlawful expressions, such as "paid hoty e Jan sy" and "maar dena chahiye." Using the term behan (sister) negatively, the speaker used this information to convey that they do not want a nasty behan to live. Undoubtedly, the dialogue structure is emphasized and categorically full of condemnation. The dialogue conveys a huge negative attitude and demonizes the other through violent language, indicating that they are mere objects of the speaker's disgust. It is a total disregard for the sister's value or worth in society or among relatives.

### **Discursive Practice**

Such a dialogue will be produced in a background that may depict extreme societal or familial attitudes. It portrays a very unfavorable and punishing perspective and might describe the effects of disapproval or the challenge of traditional conventional standards. In 'Sar-e-Rah,' this could be used to make light of intense family expectations or abuse of anyone who does not fit into a certain mold.

### **Social Practice**

The dialogue portrays the extreme poles, although the social context is intolerant of certain behaviors or characteristics. It goes a long way in emphasizing some societal or even familial demands that require a person to be put through such extreme measures depending on their value or behavior. Using the dialogue, the author reveals the possibility of extreme punishment and judgment stemming from the power difference. This ideology favors the people who are strong, intelligent, and fit to be alive and does not accept those who are not strong and smart, thus justifying ruthless actions.

### **Discussion**

The qualitative analysis of the selected Pakistani drama titled 'Sar-e-Rah' by employing the Fairclough three-dimensional Model reveals an understanding of social and cultural attitudes toward women. Overall, the story of this drama

shows empowerment. Still, studying the specific dialogues in six episodes can identify gender prejudices and gender roles in society as well as the pressures on women. The drama also portrays the expectations that women of the present age are subjected to marry, become mothers, and stick to the typical female roles while revealing the obstacles these characters encounter when trying to be different.

Gender roles and expectations are seen as common. One of the common features of the dialogues is the focus on women's actions regarding marriage, motherhood, and family obligations. As can be deduced from the above passage, pressure is imposed on women to nurture their husbands and in-laws rather than foster their careers. For instance, dowry dialogue shows social opinion, which equates a woman's worth in her marital home to the dowry she brings. In the same manner, discussions on the topic of motherhood reveal that society expects women to reproduce, and childlessness is blamed on the woman.

Restriction of women's autonomy is observed throughout the drama as, in conversations, they focus on how and to what extent decisions are painted as being beyond women's control. Most of the things heard from the male characters are that women should not work or do things that are looked down upon in society, including driving a taxi or holding nontraditional jobs. Statements like 'stay home and be silent' or refraining from whatever 'humiliates' the family divulge a potent influence over women to protect the family's honor.

Reinforcement of patriarchal norms is presented as necessary. Most dialogues perpetuate the dominant culture that men are powerful figures whose decisions the women around them are supposed to abide by. This power dynamic is well illustrated in dialogues where the men feel they own or have a right to dictate the women's choices. The belief that a married woman cannot make decisions alone, as said in one of the dialogues, proves the presence of the rigorous patriarchal structures that deny women's self-sufficiency and dictate men's superiority.

Social stigma and judgment prevail across the drama: The drama raises the issue of the social exclusion of women who do not fit the stereotypical domestic mold. There are prejudices against female characters who want to be

independent or do not meet the imposed standards. For example, a woman who is driving a taxi is considered a bad example, and women who do not have children are harassed and pressured by society. Such portrayal goes a long way in revealing that society plays a very vital role in ensuring that women and other groups are discriminated against and marginalized.

Subtle challenges to stereotypes are there to observe, however, there are some instances in "Sar-e-Rah" that open doors for such questions even though many dialogues maintain the stereotyped image of women and men. For example, when a man impregnates his wife, yet he is infertile but begs the wife not to disclose it to the public, it creates a platform where a normally silenced man is given a voice. This creates the illusion that men must also fit into certain molds within society as much as women do.

Emotional and Psychological impact on women is strong. Many of the dialogues show not only what was expected from women as it was shortly described but also the emotional and psychological costs of the existing expectations. When women characters are judged for not meeting these expectations, they feel helpless and frustrated and give up hope. The daily pressure and criticism from society put their psychological well-being and self-esteem in jeopardy, which portrays the tact of having to deal with the social expectations of thriving in full-blown gender roles.

### **Results and Conclusion**

Applying Fairclough's three-dimensional Model to Pakistani drama, Sar-e-Rah unveiled complex ways in which gender portrayal in the media perpetuates social norms through language. Other research on dramas like "Mere Pass Tum Ho," "Dil Ruba," and "Muhabbat Tujh Alvida" identified that women are portrayed negatively, as being greedy to get richer, and further contribute to the stereotype that women are needy, emotionally and financially depending on men (Rasool, Ali, & Khan, 2022). However, "Sar-e-Rah" is much closer to such representation as we see female characters who try to become independent but suffer from social pressure simultaneously. Some of the social issues portrayed in "Sar-e-Rah" concern gender roles and gender relations, where women struggle with issues such as marriage, motherhood, and family responsibilities. While the drama promotes

women's liberation, the drama always re-emphasizes the patriarchal ideologies in which women's liberation should be within the parameters of the family and marriage in particular, a phenomenon which is due to the Asian culture's hesitated to embrace gender equities (Fairclough, 1995). For example, the use of language that relates to dowry and women being expected to be home-bound is an illusion of the suppression of women's freedom. Hence, this conflict between traditional femininity and the portrayal of empowered women is key in studying how media shapes public perception. Even though "Sar-e-Rah" creates a possibility to discuss gender roles, the show itself is built upon the gender stereotype that conforms to patriarchal principles.

In conclusion, analyzing the Pakistani drama Sar-e-Rah through the lens of critical discourse analysis established by Fairclough and his three-dimensional approach revealed that the media occupies a tremendous position in defining gender roles at the societal level. The drama explains how the media is not only a mirror that mirrors and portrays gender statuses but also an actor that builds and supports those statuses. Primarily, Sar-e-Rah continues the paradigm of misogyny by fragmenting women mainly as wives and mothers and implying that these roles are the epitome of women's roles. This is similar to the criticism leveled against media consumption by feminists who propose that the particular representation of women demeans them and upholds patriarchal notions as the correct way for women to be. It also shows women being powerless, with men emerging as the arbiters of etiquette, further perpetuating the male domination of females and the feminist power relations.

Further, in the drama, societal judgment, and stigma are employed to punish any deviation from the conventional gender roles in a manner that reflects the issues women face in society. However, after reinforcing such conventional norms, Sar-e-Rah opens up moments to deconstruct the stereotypes mainstream media casts and questions its resolve, which presents gender roles as the only industry that can heal. Such scenes call for a positive portrayal of female characters as strong and self-reliant and male characters as fragile, thus sparking a discussion on equality between women and men. The study also illustrates how media plays a huge role in changing the perceptions

towards a particular gender. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the content producers to ensure that society takes a progressive view towards the different genders. More such portrayals should be examined in context to the audience's perception changes. Future research should focus on generating a more mature and culturally sensitive presentation of women, which aligns more with the contemporary sociological shifts and feminist discourse. In conclusion, Sar-e-Rah presents a multi-layered image of gender roles in a way that both reproduces a traditionalist agenda and offers possibilities for reflection and subversion of norms, thus actively engaging with the topic of debatable representation of gender in media.

### Recommendations

Future research should examine how audiences receive and perceive these portrayals of gender roles. Analyzing how female audiences participate in the messages of Sar-e-Rah may help determine how powerful media is in influencing positive notions or, conversely, in reinforcing negative expectations.

To understand the role and place of "Sar-e-Rah" in contemporary Pakistani media, it is necessary to compare it with other Pakistani dramas of a similar time. Future research could consider the general trends in the representation of gender roles as well as specific issues of how 'Sar-e-Rah' fits into such trends. This is a valuable way of drawing attention to aspects of drama and how they are gendered and impact the genre.

For this schedule, the religious analysis of a television show, "Sar-e-Rah", particularly focusing on a woman driving a taxi, would entail, understanding Islamic teachings toward women and their rights.

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