WOMEN, LABOR AND TELEVISION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN PORTRAYED IN PAKISTANI DRAMA SERIALS

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to look critically at the way women are represented in mainstream entertainment media on Pakistani television channels, mainly in televised drama serials. My chief research question is: How is women's labor represented in select Pakistani televised drama serials? One reason women's work is not always apparent is because of the gendered nature of work, and especially care work, where it is *assumed* that women will look after the household chores, especially in patriarchal societies. I propose that these shows (1) naturalize a certain form or notion of femininity as the only suitable one for Pakistan's women, and (2) naturalize a theory of work that both denies the actual work that women do and that discourages women from stepping into the masculinist marketplace of public careers. I use feminist media representation theory. Because media has the power to disseminate patriarchal and ideological views, it has always been at the centre of feminist criticism. Feminist audiovisual content analysis enables me to critically highlight the biases towards women employed in different occupations, as well as if and how the social reproductive labor of the women who are portrayed as mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, and grandmothers on screen is ignored or taken for granted.

Keywords: Pakistan, Women, Labor, Television, Feminist Analysis.

General Summary

This research is a critical feminist content analysis of televised drama serials on Pakistani television, also known as soap operas in other countries. I examine the narratives of two drama serials, *Humsafar* (2011) and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), to determine whether they were sexist and classist in nature or not, and what role religion had to play in the depiction of women in these drama serials. When it came to the portrayal of women, I focused on their labor, mainly the labor of professionally employed women, the social reproductive or affective labor of women, and the labor of women who are portrayed as hired helpers in other people's homes. My literature review provides the basis for the reader to understand what role religion plays in Pakistan, and how people view feminism in the country.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The representation of women on television has long been central to feminist research. This is not least because mass media holds the power to mold and construct cultural ideals, to introduce young people and new audiences to social concepts they may not yet be familiar with, and to socialize young generations such that they do not readily challenge the established narratives of gender roles. The purpose of this research is to look critically at the way women are represented in mainstream entertainment media on Pakistani television channels mainly in televised drama serials.

Studies have established the fact that television serials depict primarily female characters as caring for children or households whereas they depict male characters in public roles and careers outside the home (Anderson & Taylor 2002; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). Moreover, TV serials portray male figures in line with what are stereotypically known as masculine characteristics such as decisiveness, power, authority, direction, and reason, rather than emotion. Signorielli and Bacue (1999) also concluded in their study that on screen, women characters receive less recognition for their work and efforts as opposed to men, which points to the hegemonic, but not always apparent, acceptance of domestic duties as the natural domain of women. When labor is attached to love, care, or nurturing, it tends not to be seen as work; yet labor that is attached to vocation, leadership, or industry tends to be readily understood to be work (Meyer, 2000).

My chief research question is, how is women's labor represented in select Pakistani televised drama serials? I look at two drama serials, *Humsafar* (2011) and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), primarily because both of them were extremely popular at the time of their release, as I witnessed their popularity myself, and they were easily accessible to me on Netflix. I wonder if one reason that women's work is not always apparent is because of the

gendered nature of work? Especially care work, where it is *assumed* that women will look after the household chores, especially in patriarchal societies. Appreciating or recognizing women's efforts for doing what a society has been led to believe women are naturally *supposed to do anyway* never crosses the minds of people who unquestioningly accept the hegemonic representations of work. This is done through gendered representations of work on television.

Khan, Ullah and Ahmad (2018) state that it is exceedingly important to regularly analyze gender depictions on television because the audiences can also associate their attitudes with the misinformation dispersed through television and involuntarily make this misinformation the basis for their truths regarding standardized roles and gender-appropriate behaviors. In reference to Pakistani society, the authors have identified two spheres which are usually shown on television: public and private. According to the authors, because men are already dominantly represented (on screen) in the media industry, they are automatically shown to be free agents of the public domain who are independent and authoritative; women, however, are shown to be docile agents who prefer to remain in their privates spheres, such as homes or schools, and are generally dependent on their male relatives because they have little or no agency when it comes to decision-making, even about their own lives. My contention here is that these views are based in traditional, stereotypical, and patriarchal beliefs, which are promoted and naturalized throughout the culture and one of the avenues of this naturalization in Pakistan, both for the men who benefit from patriarchy and women who come to believe in it, is through televised drama serials.

According to Ullah (2013), the gender hierarchies present in Pakistani society are based on sexual differences that are thought to be grounded in nature between men and women. On these premises, rules, resources, responsibilities, power and rights are given to both genders, but in accordance with the 'nature' of that gender. Moreover, men and women

are in unequal positions in society due to women's internalization of patriarchy themselves. My proposition is that a prime source of this internalization is the daytime television shows that women watch.

Ali and Batool (2015) provide a discourse analysis that carefully examines the stereotypical portrayal of gender roles in Pakistani media. It was evident in the study that the text and images constructed in Pakistani media are gender insensitive, meaning that the stereotypical portrayal of women on screen has grave consequences. As the authors found, media representations have great effects on how women in real life perceive their roles, as in what roles are available to them. Media portrayals also affect their ideas of who they are and who they could be. Moreover, media images mostly emphasize and reproduce the patriarchal culture. With few other examples of normal, acceptable, or even attractive modes of being a woman except for these patriarchal, masculinist, and heteronormative representations, these representations are accepted as ideal.

But this is not to say that all women in Pakistan just quietly accept these submissive and patriarchal ideals and norms. I came across a Pakistani journalist's post one day while surfing Facebook. Hira Hyder (2020) shared a clipping from a 1992 drama serial named *Sitara Aur Mehrunnisa* (names of the two protagonists), written by Hasina Moin, a woman drama serial writer who was widely celebrated for her work. Hyder also posted a link to her article. In the clipping, we see a man and a woman in an office setting. The woman is working and asks the man to wait outside if he wants to meet the person he has come to meet. The man asks the woman in a lewd way if she is the wife or the secretary of the boss? The woman sternly asks him that if a woman works in an office, is she necessarily either the wife of a man working in the office or his secretary? The character then says that she is his colleague and he better wait outside. In her article, Hyder talks about the contrast between portrayals of women in the 1990s and then in 2020. She talks about Pakistani society where

women already have to struggle harder than men to make their name and fight for their rights, and how a regressive depiction of female characters on-screen does not help their movement and cause. Hyder (2020) also mentions the need to eliminate the idea of a submissive woman being a 'good catch' from the national narrative because Pakistani women are people who challenge gender role stereotypes and are intelligent with strong personalities. Furthermore, the author also argues that it is high time that the writers and producers show female characters as active heroes in their own life stories instead of helpless damsels in distress that need rescuing, and I cannot agree more.

1.1 Background

I am a Pakistani woman who was born and brought up in the rather conservative city of Peshawar in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. In my anecdotal observations, traditional gender roles, also known as gender stereotypes, are different for women of different ages in Pakistan. Young single girls are supposed to focus on their education and help their mothers with household chores, whereas married women are supposed to look after the children, their husbands, and in-laws. The chief purpose of educating a young girl in Pakistan is *not* her professional advancement in later years, but her preparation to be a better mother to her children. I do not mean to say that being an educated mother is wrong, but rather that the removal of the option of building our professional careers is wrong. Almost all parents want their daughters to be married before the age of thirty, and a great majority prefer that their daughters get married before twenty-five. In Pakistan, an unmarried woman over the age of thirty is considered an anomaly and society at large would badger the parents of said woman and criticize the woman, her life choices, her marital status, and her character. Still, the women in Pakistan have not given up and fight continuously against the patriarchal status quo that compromises their freedom.

The first TV channel in Pakistan, PTV, was introduced in the 1960s. Pakistan Television Corporation had just one channel by the same name, which started broadcasting drama serials and teleplays from 1969 onwards. Currently, the country has approximately 17 private entertainment channels with a myriad of program types, reality shows, game shows, teleplays, movies, and drama serials. As I explore further in the literature review, studies conducted in Pakistan have demonstrated that drama serials are extremely popular in Pakistan (Zia, 2003a, 2003b). Zia (2007) also found that entertainment was the chief purpose of watching television and 70 percent of women audiences watched only two types of programmes: films and dramas. Only 17.3 percent of those women watched TV for educational or informational purposes. What is key to my research is Zia's (2007) conclusion: women who are heavy viewers of television and drama serials are greatly affected by their content and "women may go beyond the actual act of just watching for entertainment" and may experience a "change in the attitude" about "household and other activities, appearance and styles, social and family interaction patterns, cultural practices, expenditures and role of women in Pakistani society" (p. 167). Zia's conclusions indicate that watching Pakistani televised drama serials is a major part of Pakistani women's leisure time, and as such these shows have the ability to influence perceptions regarding contemporary social life.

I follow Zia's argument, and take it further, for I propose that these shows (1) naturalize a certain form or notion of femininity as the only suitable one for Pakistan's women, and (2) naturalize a theory of work that both denies the actual work that women do and that discourages women from stepping into the masculinist marketplace of public careers. I also am interested in examining how protest, if at all, is part of the audience reception when it comes to the representation of women. The drama serials portray women in myriad roles, but for the purpose of this research, I narrow them down to three preliminary kinds of

representation: women employed in professional occupations, women as unpaid domestic laborers, and women employed in low paid jobs (domestic workers such as maids, nannies, cooks). The reason I chose these three specific categories is because, in my observations and experience, most female characters on-screen fall into one of these categories. And I assert that is because the depiction of women in Pakistani media, mainly through drama serials and their narratives, demonstrates and asserts traditional religious values (Talib & Idrees, 2012). I explore what this femininity is, how this femininity is represented, and how it is related to representations of work in Pakistan's television.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

In this review of the literature, I discuss the three classifications of women noted in the previous chapter in more detail, along with what role religion plays in the nation-wide narrative of women's labor in Pakistan. It is important to link my literature review to religion because religion plays a significant role in the construction of identities of people in real life and of people portrayed on television in Pakistan. In addition to that, I also briefly examine the discourse on feminism in Pakistan. Since the research is dealing with portrayals of women on television, I feel it apt that a discussion of the strains of feminism is included.

Pakistan's society has always been a heterogeneous mix of different ideologies, such as Islamist nationalism and liberalism, which make up the belief systems of the nation. Asim and Shah (2014) differentiate between the dichotomy by explaining what the followers of these two ideologies believe. They argue that conservatives, or Islamist nationalists, say Pakistan was created in the name of religion, thus Islamic traditions, law, and way of life should be incorporated in the country's system. Whereas, liberals highlight the fact that the man who led the movement for the creation of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was a liberal man and he never imposed the restriction of religion on the country's citizens. Religion plays a central role in creating the Islamist, nationalist belief system. Social conditions, religious interpretations, and cultural norms have always regarded women as subordinate to men, which commonly leads to strict Islamic practices in most Islamic countries like Pakistan that bar women from contributing in social and economic advances (Roy, 2016).

2.1 Islamic and Secular Feminism

People have different opinions about feminism in Pakistan. Roy (2016) describes feminism generally as a political, cultural, academic, and theoretical response to the heteropatriarchy that undermines women's lives, struggles, interests, rights, bodies, and

sexualities. According to the author, there are two main categories of feminism in Pakistan: modern, Islamic feminism and secular feminism. Modern Islamic feminism focuses on redefining Islamic views relating to women's rights in light of passages from the Quran. Modern Islamic feminists do this so that women are given the proper freedom and rights they deserve, such as the right to education and employment, women's share in inheritance, and fair financial recompensation in case of divorce. Zia (2009) also explains that these feminists are scholars and activists who stand for gender equality through interpretation of the Quran and Shariah (Islamic Law). These feminists pursue understandings of Shariah in a historical context; hence, this methodology ensures greater freedom and rights for women but at the same time remains inside the domains of Islam. Shahid (2010) describes that Islamic feminists are making a case for re-illustrations of the Quran and Shariah by underscoring the equitable and non-discriminatory instructions of Islam. These feminists also highlight the concepts of dignity of labor, and duties and obligations of both the employer and employee when it comes to women who are employed as domestic workers in different households.

Ali (1997) looks at the question of women's rights in the light of Quranic verses and Hadiths (teachings, actions, and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). She has divided the teachings of Quran into two basic categories: one related to morals or ethics and the other to the socio-economic elements in life. According to her, all Muslims, whether men or women, are equal when it comes to the former but there are some discriminations when it comes to the latter (e.g., the law of inheritance indicates that a man's share is twice that of a woman, polygamy being only allowed for men.). However, Ali also believes that what may look discriminatory in the 21st century was revolutionary in 7th century AD. The pre-Islamic Arab society of that time was increasingly patriarchal to the point where female infanticide was a common occurrence for fear of poverty and destituteness. Islam not only gave women rights to own property where they had none and to demand a share in inheritance, but also

prohibited the killing of the female child. Most Islamic feminists are of the view that all the Quranic verses and Hadiths should be studied keeping their specific 7th century AD context in mind.

Secular feminists, on the other hand, seek meaning for their struggles outside the realm of religion and believe that feminism is the continuation of human rights, no matter the religious beliefs of the society (Roy, 2016). These women are generally thought to be anti-Islam by those who misinterpret Islam for their own chauvinistic self-interests. Secular feminism is more pluralistic and in line with other feminist movements in the world. In my experience, for those outside these two realms in Pakistan, feminism is considered a dirty word and a layperson's understanding of feminism is that it encourages young girls and women to be modern, liberal, and Westernized in their thinking. This attitude towards feminism is similar to what Valenti (2014) describes is the attitude in the United States. She states that, generally, feminism is seen as anti-everything, that it is against men, against sex, against sexism; and while being against sexism is not bad, being a part of something that is constantly viewed as negative is not motivating and helpful.

Ahmed-Ghosh (2008) argues that secular feminism is more in agreement with Westernized feminism, and their followers are also called liberal feminists. Moreover, the author explains that liberal feminists in Muslim and Third world countries associate partially or fully with secular feminism, chiefly when criticizing the repressive religious and social institutions of their own countries. According to the author, the reason for the contestation between the Islamic and secular feminists is that Islamic feminists always forget that secular feminism is not about refuting religion in the daily life of people; rather, feminism is concerned with segregating the state and religion. In addition, Islamic feminists conflate secularism with Westernism (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008). In other words, Islamic feminists believe that Western feminism is an imposition of Western cultural values that are radically different

than Islamic cultural values. They see secularism as Westernism, because for Islamic feminists, if religion is removed from the equation, the only other alternative is Western cultural norms and mores. However, secularism simply entails the construction of a human rights discussion inside a culturally and politically suitable setting, without necessarily the imposition of Western principals and norms (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008).

Shah (2014) ponders what a feminist movement in Pakistan can look like. According to the author, Pakistan needs a feminism that expertly unites both strands of feminism—secular and Islamic—because Pakistan was created based on both Islamic and secular doctrines. She argues that any feminist movement can thrive only when it reflects the temperament of the women and the society for whom it functions. Zia (2009) provides a brilliant historical analysis of the feminist movement in Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s. As Zia notes, the movement started around the time of the military dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988), "where maulvis/mullahs (self-appointed male preachers) practically gained state sanction to operate as vigilantes particularly in enforcing the state prescription of chadar and chardevari (the veil and the household) for women" (p. 30).

The country's full name is Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which implies that religion is a central reality to the culture of Pakistan. General Zia-ul-Haq's era is also known as the era where the Islamization of Pakistan occurred. Furthermore, because Zia-ul-Haq's era misinterpreted religious texts to curtail the rights of women, secular feminists were against the Islamization of the state and society, hence the ensuing contentious relationship between secular feminists and modern Islamic feminists. Cheema (2016) believes that emergent feminist public discussion inclines more towards Islamic feminism than secular feminism, which emphasizes that there is no sole uniting discourse of feminism. The country has secular feminism, followed by NGOs and civil society, while religious political parties and religious educational organizations such as Al Huda follow Islamic feminism.

2.2 Representation of Women and their Work

In their research into the relationship between paid work and women's empowerment in Bangladesh, Kabeer, Mahmud, and Tasneem (2018) identity three categories of work: "market-oriented work outside the home; market-oriented work within the home; unpaid economic activity within the home and economic inactivity" (p. 238). At the same time, the authors argue that women employed outside the household cannot be grouped together because the nature of their jobs and income levels were extremely varied: some were basic wage earners whereas others were earning good money in professional occupations. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, I note three classifications of women in my analysis of two Pakistani TV serials: professionals, women in low-paid jobs and domestic laborers. More specifically, in the first category, I include women who are entirely financially independent and are employed in jobs that are considered certified careers.

Bustamante-Gavino, Rattani, and Khan (2011), in their study of Pakistani women's definition of women's empowerment, found in interviews that some women think of empowerment for themselves as having economic constancy. One woman, who was not working anymore, felt that when she was working and earning her own money, she was better able to look after the needs of her children and now she felt helpless. This feeling of helplessness can be explained by Waring's (2003) work, where she criticizes the international accounting entities that do not include women's economic contribution in their statistics. The reason being women's unpaid care work is invisible when it comes to contributions to the economy. So, women are not remunerated for the labor they provide for household consumption and they feel unequal to the men in their lives socially and economically.

In her study of seven Pakistani drama serials, Fatima (2019) explains that on the rare occasions when TV drama serials portray women as economically independent members of the household, they usually portray these women as negative characters who deviate from

Islamic teachings and, increasingly, dress in Western clothes – a dress code thought to be liberal. The author further points out that in most of the seven drama serials analyzed, the narrative surrounding working women was that they were doing it because they had no male relative upon whom they could rely financially. The element of necessity justified them working. For most of these women, work was not an active career choice they made, rather something they were forced to do for survival. There was also a notion present that indicated that work was these women's second preference and they must get back to their "original duty being a caregiver and raising a family" (Fatima, 2019, p. 11).

Women whom I term as unpaid domestic laborers make up the majority of the female roles in all the Pakistani drama serials. Usually, they are portrayed as mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, and daughters-in-law who stay at home and look after the households, children, and other members of the family. Daniels (1987) notes that the glorified separation between work and home – the usual division of the public world where men go out to work from the private world where women remain at home to care for the family and provide a place of reprieve for the working man – made the difference obvious between productive workforce (men doing the supposed *real* work for wages) and non-productive workers (women doing all the support and caregiving work for those *real* workers). The author further points out women who have only worked insides their homes and know virtually no other livelihood are called displaced homemakers.

One thing that I would like to point out here is that, although Daniels's article was written in 1987, this is still true for the Pakistani society and culture today. I have personally seen countless stories on social media where women financially dependent on their male relatives had to face numerous difficulties when they were no longer married or their male relative was no longer in their life. The obsession Pakistani society has with a woman's marriage is particularly harmful to women who have to go through divorces or abusive

marriages, and then have no means to support themselves (Hussain & Bittles, 1999). From a young age, they were socialized to believed that their economic sustenance is not their responsibility and they should focus on homemaking. These very displaced homemakers that Daniels (1987) is talking about, are a reality in Pakistan and one of the drama serials that I have chosen to analyze for this research, *Humsafar* (2012), has as its lead character a displaced homemaker.

Lastly, women who are represented in the drama serials as being employed in low paid jobs are poor women, who usually do not have enough education or trained skills to help them earn good money. Instead, they work in other people's households, typically as cooks, nannies, and cleaners. The narrative that middle or upper-class women are only working outside the homes in order to survive and that work is not their first responsibility does not apply to the paid domestic work of working-class women. Nobody objects to their work as something that is against the religious obligations of a woman. Palriwala and Neetha (2010) in their research look at the working conditions of paid domestic workers in India, and explain how working women from middle and upper classes, who can afford it, hire paid domestic labor to help with the household chores and child caretaking duties. Shahid (2010) found in her study that most of the domestic workers in Pakistan are women, their economic conditions are the basic source of stress in their lives and they are either divorced, separated, or in polygamous marriages with children to look after. In the context of drama serials, my preliminary analysis indicates that women employed as domestic workers are always there in the background, providing care and cleaning work to women in a higher social class. As I discuss further in my analysis, they are not given much screen time, nor do they have a lot of dialogues, but they are present.

I have made the following preliminary schematic to briefly depict these three categories of women:

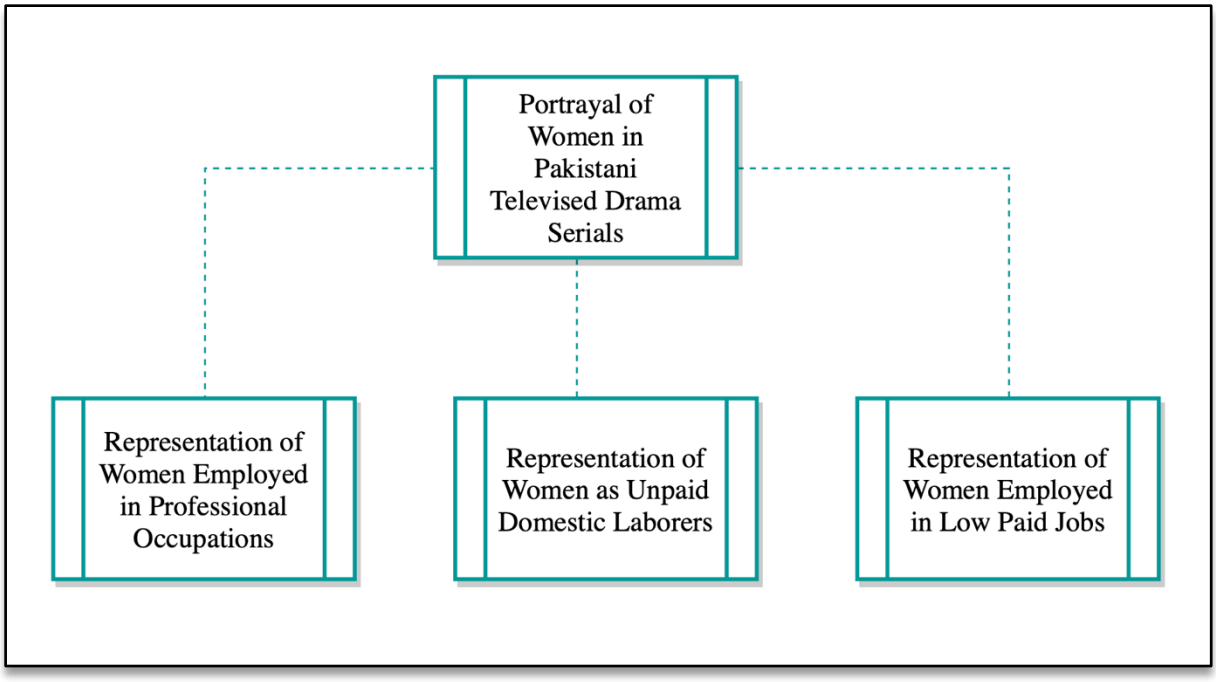

Figure 1

2.3 Soap Operas

Ahmed (2012) traces the history of the term "soap opera" to the 1930s, where it was coined by the American press to denote the extremely popular genre of serialized domestic radio dramas. The "soap" in the term referred to their sponsors, who were the manufacturers of domestic cleaning products, whereas "opera" referred to a bizarre connection between the domestic narrative considerations of the daytime serial and the most celebrated of dramatic forms. The author also classifies soap operas into two categories based on their narratives: open soap operas, where there is no seeming end to the narrative, and closed soap operas where the narrative does finally end. However, the most crucial characteristic of a soap opera is that it takes place in a series, or in other words, its seriality.

Ang (2007) discusses the nature of soap operas; that is, how they generally focus on emotional situations and archetypical struggles between love and hatred, loyalty and deception, greed and kindness, and hope and anguish. Hermes (2006) and Barker (1997) both argue that media texts and narratives on television deceive women into adhering to their

subordinate place in the world by depicting women skilled in the private sphere of interpersonal relations, but ostracized from more decisive roles in the public world. Soap operas have the potential to reach audiences across the globe and that potential depends on their persistent appeal to women because, as Ang (2007) argues, soap operas mainly offer emotive release, personal satisfaction, company, and escape from reality to their viewers. On the surface, this looks very benevolent. However, as Stern, Russell and Russell (2005) point out in their study of the literature pertaining to soap opera consumption, soap operas operate in a genre that focuses on distributing images of women either living in luxury or adhering to impractical and inapt role models to the masses. The authors further argue that extended and extreme exposure to unrealistic role models weakens viewers' practical assessment of what the real world is like, attainment of sensible goals and even gratification in personal life. For instance, Stern et al. (2005) asked a group of teenage girls to evaluate the portrayal of single mothers on television. The girls considered these portrayals as "healthy and desirable—the mothers enjoyed an affluent lifestyle without having to work for it, participated in a vibrant social life minus bothersome infants, and brought up healthy babies minus a father," which is far from how things work in real life (Stern et al., 2005, p. 3).

Lacalle and Semelio (2019) researched the trajectory of Spanish serial fiction from telenovelas to English-speaking soap operas. They found that soap operas have a hand in increasing the pace of the serial in the sense that production processes now have more flexibility to adapt, as soon as possible, to the audience reception and response which includes discontinuing series that are not met with public say-so. It is important to add here that it is not only the television industry influencing the audience, but also the other way around. For instance, if there is a proliferation of patriarchal portrayal of families on a country's television, it may be because other narratives are not appreciated by the audience and do not receive the ratings they need in order to continue. Laurence (2019) explains the

nature of soap operas in Turkey as very classist because protagonists almost always have a rich lifestyle and have a lot of material possessions, which the majority of the population may not have. Thus, such a portrayal of a lifestyle attracts the audience to be witness "to a journey towards fantasy, dream, and evasion" (Laurence, 2019, p. 66). The author further concludes that Turkish soap operas never question dominant hierarchies and conventional ethics. Even though some of the soap operas do underscore the need for change, they never negate the workings of the patriarchal society that undervalues women and, as a result, propagates gender disparities.

2.4 Pakistani Drama Serials

In Pakistan, the equivalent of soap operas are drama serials. Although these drama serials are not as long as some of the famous Western ones, for instance *Dallas* (1978-1991) and *General Hospital* (1963-present), viewer audiences still hold them in high regard, and spend at least an hour or two daily to consume these shows (Zia, 2014). Zubedi and Shaikh (2013) trace the inception of drama serials on Pakistani television during 1967-1977. They describe how the narrative of these dramas, more often than not, dealt with class structures where the predicaments of ordinary people were shown on screen for endorsing progressive thought, which the authors defined as standing up against oppression and totalitarian rule. But the political environment of that time should also be kept in mind: where Marxism and Socialism were itching to take root wherever they could. Hence, these representations offered the masses the chance of an alternative way of life (Zubedi & Shaikh, 2013). As my analysis will demonstrate in more detail, over time, the motivations for different depictions of different social classes changed on screen. Now, when poor women are shown on screen as domestic workers and helpers, they are simply there in the background, often having no agency, political or otherwise, when it comes to the narrative or the motivation for that specific production.

As Kothari (2005) notes, Pakistani women are mainly interested in Urdu drama serials on television, Urdu being the national language of Pakistan. The researcher also describes how most of these serial narratives are about women's lives, frequently written by women writers, and always viewed by a largely female audience, so it seems safe to say that they play a large part in the development and evolution of women's culture in public and private spheres. Furthermore, the author also points out that these dramas illustrate the broad sites where women deliberate, challenge and transgress their already defined limits in an Islamist male-dominated society. The women also prefer to watch these drama serials in the company of other women instead of men, because either they are not comfortable with watching these dramas with men or men do not approve of these drama serials (Kothari, 2005). Islamist ideology labels the home as a place of feminine prowess. Since most of these Urdu drama serials are about what women who stay at home are doing, the audiences of these drama serials relate to them on an astonishingly high level.

As the scholarly literature shows, the most common themes found in these drama serials generally revolve around making the life of the female protagonist difficult or in other words the source of 'drama' in these serials comes from women's difficulties. These themes include arranged marriages, wedding ceremonies, domestic problems between spouses and between the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, restrictions imposed by the husband's family on the wife, forced marriages, domestic violence and abuse and many more (Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018; Kothari, 2005; Roy, 2016). Moreover, the women represented in the dramas are heterosexual and cis-gendered. Although these drama serials focus on the domestic lives of women, the melodramatic nature of these drama serials makes the seemingly mundane lives of women exciting. Ang (2007) termed this as the audience being "swept away" by the amplified emotional ups and downs of the narrative. According to Brooks (1985), the routine implications of the word melodrama are "the indulgence of strong emotionalism, moral

polarization and schematization; extreme states of being, situations, actions; overt villainy, persecution of good, the final reward of virtue, inflated and extravagant expression; dark plotting, suspense, breathtaking peripety" (p. 11-12). Hence, soap operas tend to add a bit of flare to the seemingly 'dull' and 'ordinary' lives of the viewers.

Qaiser and Jabeen (2008) talk about a Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) production in 1993 called *Gul-e-Lala*, with very paternalistic and misogynistic content. In this drama serial, women were hampered from getting an education because the patriarch of the family believed education brings evil and immoral values with it. He also thought women to be mere attendants and helpers to the whims of the men in the family. Another leading character of the drama serial, a woman named Zarmina, is a staunch contrarian of such beliefs and of the view that the continuous labelling of women as 'weak' and 'fragile' has reduced women to nothing. We also see a similar patriarch in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), who thinks that working women and educated women can never be good wives. The authors conclude in their paper that mass media in Pakistan has reacted constructively to the miseries and unfair objections regarding women. Surprisingly, they also conclude that the drama serials on PTV have meticulously brought forth feminist issues in an effective and positive way.

Although many drama serials, including *Humsafar* (2011), *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2010), and *Bin Roye* (2016) have strong female protagonists, according to my preliminary observations, the plot of these TV serials is always about how the female protagonist is forced to choose between her career and her intimate life, or how she must prove herself worthy of the male protagonist's love. Nevertheless, it would be entirely unfair to say that women are always portrayed in traditional gender roles in all Pakistani media, or in these drama serials in particular. For example, the protagonist in one of the TV serials mentioned, *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), is a woman who is dedicated to her academics and career. She

ends up securing a position in the District Management Group (DMG) of the Civil Service of Pakistan after appearing for Central Superior Service (CSS) examinations.

Zubair (2016) analyzes how a drama serial like *Uraan* (2010) can depict an independent career woman employing her autonomy and liberty in decision-making, thus demonstrating a clear retreat from patriarchal structures, while concurrently offering hesitant or conflicting discourses on femininities. The author further discusses how the visual representations of women are different for women at various levels of the social hierarchy and shown through their dress codes, body language, and choices. While the very educated upper middle-class protagonist in *Uraan* (2010) is shown as independent and adept in autonomous decision-making, thus contesting official discourses on conventional femininities and societal and familial pressures, the daughter of the Imam (a person who leads prayers in a mosque) in *Khuda & Mohabbat* (2011) is presented as having little choice but to submit to her father. Moreover, she is portrayed as modest, less confident, less expressive and less outspoken about her desires than the women from upper and middle classes.

In relation to constructions of femininities in Pakistan, the drama serials also portray women in definitive categories: 'good woman' and 'bad woman' or 'perfect woman' and 'imperfect woman' (Ayesha & Shafiq, 2018). The authors argue that a 'good woman' or a 'perfect woman' is someone one who is patient, docile, polite, compromising, hospitable, and considerate of the wishes of her elders, and partakes in the household chores, and adheres to her parents' or guardian's choice of companion when it is time for her to get married. On the other hand, the 'bad woman' or 'imperfect woman' is one who is vociferous, liberal, modern, authoritative, and impatient, and who does not tolerate any mistreatment by anyone, and who is focused on her professional development and ambitions. "Gender stereotypes are widely held beliefs about the characteristics, behaviors, and roles of men and women" (Weinraub et al. 1984, as cited in Endendijk et al., 2013, p.1). This unrealistic classification of women into

‘good’ or ‘bad’ stems from the different stereotypical gender roles that are pervasive in Pakistani culture and society. In fact, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, the two drama serials under analysis in this thesis also portray women in definitive categories: ‘good’ and ‘bad’ woman or ‘perfect’ and ‘imperfect’ woman. (Ayesha & Shafiq, 2018).

The key points that are worth highlighting again at the end are the role the religion plays in the belief systems of the country and how the emotional/affective labor of women is viewed. Also the association of a professionally employed woman with a woman who is ‘lacking’ in some regard is further explored in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3. Theory and Methodology

3.1 Theory

When it comes to why every research project must have a theoretical foundation, I like Neuman's (2014) reasoning; theory offers insights into the actual meaning of a social phenomenon by offering enlightening interpretation and telling us what the phenomenon is all about. It can also provide a criticism based on a "political-moral viewpoint," which uses its tenets to critique and debate the position and assertions of opponents (p. 56). In my research, I use feminist media representation theory. Because media has the power to disseminate patriarchal and ideological views, it has always been at the centre of feminist criticism (Parry & Karam, 2001). In particular, radical feminists have retaliated against patriarchal norms, seeking to define what women themselves want in their lives as opposed to what men want for women. According to the authors, radical feminists believe that women were the first oppressed group, and still are in many societies, because men believe them *naturally* to be inferior. Ultimately, they envision a world where men have no control over women, especially over their reproductive processes, as they believe it is a significant factor in sustaining patriarchy.

Parry and Karam (2001) further explain the importance of feminist criticism by describing how it has established the significance for women of securing their own separate space where they can express themselves with freedom, and by separate space feminists mean that research on women on television should only be carried out by women. According to the researchers, women would apply subjective approaches, such as interviewing and qualitative interpretation in a way that male researchers would not be able to, because it is not *male representation* that they would be dealing with. Feminist media criticism is a crucial ingredient for securing such spaces, given the paramount role of media in influencing how people conceptualize 'reality.' As Adoni and Mane (1984) explain, "The degree of media

contribution to the individual's construction of subjective reality is a function of one's direct experience with various phenomena and consequent dependence on the media for information about these phenomena" (p. 327). In other words, depending on what people already know about a phenomenon, what they learn from different outlets of media—such as news, film, drama, and social media—profoundly affects what they consider true. Critical feminist media representation theory can inform this process by exposing the patriarchal lens of much mainstream media. Hall et al. (2003) discuss media messages and the way media images and texts are received by the audience. The researchers argue that when a message is transmitted, not only what is said has importance, but also *how* it was said, and what is not said but *could* be. Also, the authors explain how the producers and broadcasters encode a media message a certain way, the way they want their content to be understood by the viewers, but the audience does not necessarily understand or decode that message the way producers wanted. This subjective and individual decoding depends on what they know previously about the message, how their experiences have shaped their lives, and what role their culture, religion, language, and ethnic background have played in their socialization.

Zoonen (1994) adds that the chief purpose of feminist media research is to unearth both the hegemonic and alternative representations of gender—as they intersect with other discourses of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality—embedded in media texts, such as movies, TV programmes, books and newspapers. In relation to my research, feminist media critics Brooks and Hébert (2006) explain why Pakistani women relate to and associate their lives with the women of drama serials: the majority of the things that people consider important in their lives are usually based on the stories produced and broadcasted by media institutions. Moreover, they also say that individuals construct their social identities (that is, what it means for them to be male, female, black, white, Asian, etc.) based on commodified texts produced by media for audiences that are, to a great extent, divided by social constructions of

race and gender. People present themselves in real life as they think their counterparts are represented in the media.

Similarly, Pakistani women want to shape their own lives and the lives of other women who they can control, based on what they see as the lives of the characters portrayed in Urdu drama serials. In short, the theoretical lens of feminist media representation can help explain how women are portrayed in the media, how female audiences associate their lives and experiences with the women on-screen, and how cultures and norms are recycled in close knit groups of women. Women portrayed on-screen reflect and potentially shape cultural values by doing what is and is not considered acceptable. It is likely that off-screen audiences of all genders also reproduce, and sometimes challenge, those values in their own lives because media is one of the key institutions that introduces, produces, and regurgitates the culture of a society.

For instance, Brunsdon and Spigel (2008) discuss how the character of a mother in a soap opera is often shown as an all-forgiving mother who, as opposed to manipulative mothers who interfere in the lives of their children, sits by powerlessly while her children's lives crumble in front of her. She mostly cannot do anything about it, but she is compassionate to them. Hence, soap operas appear to do an excellent job of both convincing women off screen that their primary life purpose is to see that their families are content and unified, and comforting those same women in their incapacity to harmonize the family. Johnson and Minor (2019) conclude that "identity, in feminist media studies, is key" (p. 374). Essentially this is part of what media does: it allows space for the on-screen modelling of ideal identity formations and leaves audience members to associate their real lives with those identities. This is how ideal identities can be transferred from screens to real lives. Importantly, ideal identity formations, or those identities to which we are encouraged to attach ourselves, tend to represent some ideals and leave out others.

This discussion of the formation of identity leads me to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's (2014) theory of representation. Although they are looking mainly at the concept of race and racial stereotypes – how they are constructed, disseminated, and internalized – I adapt their theory to look at gender stereotypes and social class. In their theory of representation, Shohat and Stam describe how both the audience and critics of media are invested in realism because they are invested "in the idea of truth," though, as poststructuralist theory holds, everyone resides within language and depiction and therefore has no direct contact with the "real." Nonetheless, they argue, the audience wants to see something "real" that they can relate to. Media can exploit the public's need for truth, according to Shohat and Stam (2014), when it depicts real-life events, but twists and molds the facts from what actually happened to what the writers and producers (who represent hegemonic power structures) would have wanted to happen. In the context of my research, I consider how the directors and producers of Pakistani drama serials distribute a version of reality where women are weak and dependent on men because these are the widely held stereotypical beliefs accepted by the majority of the population and such representations will increase their viewership.

Shohat and Stam (2014) also argue that films and fictions bring to the screen real-life assumptions about cultural and social relationships people have in a community or a nation. In response, people may protest representations that portray their societies or values in a way that they do not believe to be true. For example, historically the concept of a nuclear family in Pakistan has been very patriarchal and paternalistic. The father figure is the decision maker and the protector of the women in the family. If a drama serial were to depict a family where a woman (usually the wife) is autonomous and financially independent, the majority of audiences, having been conditioned for centuries to subjugate women, would protest this representation because, according to them, this is not how roles in a family should be in Pakistani society.

Furthermore, stereotypes of some communities on screen do not directly contribute towards violence against them (for instance, stereotypical representation of Polish-Americans and Italian-Americans), but they do contribute to "a continuum of prejudicial social policy […] against disempowered people" (Shohat & Stam, 2014, p. 183). To situate this contribution in relation to my research, the depiction of working-class women as maids in households on screen is not criticized, but middle-class women with jobs are immediately thought of as 'not good enough' because they are prioritizing their employment over their families. The problem around stereotypes and distorted depictions chiefly arises from the incapacity and helplessness of marginalized groups to have a say in their own portrayal on screen. Shohat and Stam (2014), then, believe that a complete appreciation of media representation involves a thorough scrutiny of the institutions that create and disseminate mass mediated content and of the audience that consumes it. The authors ask some very important questions: Whose stories are told? Who is telling them? How are they generated, distributed, and accepted? What are the underlying and basic structures of the media industry? Who has control over production and delivery processes? In the case of my research, the questions are, how are women portrayed in Pakistani drama serials? Are professionally employed women portrayed positively or negatively? How do class and gender intersect to affect the narrative and the portrayal of women? What are the stereotypes that the characters of the drama serials associate with different women of different social classes?

As I mentioned in the Literature Review, the producers of the drama serials in Pakistan are obsessed with portraying certain positive and negative images of women on screen. Shohat and Stam (2014) critique this preoccupation with images, whether favorable or unfavorable, because it can lead to a sort of essentialism where the viewers and unsubtle critics neatly divide diverse portrayals into a defined set of already established categories. More often than not, the drama serials on Pakistani television are adapted from Urdu plays or

novels that do not define all characters as definitively good or bad. Scholars such as McClain credit Urdu literature especially for depicting situations, circumstances, and people as they would appear in real life with the real problems and worries of an ordinary middle-class Pakistani citizen (McLain, 2001). But the drama industry commercializes the story to force the characters to fit into preestablished notions of character images. Such "reductionist simplifications" pose the risk of reproducing the very stereotypical essentialism that critics say to avoid (Shohat & Stam, 2014, p. 199). The debate on good and bad characters easily morphs into moralism and thus into futile arguments about the relative merits and demerits of fictive characters and the appropriateness of their fictional decisions, where these characters are treated as though they are real live humans.

In capitalist societies such as Pakistan, the general population does not consider the labor of working-class women to be work because middle- to upper-class people need the services of the working class. This is where the work of Silvia Federici (2018) comes into play. Federici's work on reproductive labor is the starting point for my research. According to Federici, Marx disregards the role of the unpaid domestic worker – the women in the family who provide the support and care system and produce the next generation of workers in maintaining capitalism. As I discuss in my analysis in Chapter 4, this may explain why in many Pakistani drama serials, those working-class women employed mostly as maids in the households of upper-class families are not viewed as women employed in meaningful occupations, and more often than not, are not seen as 'real women' either. In other words, the social reproductive labor of women is ignored and not even considered labor because it has become totally naturalized such that all the domestic duties performed by women in actual life—and on screen—are inherently a part of being a woman. The male characters on screen would object if a female member of the family, from a middle-class family, wants to work

outside the household, but no one, who represents hegemonic social groups or power in society, would object to the work of these working-class women.

Federici (2012) talks about how the campaign she joined in 1972, Wages for Housework (WfH), identified the 'house-worker' as the vital subject. The exploitation of this subject's unwaged labor and the unfair power relations constructed on her wageless circumstances were the foundations of the capitalist arrangement of production. In other words, capitalism needs "unwaged reproductive labor" in order to limit the expenditures of labor power (p. 8). What Federici calls social reproductive labor what Hardt and Negri (2009) term affective labor. They contend that is it always the female members of the family who are called upon to "tend to hurt feelings, knit social relationships, and generally perform care and nurturing" (p. 134). The authors further discuss that although women in the waged labor market are increasing day by day, women are still principally responsible for "unpaid domestic and reproductive labor" (p. 134).

A bit more detail of Federici's point of view is warranted here. She believes that the procreation of humans is the basis of every economic and political structure, and the enormous amounts of paid and unpaid domestic work that women do in the households is what keeps the world running (Federici, 2012). She criticizes Marx for failing to recognize the roles women play, namely preparing food, raising children, looking after the households, washing clothes, and making love, in the reproduction of the one resource on which the entire engine of capitalism depends: labor. When one applies Federici's feminist perspective to drama serials in the context of Pakistan, it is clear that these women are not viewed as laborers of any kind, let alone unpaid domestic laborers. WfH, according to Federici (2012), was radical because it sought to put an end to the accustomization of housework, refuting the supposed belief that it is 'women's labor.' Rather than asking for more work, it demanded remuneration for the work women already do. The members of the campaign thought it

would be important to fight for wages for ‘housework’ and not for ‘housewives’, as this could go a long way toward “degenderizing” the work (Federici, 2012, p. 9). Moreover, Federici believes that the reason the issue of housework is so significant is because not only has it been inflicted on women, it has also been molded into a natural characteristic of the female form and personality. In other words, care work has been essentialized as an inner need and an eager ambition that apparently originates from the depths of the female disposition. At the same time, Federici (2012) recognizes that domestic work has not vanished, and its undervaluation, financially and otherwise, has persisted as a problem for most of the women today, whether it is done for wages or not.

In my literature review, I cited Ayesha and Shafiq (2018) to explain the stereotypical characterizations of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ woman portrayed in drama serials on Pakistani television. Federici (1975) also talks about such attributes, but in reference to real life. She explains how young girls are taught to be “docile, subservient, dependent and most important to sacrifice yourself and even to get pleasure from it” (p. 78). This point suggests that the ideas shown on screen can get bound up in an endless loop, whereby people believe and practice what is shown on screen to the point where it becomes normalized in a given society. Those norms are then reiterated on screen as facts.

Federici (1999) talks about the migration of women in financially unfavorable conditions from the so-called Global South to the Global North, where they started to account for much of the labor pool engaged in the services industry and domestic labor. This worked miracles for the middle-class women of the countries in the Global North, as they pushed all the domestic work they did not want to do on these “foreign domestic caregivers” who for a moderate sum, swept houses, reared children, cooked meals, and looked after the elderly. Hochschild and Machung (2012) discuss in their book how care has become a hand-me-down job, as men hand it to women and high-income women hand it to low-income women. The

authors also mention how migrant workers employed in the care work industry in the United States delegate the care of their children to female relatives.

Nevertheless, what is a solution for so many is problematic for others as it creates a "maid-madam" dichotomy between the women, further made difficult by the supposition that housework is not real work and should be remunerated as little as possible. But, Federici (1999) points out that partaking in this kind of employment was–and is–very agonizing for some immigrant woman, as it was–and is–inadequately paid, and requires that she leave behind her own family to look after the families of others. In Chapter 4, I consider the extent to which the "maid-madam" dichotomy applies to the two drama serials under analysis. The women employed as domestic workers in the drama serials I analyze often do not have the option to not work. They are always present, but in the background, embroiled in this very "maid-madam" dichotomy. Even if they are not happy with their working conditions, they still have to keep working in them because they are from the working class, whereas their employers are usually from the upper-middle to upper social and economic class.

What women do domestically does not count as work. Paradoxically, when they step outside their households to partake in waged employment, they do not fully qualify as 'ideal women,' who must also adhere to other societal norms such as race and class. Therefore, my analysis in this thesis is intersectional in the sense that I consider the ways in which drama serials portray different categories of women, depending largely on their class. Crenshaw (1991) suggests that intersectionality provides a way of taking stock of the power differentials and tensions between multiple identities. Crenshaw talks broadly about race, gender, and class, but for my analysis, I am primarily concerned with gender and class. Crenshaw (1993) explains that on an elementary level, an intersectional lens reveals how the dual positioning of women of color as women and as members of a subaltern racial group determines the kinds of violence that is committed against them. In the case of my research, I

apply an intersectional lens to explain and uncover the plight of women as a subordinated group in Pakistani society at large and then as members of a socially disadvantaged class. Here, the dual positioning or double jeopardy (Crenshaw, 1993) in play is primarily that of gender and class.

McClintock (1995) also talks about intersectionality to elaborate on how race, gender, and class are not distinct categories that function in complete isolation from one another. She calls them "articulated categories" because they come into life by being in contact with each other, and more often than not that contact happens in complicated and contradictory ways (p. 5). For their part, Brah and Phoenix (2004) argue that applying intersectionality has led to novel ways of thinking about the density of and multiplicity in power relations. Specifically, identifying that race, social class, and sexuality distinguish women's experiences has upset the idea of a homogeneous category 'woman', and at the same time has shaken the universal assumptions that helped maintain the status quo in regard to race, social class, and sexuality. The authors also believe that if mechanisms of social exclusion and inclusion are to be taken seriously, then how they operate demands more attention.

To summarize, I use Shohat and Stam's representation theory in relation to the concept of gender stereotypes and how they interact with social class. The labor of working-class women is continually ignored, and is viewed as something that is happening in the background of the drama serials. However, I use Federici's social reproduction theory to explore why the labor of the house worker (female characters portrayed as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, etc.) is not considered 'work' and how the narrative of the drama serials makes the domestic work of women invisible. Along with this, I use the concept of intersectionality to understand if and how the women from lower social classes are at a disadvantage because of their class and gender.

3.2 Methodology

Now I turn to the methodology of my research. Creswell (2013) talks about qualitative research methods as relying primarily on written and visual data. For the purpose of this research, the data is textual and visual because of its nature and my focus. I analyze representations of women in Pakistani televised drama serials to interrogate the social meaning and effects of these representations. More specifically, I use feminist content analysis to analyze the subject matter of the following two Pakistani drama serials: *Humsafar* (2011) and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2010). The former has 23 episodes while the latter has 26 episodes. Both of these drama serials are available on Netflix, and there are instances where, after mentioning the episode, I use some direct dialogues taken from the subtitles that Netflix offers. In many places, however, the subtitles fail to convey the exact meaning of a particular dialogue; in these cases, I translate the dialogue from Urdu to English myself. While I briefly explain their storylines in the Literature Review, I provide detailed narratives later in this chapter.

Neuman (2014) defines content analysis as the gathering and analysis of the content of text, broadly defining text as "anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication. It includes books, newspaper or magazine articles, advertisements, speeches, official documents, films or videotapes, musical lyrics, photographs, articles of clothing, Web sites, or works of art" (p. 371). Although Neuman's book is not strictly about feminist research methods, he identifies the potential of this method when the researcher wants to study gender role stereotypes in schoolbooks or movies and how often people of diverse races appear in television advertisements and programs. The reason I use Neuman's definition here in the start is because it is a very wide, all-encompassing definition. In the

coming paragraphs I narrow down to Leavy's (2007) definition of feminist content analysis because it relates to my content analysis the most.

For their part, Leavy (2007) believes that feminists have always been in the lead when it comes to questioning cultural texts and products so that patriarchal understandings of social reality can be contested. This is because more often than not, these distorted understandings relegate women and minorities to far-flung corners of their culture where they are eliminated from the social interpretative practices. Reinharz and Davidman (1992) believe that there is no one way or method of doing feminist research, but rather that the method for any given feminist research is always guided by feminist theory. With this in mind, I use Shohat and Stam's media representation theory in line with Federici's social reproduction theory in my analysis. I select these two theories because Federici theorizes why capitalist societies do not consider women's work inside the household as labor/work, and how this omission effects social frameworks of power. Shohat and Stam discuss how different outlets of media use their power and position to portray stereotypical images of people from different ethnicities and social classes.

First, I look at the type of the narrative found in each drama serial. Is it sexist, classist or both? Here Crenshaw's intersectionality lens is useful. As it turns out, both *Humsafar* (2011) and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) have major characters from the working or lower-middles classes who are ostracized and ignored precisely for being from that class by people who are positioned at a more empowered social class. Second, I look at the manner and frequency in which professionally employed women are portrayed in the drama serials and if and how they are treated by other characters. Likewise, I examine the ways women employed in low paid jobs are portrayed and how they are treated. In the process, I consider to what extent Federici's ideas about "work" apply to the Pakistani context. What brought me to this research topic in the first place is that, as I mentioned in the theory section, women characters

were criticized for some type of jobs and not for others, and that this criticism largely depended on their social class. For this, content analysis is an excellent way to gauge if and how that bias exists to discriminate against women who either *want* to work or *have* to work. And thirdly, I briefly look at how certain female body images and dress codes are distributed through these drama serials.

To summarize my approach to methods, I have made the following schematic.

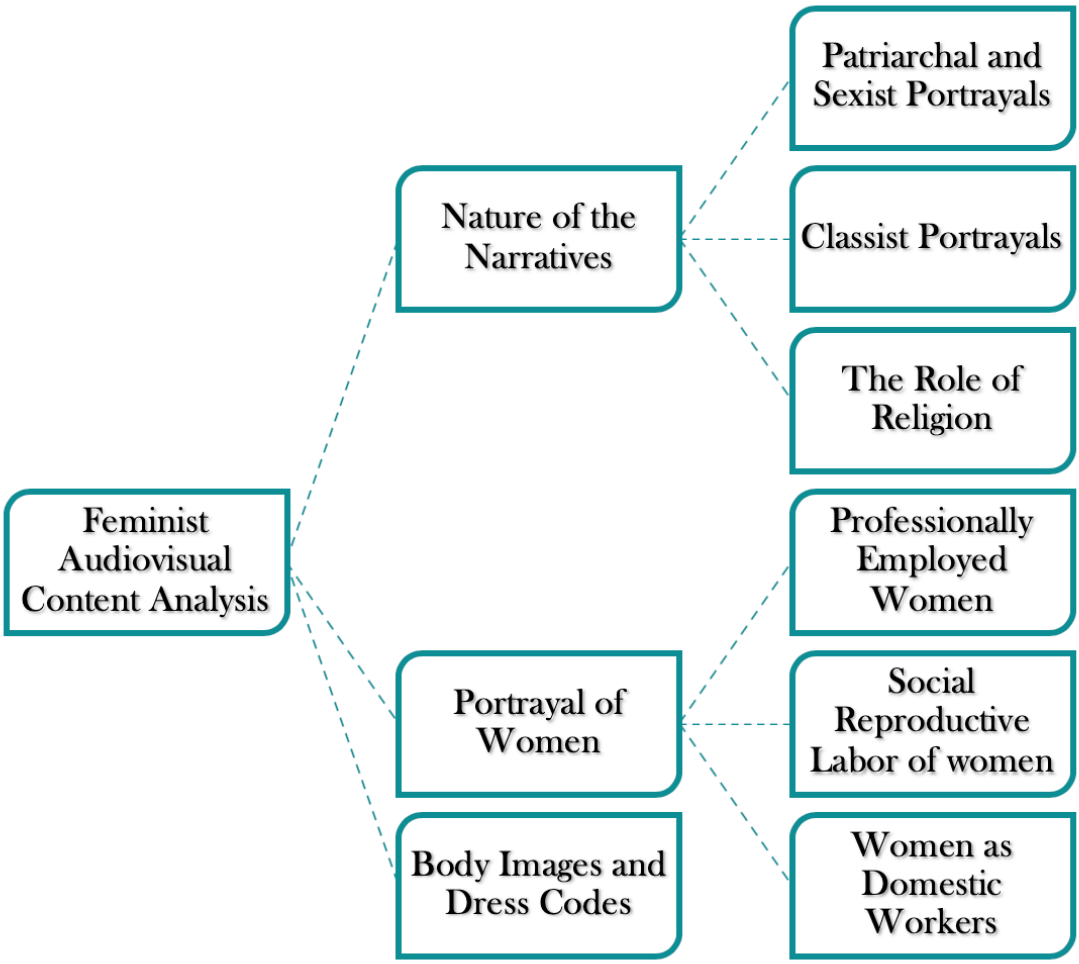

Figure 2

As discussed in Chapter 2, Zubair (2016) examines the representation of women in two Pakistani drama serials. Along with scrutinizing the content of the drama serials, she also conducted focus group discussions with women she knew personally, who were mostly

students or teachers in different universities in Pakistan. Although first-hand data both about what women think and feel about the drama serials and about whether their attitudes have been affected as a result is invaluable, this is not the focus of my research. The focus is to look critically at the way women are portrayed in mainstream entertainment media on Pakistani television. Neuman (2014) believes that qualitative studies analyze the data by arranging it into categories based on themes, concepts, or matching attributes. The conceptual categories in the case of my research are the three types of women's labor that I examined: professional labor, social reproductive labor, and working-class women's low paid labor. These were also the preliminary analytic categories because I selected these before watching the drama serials.

In my research, I draw on Leavy's work (2007) which describes feminist audiovisual content analysis as follows:

> We live in a cultural landscape in which audiovisual narratives constantly flow from television sets and movie screens. The *content* of these narratives emerges from the interplay or fusion of the visual, sound, and textual components. Given the normative nature of audiovisual material in people's daily lives, feminists have a real stake in investigating how different genres of television and film portray women, people of color, and sexual minorities [emphasis in the original]. (p.16)

Feminist audiovisual content analysis will enable me to critically highlight where and how there are biases towards women employed in different occupations, as well as if and how the social reproductive labor of the women who are portrayed as mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, and grandmothers on-screen is ignored or taken for granted. Leavy (2016) also points out that this type of analysis always comes with challenges because every audiovisual narrative is unique, since such narratives include dialogue, language, actions, and expressions. For example, the meaning of a scene from a Pakistani drama serial would be one

thing in Urdu but would shift if translated into any other language. This is precisely why I look at just the content of the drama serials: it takes careful effort to translate the meanings, behaviors, and attitudes that people associate with women on screen from an Eastern, religious, conventional, Pakistani context to a Western academic context and to make the readers of this research understand what exactly is the point. But I attempt to translate so that the intended meaning of the drama serials or the original messages are not altered, which is not an easy task. For example, Hardt and Negri (2009) hold that even in Western countries, women are still responsible for most unpaid domestic and reproductive labor. The same is true for Pakistan, but the narratives of these drama serials also use religion in creating an ideological atmosphere where women are socialized into believing that performing the domestic work is something that is done *only* by women because it is *their* duty. This is one instance where Federici's concept of social labor operates hand in hand with a South Asian religious context.

In short, content analysis is a way to ask in-depth questions about the material of movies, soap operas, songs, TV commercials, and talk shows that also inquire into the thematic, ideological, and iconological ways that content endorses itself as realism (Leavy, 2007). That is, I examine how the drama serials portray different gender roles and behaviors, what on-screen behaviors for women are rewarded or not objected to, and what behaviors are associated with what women 'shouldn't' do. In this way, I examine how these women's shows are both normative and prescriptive for women. But I also look for any counter-hegemonic portrayals of women in my analysis. Even if the behavior or actions of female characters go against the norm for one or two episodes, that shows that there is a potential for female characters to break the chains of hegemony.

Chapter 4. Analysis

Before I get on with the analysis, I believe a discussion about the plot and the main characters is in order, which would aid the reader of my analysis. *Humsafar* (2011) is a story about individuals, whereas *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) is a story about two families with a focus on two protagonists.

4.1 *Humsafar* (2011)

Humsafar means "someone who travels with you," but in this instance, it means "life partner" as in life is a journey, and someone who travels that journey with you is your *humsafar*. The protagonists of *Humsafar* (2011) are Khirad, Ashar, and Sara, with a lot of other characters, but these three are the main ones. Khirad is a young woman living in Hyderabad with her mother. They belong to a lower-middle-class family. Khirad's mother, Maimoona, is a teacher in a government school in Hyderabad, and she earns just enough money to make ends meet. Maimoona's brother and Khirad's uncle, Baseerat, is a major businessman in Karachi. When Maimoona is diagnosed with cancer, she calls her at-this-point estranged brother to ask for help, as she cannot afford the treatment, a move that Khirad does not like but agrees to in the end because she is more worried about her mother's health than bruising her own pride. On her deathbed, Maimoona confides in Baseerat that she is worried about leaving Khirad all alone as Khirad's father had died a few years earlier, and that she wishes to get Khirad married before she dies. Baseerat offers to marry Khirad to his son, Khirad's cousin Ashar. Neither Khirad nor Ashar want to marry the other. For her part, Khirad feels humiliation at the thought of being married off this way: to someone she does not know who is so much richer than her and who clearly does not want her in his life. Ashar does not want to marry Khirad because he has reservations about her being a 'small-town

girl.' He also does not really know her and, besides, is not ready for marriage. Nonetheless, both of them agree to the marriage because of their parents' pressure and emotional pleas.

Sara is Ashar's cousin from his mother Fareeda's side. Zarina is Fareeda's sister, which makes her Ashar's aunt; and Sara is Zarina's daughter. Sara and Ashar have grown up together and now work together in the business office of Ashar's father, Baseerat. They are very good friends, but Sara has always been in love with Ashar, who does not return those feelings and has always considered Sara only very good friend. The rest of the drama serial follows the story of the couple, Ashar and Khirad, who start to like each other and fall in love only to have Fareeda, along with Sara and Zarina, hatch a plan to break up the couple because Fareeda never wanted their marriage to take place in the first place.

4.2 *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012)

Zindagi gulzar hai means "life is pleasant" or "life is beautiful." The two protagonists of this drama serial are Kashaf and Zaroon. Kashaf is a young woman who belongs to a lower-middle-class family and lives with her mother Rafia and two sisters Sidra and Shaneela. Their father, Murtaza, has abandoned them and has married a second time because Rafia has been unable to give him a son, modern science is completely ignored here, as now we know that it is the sperm that carries the pair of chromosomes that decides the sex of the baby. All the sisters are shown to be very studious and hardworking girls, where they tutor young children with their mother in the evening to make ends meet. The mother, Rafia, is the principal of a government school in a poor neighborhood in Karachi. The other main character, Zaroon, is the only son of his parents, Ghazala and Junaid, and has one sister named Sara. Junaid is a big businessman, and Zaroon's life is the complete opposite of Kashaf's when it comes to their standard of living. Despite his father's successful business, Zaroon does not want to work for his father but aspires to pass his CSS (Central Superior Services) exams to work in the foreign service of Pakistan. Zaroon is portrayed as a

misogynistic character who doesn't believe in women 'doing everything they want' and believes that it is a 'man's world.' Kashaf, because of her father, develops a hatred towards men and has major reservations about social class differences and inequalities. The drama serial is basically about how these two different characters meet and then make an unlikely couple. Most of what the audience knows about these two characters—including what they think about each other and their lives—comes when, at the end of the day, they both sit down to write in their personal journals. However, unlike *Humsafar* (2011) where the focus is only on Ashar and Khirad's relationship, in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* we see the dynamics of several relationships, including those of Rafia and Murtaza, Ghazala and Junaid, and Kashaf and Zaroon.

4.3 Nature of the Narratives

In this section, I inquire into some of the themes that are present in both drama serials. Are they perpetuating patriarchal stereotypes? Do they reflect the classist views of their writers and producers, and thus society at large? Does religion play a role in the serials?

4.3.1 Patriarchal and Sexist Portrayals

Hedley (2002) did an inductive content analysis of a hundred and fifty of Hollywood movies popular from the 1980s to 2000s, where he found that "popular culture in modernity" is now describing what is real, and how the people who control the related media are very well aware of the power their control gives them (p. 202). His findings also show an increasing prevalence of male protagonists' perspectives, which is especially true for *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), in the sense that it is not as if Kashaf's perspective is given less screen time; rather, Zaroon's perspective of life and how women 'should be,' wins in the end. Zaroon feels that his mother, Ghazala, and his sister Sara have 'too much freedom and independence', and because of her mother being a professionally employed woman, Ghazala

has missed out on family time and has not been very active in his and Sara's upbringing. Junaid, Zaroon's father, feels the same way, and in the end, even Sara starts to blame Ghazala when Sara's own marriage fails. Sara scolds Ghazala that it was her job as a mother to stop Sara from divorcing her husband in a rush, and that it was Ghazala's fault that Sara never learnt to compromise. To illustrate this with an example from the drama serial, in Episode 2, Ghazala comes to inform Junaid that she has been nominated for an international conference related to her work. Junaid, on the other hand, is busy rummaging in his wardrobe as he is late for a meeting and downplays the importance of her news and does not express any excitement. He blames her that she prefers her work life over her duties as a wife. She offers to take out another suit for him but he curtly refuses, which angers Ghazala who then accuses Junaid of being a typical man who has never been happy with her successful career. In this scene, the writers of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) clearly depict that what Junaid and Zaroon feel about the women in their lives is correct, and if a woman gives preference to her career over her family, she is clearly in the wrong. Studies of Pakistani dramas by Talib and Idrees (2012) and Abbas (2018) reinforce this conclusion. As these scholars conclude, drama serials assert that staying inside the household is evidence of a woman's good character by frequently casting professionally employed women as villains.

The important fact to note here is that Ghazala is portrayed in a negative light, which becomes more clear by the sinister background music in this scene. The reason I bring up the background music is because, as Dicks and Mason (2008) argue, during a content analysis, too much focus on the visual aspects of the data tends to overshadow the significance of other senses that audiences use to understand any social phenomena. The authors further contend that the idea of visual methods should be replaced with multimedia methods, as researchers learn to identify and understand the multisensory nature of the social settings they study.

Hedley (2002) also deduced that female characters were depicted as unfailingly advantaged when it came to "moral status" in contrast to male characters, while disadvantaged when it came to "social power" (p. 207). In regards to the two drama serials under analysis, I observed this trend as well. In Episode 11 of *Humsafar* (2011), Khirad's character is framed by her mother-in-law's character, Fareeda, for supposedly having an affair with a classmate of hers, Khizar, while being married to Ashar. Khirad pleads and beseeches Ashar to listen to and believe her, and not his mother, Fareeda. She tries to make him understand that she is "his Khirad" and she would never look at another man that way. Ashar does nothing even when his mother slaps Khirad and calls her an adulterer who has shamed Ashar and his family name. Towards the end of this scene, we see Khirad, who is clearly distraught, defeated and crying on the floor. At that moment, Khizar comes close to her, and she looks up at him. The positioning of the two characters speaks volumes about the social imbalance of power between them. He is literally towering over her after destroying her marital life by saying a few sentences. The reason he gives for doing what he did is that Fareeda promised him a lot of money and the love of a woman he likes. The thing to note here is that, throughout the series, different characters talk about how Khirad has led a very simple and innocent life with her mother. On his deathbed, Baseerat confesses to his son Ashar that he is afraid people might try to take advantage of Khirad's innocence. She herself apologizes to Ashar after lying to him about something as menial as who moved his favorite plants in the garden from one place to another. Khirad is shown to have the high moral status Hedley (2002) talks about.

In the case of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2002), the high moral status is possessed by Rafia, Kashaf's mother, who has been abandoned by her husband for another woman. She works to support herself and her daughters. She may have bitter feelings towards her husband, Murtaza, but her 'redeeming' quality is that she has never taught her daughters to hate their

father and always encourages them to be polite and respectful towards him. This whole arc is patriarchal in nature, because the message is that even if a woman's father abandons her, he still deserves to be treated with respect just because he is the father.

A very good question that Hedley (2002) asks is about what circumstances foil women's participation from disputing normative patterns. Rafia's situation is an example of this. She stands up for her daughter, Kashaf, when Murtaza tries to get her married to stop her from getting her graduate degree. At the same time, when Kashaf does marry Zaroon, Rafia teaches her daughter that she must call her husband's parents daily to ask about their well-being and do everything for Zaroon with her own hands, including cooking food for him, among so many other things. Zaroon does not return this kind of care for Kashaf in any way, i.e., the kind of care where you do something for your partner because you are concerned, which automatically puts Kashaf in a subordinate position. Rafia's character is different because some of her actions do challenge normative gender patterns, for example, when a colleague of Murtaza's tries to pressure Rafia into letting his daughter study in her school. Rafia refuses, even when this man threatens to thwart promotion prospects for Murtaza. But then her character comes back inside the folds of convention when she tells Kashaf that a woman's greatest achievement is to have a husband, a family and children.

Angelique and Culley (2000) performed a feminist content analysis of 2,178 research articles from two peer-reviewed journals. In their study, the researchers reported that there was an increasing trend towards 'women-relevant' subjects, but stereotypes of women and other ostracized groups were still pretty common. This is also accurate in terms of the drama serials, because the key subject matters in both are heterosexual marriage, including separations, tensions between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, tensions between the husband and wife, financial woes of women, and general disparities in social power between men and women. Most importantly, the drama serials overwhelmingly represent these issues

in stereotypical ways, where the women always have to sacrifice for the happiness of their marriage or the family at large. In short, heteronormativity seems to saturate the drama serials.

Angelique and Culley also used feminist content analysis to identify "gender stratified power imbalances" (p. 797), an approach that I apply in my analysis. For example, in Episode 7 of *Humsafar* (2011), the audience sees Khirad's idea of love as she emails a friend. In the email, she confesses that she wants to mold herself according to Ashar's likes and dislikes. Ashar is depicted as a highly educated young man, because he has a foreign degree from Yale University. On his encouragement, Khirad goes back to school for a Master's degree; and so, Khirad admits to this same friend that Ashar has backed her to follow all her dreams. However, Khirad confesses her real reason for continuing her education: she believes that, as Ashar's wife, she should be as educated as he is. When Khirad brings a cup of tea for Ashar, he tells her that he likes that she does everything for him. All the little chores that she does for him could also be done by the maid but he 'is happy to see' that she does it, and likes it that she takes care of him and wonders if "one always remains a child at heart, and if someone looks after him, it feels good." Khirad's character is shown to be doing all this out of her own free will and the love she feels for Ashar, which is the very affective labor that Hardt and Negri (2009) and Federici (2012) talk about, though Federici calls it social reproductive labor. Capitalism and patriarchy work hand in hand, where the social reproductive labor of women does not seem like a chore to them, and they do it with a smile on their face. The power imbalance here is that Ashar does not realize his own socialization and privilege, where it is okay to express happiness at the thought of your wife caring and nurturing for you, and Khirad does not realize that the love she feels for Ashar has very patriarchal connotations.

In Episode 3 of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), Zaroon is talking to his father, Junaid, about his mother, Ghazala, and how Junaid should talk to Ghazala about her priorities, how she gives so much time to her work and never has enough time for her family. Junaid assures his son that Ghazala is not a bad woman, but she has definitely shirked her responsibilities towards her home. He says, "In order to make herself independent, she made a lot of unwise decisions. She lost a lot of things in life that bring one happiness, that remain a part of precious memories. I never made that mistake." The power imbalance here is that Junaid's character conveniently ignores the fact that he did not *need* to become independent because he already was. (I provide more on Ghazala's character in the next section where I discuss the depiction of professionally employed women.) The "precious" memories that he talks about are the memories made by spending time with one's family. However, if a man fails to make time for his family because of his work, it is quite alright because he is providing for his family; but, if a woman prioritizes her career, even for a second over 'memory making', suddenly she is 'unwise'. For his part, Zaroon appreciates his father's 'patience' at being so understanding, admitting that if he had been in his father's place, he would not have been so accommodating and would have created a lot of issues for his wife. The above examples from the two drama serials illustrate the patriarchal structure of the narrative, and how some of the viewpoints are downright sexist. Even the female characters, like Khirad and Rafia, have internalized patriarchy.

4.3.2 Classist Portrayals

The next factor I consider is when class intersects with gender, and women characters are at a disadvantage because they belong to a supposedly lower social class. In this section, I bring attention to the fact that class becomes a part of the identity of different characters: how being from that particular social class, usually lower middle-class, is somehow indicative of these characters *lacking* something. This classist portrayal when observed together with

sexist portrayals is particularly destructive to real life women who are from lower social classes and face this discrimination in their daily lives. If popular media of a country is perpetuating and reproducing the already existing bigoted stereotypes related to women, this doesn't help the women's movement or struggle for equality. In the cases of both Khirad and Kashaf, each has to face criticism from their male protagonists' friends over being from a lower middle-class familial background. Words and phrases like "cheap", "illiterate", "gold-digger", "small-town girl", "simple-minded", "small-minded", "ordinary", "proud", "arrogant", "lacking manners", "stupid", "witch", "no sense of style", "no class" and "idiot" were used for both Khirad and Kashaf. For example, Khirad's mother-in-law, Fareeda, tells her when she kicks Khirad out of the house in the middle of the night, after staging the supposed affair, that: "My son had given way more importance to you than your worth. That mistake had to be rectified. A girl who grew up in a tiny apartment in a small town, daughter of a government school teacher, wanted to be my daughter-in-law?" This dialogue has very classist tones because Fareeda always wished for Ashar to get married to a woman of his own "standard." Here we see a woman from a rich economic background trying to assert social power over a woman from a lower middle-class background. However, when it comes to Ashar and Khirad's marriage, Fareeda's husband, Baseerat, threaten her with divorce and physical violence if she tries to hamper their marriage in any way. Therefore, a woman of the upper class has social power over a woman from the middle class, but is (shown as) powerless in front of a man from her own social class. This is not exactly the same but similar to what Shohat and Stam (2014) say about imperial narratives on the big screen in the West. According to them, the movies that have the colonial and imperial connotations in their narratives are basically masculinist, but the role of European female characters sometimes makes the analysis difficult. The authors talk about the same intersectional analysis here that

I draw on: a Western woman will be in a subordinated relationship with a Western man, but would still exert dominance over non-Western women and men.

Cole (2009) discusses how intersectionality makes visible that gender, race, class, and sexuality work at the same time to form and affect the perceptions and experiences of everyone in a society in which they are stratified along these aspects. She also believes that to study any of these social categories in isolation is a disservice, and that to realize this offers the researcher the opportunity to bring more context into research. In relation to my research, it is important to point out that Fareeda's character is being unfair to Khirad, but it is equally important to draw attention to the fact that Baseerat threatens Fareeda, and under no circumstances should a man be allowed to get away with that.

In their analysis of some TV shows on the US television in relation to feminism, Press and Strathman (1993) discuss how working-class families and middle-class families are represented. According to them, the working-class families are shown in a more matriarchal light, that is, led by strong, determined women like Maimoona, Khirad's mother, in *Humsafar* (2011), or Rafia in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012). This is in stark contrast to patriarchal depictions of middle- and upper-class families, like Baseerat being the patriarch and leader in *Humsafar* and Junaid being the patriarch in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*. But, both Maimoona's and Rafia's leadership of the household was not something they did out of their own free will. The narrative dictated that because both of their husbands were no longer in the picture, they had to step up and 'take on the role of the man of the house'.

After Fareeda kicks her out of the house and Ashar refuses to answer any of her calls, Khirad goes back to Hyderabad to live with a good friend of her mother's. All this time, Khirad is pregnant with Ashar's child and decides to start living her life without him. In Episode 15 of *Humsafar* (2011), the audience sees Khirad return to Karachi after four years to ask for financial help from Ashar because their daughter Hareem has a congenital heart

defect, and she cannot pay for it herself. The audience watches an internal monologue where Khirad is struggling with her decision to go back to a man who refused to even listen to her side of the story, let alone believe her, but she decides to brave the 'humiliation' anyway. She curses her fate and thinks, "Why is it that I had to be born poor and Ashar rich? He has money, so no matter what he does, he is respected in the society, and because I am poor, even after tolerating all the unfair and cruel treatment, I am the one who has to go through all the abasement."

In *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), Kashaf and Zaroon meet for the first time in a university, when they are both doing their MBA. Kashaf is a brilliant student who won a very prestigious scholarship. She looks around at the children of rich people and starts envying them. We see how she has to change a bus and a public transport wagon in order to reach her university and how her class fellows have luxurious lifestyles and how they know no real hardship. The audience also sees her thinking that everything in life is easy for people who have enough money to spend and how she has been "pushed around all her life in her pursuit of a good education".

The point here is that the struggles and tensions around gender that both Hedley (2002) and Press and Strathman (1993) observe in their respected studies is multiplied by the class differences between the main protagonists in these drama serials. It is true that the source of struggle between the two protagonists may be something else entirely, such as familial tension, or work life, but the social class difference makes it harder for the protagonists to bridge the gap. This is especially true in Khirad's case because, as we observe in Episode 3 of *Humsafar* (2011), at the thought of her marriage with Ashar, she pleads with her mother that because of the class difference, their union would not work and not to force her upon someone who is "at a higher level than her when it comes to education, living standards and

status". It would be apt to say that she has internalized classism the way Rafia from *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) has internalized patriarchy.

4.3.3 The Role of Religion

In their analysis of the image of a 'perfect woman', Ashfaq and Shafiq (2018) analyzed six drama serials and in almost all of them, the 'good woman' portrayed on-screen was also religious in addition to being obedient and subservient, which I discussed in my Literature Review. In my analysis, both drama serials associated the concept of religion with women of lower middle-class families. Typically, one does not see religion as an aspect of intersectional analysis, but in this case, Maimoona, Khirad, Kashaf, Kashaf's sisters, and Rafia were all shown to be following Islamic teachings when it comes to their lifestyles. The characters of Khirad and Kashaf are also shown praying on various occasions, and when they lament their difficult lives, their mothers always tell them that God would reward them in the end. Moreover, women in Islam are also encouraged to cover their hair and heads when going out of their homes. The female characters of lower social classes in both the dramas are shown to follow this particular Islamic teaching, but not the women from upper social classes like Fareeda, Zarina, Sara, or Ghazala.

Mahmood (2011) has also questioned what role a culture and its historical background plays in any feminist project. The author argues that this question has encouraged feminists and gender studies scholars to incorporate racial, sexual, national and class issues in their analyses, while concerns related to religious issues and differences have remained comparatively uninvestigated. I heed Mahmood's point by considering the importance of religion in my analysis of these drama serials. In Pakistan's society, being a Muslim comes sometimes even before being a Pakistani citizen. Religion here plays a vital role in the very identity of the people, so to include it in my intersectional analysis is essential. In fact, a person consuming the content of these drama serials is not thinking about how Islam is being

used to convey a specific message through them, but the whole point of my critical feminist media and intersectional analysis is to look at and identify factors which are usually taken for granted.

Marx (1978) called religion the "opium of the people" when referring to the working class and how religion works to distract them from the overarching capitalist agenda of the upper class. The ending of *Humsafar* (2011) sends the same kind of message. The audience sees Ashar finally reading a letter left to him by Khirad before Fareeda kicked her out of the house four years earlier. He realizes that Khirad was innocent of any wrongdoing after all, and therefore brings her back home, and the audience sees Khirad thanking God for restoring 'her lost dignity.' The message seems to be that if a woman is 'patient' enough in the face of hardships and humiliation, God will reward her for such patience. When Ashar defends 'her honor' in front of Fareeda and brings her back home, the narrative here conveys the message that the only way a woman's dignity can be maintained or restored is if a man speaks for her and defends her. In this instance, patriarchy works hand in hand with religion to give women a false sense of achievement and security. Mahmood (2011) talks about the similar experiences of Egyptian women with religion and how they think patience is a characteristic of a pious woman.

4.4 Women and Work

In this section, I hone in on a topic touched upon above, which is how these drama serials portray women in relation to work. More specifically, I talk about the following three categories of women portrayed on-screen: professionally employed women, stay-at-home women and their social reproductive labor, and domestic workers employed as maids, servants, and nannies. I chose to look at only them because they make up the majority of the women portrayal in the drama serials.

4.4.1 Professionally Employed Women

First, I discuss the professionally employed women by drawing on the scholarship of Kothari (2005), who looks at the work of some of the early writers of drama serials in the Pakistani media, from the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. In particular, Kothari studies the work of Hasina Moin, who has penned numerous drama serials including *Parchaiyan* (Shadows, 1976), *Ankahi* (Unspoken, 1982), *Tanhaiyaan* (Solitudes, 1983), *Dhoop Kinarey* (Sunlight's Edge, 1987) and many more. Kothari (2005) describes Moin's narratives as unreal because in these drama serials women have power and success, and are not at their mercy of their husbands. More often than not, women are financially independent, and some of these drama serials even show platonic friendships between men and women. In fact, Pakistan's Islamic clerics heavily criticized Moin's drama serials at the time because of how they portrayed "strong women characters that are agnostics" (Kothari, 2005, p. 298).

As far as *Humsafar* (2011) and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) are concerned, we have quite a few professionally employed women. I am avoiding the term 'working women' because my argument here is that women who stay at home are working day and night as well, just that their labor is not recognized. In *Humsafar* (2011) Fareeda has her own NGO (non-governmental organization) that works for the welfare of women. Ashar's cousin and Fareeda's niece, Sara also works with Ashar in Baseerat's business offices. Khirad's mother, Maimoona, and later Khirad herself, in order to support herself and her daughter Hareem, work as teachers in a government school. Even so, their work is considered neither important nor prestigious. Khirad and Maimoona *have* to work in order to survive. In *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), both Zaroon's and Kashaf's mothers are employed, but where Ghazala works in a high-powered job, the audience never finds out what, just that she has to go to conferences to other countries for her work. Rafia's profession is more a matter of survival than choice. Moreover, whereas Ghazala's work life is criticized, there is no mention in *Humsafar* (2011)

of Fareeda's job as an impediment in her being a 'good' wife, mother, or a woman. Kashaf herself has a government job, which is coveted in the society, and it also changes her father's opinion about her education and employment once she gets the job.

The interesting contrast in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) is between how people around them, mainly men, view Rafia's and Ghazala's job. Because Rafia is the head of her household, and the responsibility to look after the family falls on her shoulders, her working outside the home is not labeled as her prioritizing her career over her family. Ghazala, on the other hand, works because she *wants to*, not because she *has to*. In Episode 3, Ghazala is shown leaving the house for a conference in Malaysia when Zaroon comes home and asks her where she is going. When she informs him, we see him wonder in surprise why she never said anything about leaving the country, to which Ghazala replies that Zaroon's father has never questioned her in the way that Zaroon does. She also says that sometimes he behaves like a man from the Stone Age who believes that "a woman should inform and get permission from the man before going out whereas the man should just be able to go off wherever and whenever he pleases". By this stage in the drama serial, the audience knows Zaroon to have a very misogynistic personality. The tricky element of this scene is that there is nothing wrong in asking one's mother why didn't she say she was going out of the country, especially if she lives in the same house. However, because she chose this moment to call him out on his misogyny, Ghazala becomes the 'rude independent feminist'. The fact is that any typical member of the audience, at this point, would say she is being 'rude' for no reason at all. This can be better understood by the explanation I provided in Chapter 3 of encoding and decoding media messages given by Hall et al., (2003). The producers and the writers of this drama serial are trying to convey the message that Ghazala's character's choices are wrong as a woman, but my critical feminist analysis is able to look through that trick.

In addition to this, Ghazala's character is further cast in the negative light by the presence of sinister background music, which emphasizes that what is happening on screen is not pleasant. Towards the last episodes, Ghazala's 'wrong priorities' are further cemented when her character realizes that maybe she has ignored her family when it came to her career despite repeatedly telling Junaid that her first priority has always been her children's educational and personality development.

The same is done with Sara's character, Zaroon's sister. Her character is shown to be liberal, outspoken, and independent, which, according to the narrative of the drama serial, becomes the reason for her divorce because she has not been taught by Ghazala to "adjust and compromise". Rafia's character faces some criticism as well because of her profession. Murtaza's second wife, Nigar, plays the devil's advocate and tells him to ask Rafia to think of Kashaf's marriage when Kashaf gets admission in a co-ed university for her Masters. Rafia's and Nigar's characters are the classic "other" woman characters if taken in relation to each other (Meyer, 2015). According to the Meyer (2015), this character is oftentimes sexually, ethnically, and financially othered. Murtaza consults with his older brother and quickly finds a proposal for Kashaf, but when Rafia refuses, both Murtaza and his brother criticize Rafia that "these working women are definitely not capable of starting families and being housewives. Their heads are in the air" (Episode 3).

Somewhat contradictorily, we see people around the neighborhood congratulating Murtaza when Kashaf passes her CSS exams and is now a government officer and how "these kinds of daughters are worth more than a hundred sons" (Episode 12). In the same episode, Murtaza's elder brother comes to visit Rafia and says, "You have worked hard on your daughters. Every family has daughters, but they are always a burden." Rafia replies: "Daughters are never a burden. Rather, they are made to feel that way, and then, they become so. Besides, anyone can feel like a burden, be it a daughter or son. One shouldn't differentiate

between a daughter and a son and never should predict one would be more successful than the other." Towards the end of the drama serial, we see Murtaza feeling repentant and apologizing to Rafia in saying that she is a remarkable, hardworking woman, and he was wrong to think that sons are worth more than daughters. The point being, that Rafia's decision to work to support her family does not make her a bad woman, but Ghazala wanting to work does.

On some occasions, to be the daughter of a government school teacher was also used as an insult and in a derogatory way, for example, by Fareeda in *Humsafar* (2011) for Khirad and by Ghazala in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) for Kashaf. In *Humsafar* (2011), being a financially independent woman herself, Sara tells Ashar to keep an eye on Khirad as she is from an "economically impoverished background, has upgraded from simple clothes to designer wear and as a result, she may start thinking she has too much freedom" (Episode, 6). I will discuss dress codes more in the next section as different dress styles have different effects on how the audience perceives a character.

4.4.2 Social Reproductive Labor of Women

I now turn to the social reproductive labor or affective labor of women who are homemakers. Several women obviously fall into this category, including Khirad, Sara's mother, Zarina, from *Humsafar* (2011); Kashaf's sisters; and Murtaza's second wife Nigar. In addition, perhaps less likely characters, including Kashaf, Rafia, Fareeda, Ghazala, Sara and Sara (one from each of the dramas), and Maimoona are also a part of this category because their professional employment outside the home did not relieve them of the caregiving duties inside the home. Both Ghazala and Fareeda have a number of domestic workers to do the housework for them, but child-rearing responsibilities, tending to the husband's needs and decisions related to the day-to-day running of the household still fell on their shoulders. Some

of these women are what Federici (2012) calls full-time homemakers, whereas some bear the burden of a double shift because their "life [is] built exclusively on work" (p. 51).

Affective labor is not just doing the housework and performing the child rearing responsibilities. It is also Khirad's character obeying her dying mother and marrying a man she does not want to; it is also Rafia being disappointed time and again in Murtaza but still putting up with his cruel and indifferent behavior because sooner or later she has to get her daughters married and 'people talk' if the father of the girl is not present. Kashaf's affective labor is listening to her mother before the first day of her university that she is the first girl from their family to go to a co-ed university and Kashaf "should be careful to never let her mother's head bow down in shame" because if she made a mistake, her mother and sisters will never be able to show their faces in the society (Episode, 2). Fareeda's character's social reproductive labor is being helpless in front of Baseerat when he threatens her with divorce, despite her being a financially independent woman. Affective labor is also Kashaf overhearing Ghazala telling Zaroon to be careful with his money, after their marriage, and Kashaf may be passing on the money to her family, but still treating her mother-in-law with respect. When Kashaf tells her mother that Ghazala thinks Kashaf to be a thief, she experiences and bears the same emotional labor when her mother says that Kashaf's in-laws do not know her and "she needs to prove she is not like that" (Episode, 21). In Episode 23, Nigar's emotional labor is when she has to listen to Murtaza and their son Hammad, who is indolent in his education, that the reason he is not as brilliant as Kashaf and her sisters in his studies is because "she's not educated enough, if she had been she would have done a better job of rearing her children" and so many more examples of affective and emotional labor but I feel as if I've made the point.

My argument here is that all of what the above-mentioned characters do is invisible because women are supposed to sacrifice for the rest of the family *anyway*. Kashaf's

character was deeply hurt by Ghazala's (her mother-in-law) comments but Rafia still asked her to be an obedient daughter-in-law and not to disrespect her in-law in any way. This is especially duplicitous of the narrative because if Zaroon's character had overheard something like this being said about him by Kashaf's mother, he would have thrown a fit. Oksala (2016) sums it up in an extremely eloquent way: "Affective labor is thus immaterial in the sense that its products are intangible [because they are relationships and sentimental reactions], even though it is usually corporeal and mixes with material forms of labor" (p. 284). This case of invisible work that women are supposed to do anyway is apparent in Khirad's character, when her daughter Hareem is diagnosed with a heart condition and she has to move back to Ashar's house for the sake of her daughter's treatment. We see the internal struggle of the character, where she does not want to remain in Ashar's house with people who insulted her, but she has to continue living there because Ashar is paying for Hareem's treatment. Oksala (2016) also discusses Hardt and Negri's work and they understand domestic work as a prime example of affective labor because, apart from household chores, it also consists of producing affects and forming connections, forms of interaction and cooperation between children, in the family and the society at large. Oksala (2016) blames capitalism as the reason for this invisibility of women's labor: in order for a modern capitalist economy to function efficiently, it is vital to uphold a sexist division of labor and to depend on women's unwaged reproductive and social labor in the private realm.

4.4.3 Women as Domestic Workers

I now turn to the representation of women employed as domestic workers in other people's homes. In *Humsafar* (2011) the audience sees three women domestic workers: two as cooks, one as a nanny and a cook. The viewers know the name of only one of the cooks: Rooh Afza. The other female domestic worker is shown in Zarina and Sara's house. In *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), the work of the servants is taken for granted to the extreme that

the producers did not bother casting the actors. One maid is named Salma, who helps around the house but is never seen. One thing that I was not looking for, but discovered during my viewing of the dramas, was the presence of male domestic workers. In *Humsafar* (2011), in Khirad and Ashar's home, there is a young man named Jamal, who is also the gardener and does the grocery shopping. That said, even between the domestic workers, there is a sexual and patriarchal division of labor, which is not portrayed as a noticeable occurrence. It is something that is very normalized in the narrative. Rooh Afza cooks and cleans *inside* the house, whereas Jamal cleans the rest of the house from the *outside*. In Zaroon's house in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), they have a driver named Zaman and another helper named Salim, both men who are never shown on screen. The only domestic worker shown on screen appears in the last few episodes, in Zaroon's and Kashaf's home in Islamabad, a man named Amjad who is responsible for both the cooking and the cleaning.

All of these domestic workers are depicted as having little to no agency. They do what they are told to do, and on seven different occasions, they had to listen to their employers being rude and disrespectful to them, where each and every time, the employer's behavior was not because of something servants had done wrong, but because of something else that was going on in their lives. In Episode 11, when Khirad is kicked out of the house in the middle of the night by Fareeda, she pleads with Roof Afza and Jamal to let her back in the house. Both the servants apologize to her and say they are not allowed to let her back in and it is better if she leaves the premises because if they are seen with her, both of them could lose their jobs. Zarina calls her domestic worker an "idiot" in front of other people because in "all her years of service she has not grasped how to make sandwiches correctly". In Episode 26, Zaroon is shown as having dinner and scolds Amjad for not cooking the meat enough as it is raw, and also takes issue with how the lentils are cooked. The audience is shown that the reason Zaroon dislikes the food is not because it is raw or not cooked enough, but because

Kashaf has not prepared it. Zaroon asks Amjad if he has forgotten to cook, and the only agency that I observed in these two dramas on a domestic worker's part comes from Amjad when he replies: "I haven't forgotten how to cook. You have forgotten how to eat." This angers Zaroon, and he dismisses Amjad to the kitchen.

Press and Strathman (1993) discuss in their research that whether they are professional or non-professional women, women from the working class or middle class, all of them face various types of discrimination and unfair treatment in their particular workplaces that are not only absent from representation on television but are rendered invisible. As I discuss above, the treatment that these domestic workers in these two dramas are getting is not fair and if they demand to be treated fairly, they could lose their jobs. According to Press and Strathman, if highlighted at all, these problems are presented as the woman's fault, that is, as a result of her decisions to engage in paid employment, rather than as a critique of the systemic practices that force women to choose between work or family when, actually, the choice is a fable.

4.5 Body Images and Dress Codes

In this section, I give attention to how the women portrayed in the drama serials were dressed and whether there was a certain body type that was repeatedly shown or not. Zia (2009) talks about the revival of Islamic feminism that attempts to justify all women's rights within the Islamic framework, which makes secular feminism irrelevant. This would result in a discussion on women's rights that is entirely centered on Islamic history, customs and tradition. The adverse effect of that would be a discussion based on a polarized 'good' vs 'bad' Muslim woman identity. I witnessed the same polarized identity on-screen in *Humsafar* (2011) and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) as well with the added factors of social class and age. The female protagonists, Khirad and Kashaf, before their marriages and upward social mobility are dressed in modest traditional Pakistani clothes or *shalwar kameez*, which is a

long shirt with a trouser and a scarf. The other young female characters from the upper middle class, like Zaroon's sister Sara and Ashar's cousin Sara, are shown in Western dress wearing short shirts with jeans and pants. But the female character who were older in age like Zarina, Ghazala, and Fareeda are shown in Pakistani clothes, sometimes wearing a *dupatta*, the scarf that is part of the traditional Pakistani dress.

Khirad's and Kashaf's mothers, on the other hand, are depicted with their heads covered with their *dopattas*, and with plain clothes. The narrative of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2011) conveyed the message that Sara's decision of getting a divorce was hasty and wrong, and after her divorce, the audience see a switch in her dress. She stops wearing tops and jeans, and switches to Pakistani clothes. Ashfaq and Shafiq (2018) found in their research that women in Pakistani drama serials are portrayed as 'good' if they wear Eastern clothes, cover their heads and respect the elders. Women who wear Western clothes and do not wear *dopatta* are shown as liberal and Westernized.

As opposed to the Western media, not much skin is shown by women in the drama serials. The maximum that the 'Westernized' female character is able to do is wear a sleeveless shirt or a dress. So, when it comes to body images, the exact figure of the female body is never visible but the audience can still see that young female actors are always very thin, with tiny wrists and toned faces, whereas the older female actors do not have to uphold these body image criteria. Khan et al. (2011) did research on how young men and women enrolled in different Pakistani higher education institutions think of their body and whether it is influenced by the media or not. In the study, the authors talk about Pakistani society's norms and how women, mostly, dress in line with the Islamic tradition – all parts of the body covered. Their study concluded that media has the potential to have an overall adverse effect on people's body images, and in the case of young women specially, it can be very harmful. The reason, according to the authors, is that the young women are more likely to perceive a

slim body as ideal, which is incited by media images of lean women portrayed across different outlets of mass and social media.

To summarize, in this chapter I conclude that, overall, these narratives are both sexist and classist. Religion was also used in the narrative to silence female characters, and also to give 'courage' to them that if they are being treated unfairly. All they have to do is be patient and God would reward them in the end by giving them justice. I also looked at the biases that were prevalent in both the drama serials towards professionally employed women, women from lower social classes, and women employed as helpers. I also briefly looked at what dress codes and body images have positive connotations attached to them, and what dress codes and body images have negative connotations attached to them in both the drama serials.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

My content analysis demonstrates that the representation of women is biased and skewed in favor of patriarchy and hegemonic capitalist ideology, in which religion is used as a weapon in the unfair and inequitable portrayal of women. The majority of the women characters that I discuss are dependent on the men in their lives, not just financially, but emotionally as well. Amongst the financially independent women characters, Rafia from *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) was the only one who was celebrated for the kind of life she led. Ghazala's character was portrayed as selfish, her decision to prioritize her career over family (which she repeatedly claimed she did not do) as wrong, and Kashaf's character was forced to fall in love with a misogynistic character who she could not bear to be around in the start.

To elaborate my point further, I would now like to mention a couple of bloggers, journalists, and social activists from Pakistan who protest vehemently against such depictions of women. The first one is Nayab Jan, who is a social activist, an entrepreneur, and a journalist. She uploads videos on her social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter) on issues she believes are worth highlighting. During the quarantine because of Covid-19, she got the chance to watch some of the contemporary drama serials. On April 30, 2020, in a video, she said,

> The women depicted in these drama serials have only one purpose in their lives, either to get married or to take part in vicious schemes against other people of the household. On one side, a lot of importance and respect is given to personal relationships, but on the other side, marriages are treated so casually that, in every other household, men have two wives. Twenty-five percent of women in Pakistan also work outside the homes; we hate them so much that we never represent them in dramas.

This last point made by Jan (2020) is particularly true. There is no major representation of professionally employed women in popular media, that is, they are never the main

protagonists. But, even if they are, they are cast in a negative light, case in point of Ghazala from *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012), or they are portrayed as giving first priority to their family and children and then to work, Kashaf and Rafia's case. I went online to double-check the statistic and found a report from World Bank (2019), which showed, graphically, that women's labor force participation has increased 6%, from 20% to 26% in the last decade. In contrast, men's labor force participation is around 56% to 60% percent. *Humsafar* (2011) and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) are almost a decade old. In fact, however, the drama serials currently on television seem to have deteriorated in quality when it comes to the portrayal of women. *Ruswai* (Debasement, 2019) was a drama serial about a woman, Sameera, who is gang-raped by thugs and then has to *apologize* to her in-laws for being raped. The character is a medical doctor but is entirely at her husband's mercy. The audience sees her character being beaten and abused by her husband because it was all her fault. The audience sees her mother-in-law describing her as 'damaged goods'.

The point I am trying to make here is simple and straightforward. If a drama serial with such sexist and chauvinist connotations airs for 25 episodes, and only in the last one or two episodes the narrative redeems itself, the audience is more likely to retain what they saw in the first 24 episodes, rather than what they witness in the last one. This is exactly what Ali and Batool (2015) established by their research: "When people are repeatedly shown images of women as victims, passive, dependent, weak, sexualized, in domestic roles, they are more likely to accept these images as normal" (p. 709). The authors believe that media images in Pakistan fortify and reinforce the patriarchal culture because the imagery and text people confront in their daily lives, distributed by media, shape their personality and identity.

Another social activist from Pakistan is Kanwal Ahmed, who uses Facebook and Twitter to get her counter-hegemonic messages across to the women of Pakistan. She also has a web-series called Conversations with Kanwal, where she invites women who have been

ostracized by society for their life choices and talks to them. In a recent post on Twitter on May 8, 2020, she discusses sarcastically what Pakistani dramas teach the audience, and especially the young women:

> 1. If you suspect your husband of having an affair, he'll bring home another wife. 2. If you don't suspect your husband of having an affair, he'll bring home another wife. 3. If you mistreat his family, he'll bring home another wife. 4. If you don't mistreat his family, he'll bring home another wife. 5. If you spend more time at work than at home, he'll bring home another wife. 6. If you spend all your time at home, he'll bring home another wife. 7. If you don't give him love and attention, he'll bring home another wife. 8. If you give him all the love and attention, he'll bring home another wife. In short girls, be prepared to share your husband with another woman. And in case you're in love with a married man, don't be upset according to Pakistani dramas you can still have him especially if you act like a damsel in distress around him.

Ahmed (2020) points all this out because, in contrast to the practice of polygamy in real life, the prevalence of polygamy in drama serials is alarming because, yes, Islam allows multiple marriages, but there are certain rules that have to be followed in order for a man to marry a second, third and fourth time. Ali (1997) explains these rules by citing different verses in Quran that have to be read and interpreted *together* which the conservative Islamic scholars do not. The author discusses how the justification provided for polygamy by most Muslim men and scholars — that since Prophet Mohammad was polygamous in later life, it is permissible for Muslim men to be polygamous as well — is not evidence enough. Here is Ali's summary and interpretation of the verses that mention polygamy in the Quran:

> (a) If you can be just and fair among women, then you can marry four wives.
>
> (b) If you cannot be just and fair among women, then you may marry only one.
>
> (c) You cannot be just and fair among women; from which follows: i.e. you may

marry only one wife. (p. 142)

Basically, what Ali is trying to explain here is that it is virtually impossible to be just and fair when in a marriage with more than one woman women. A man will always like one of his wives more than the others, or will love and care more for one of the wives, which goes against the basic rule of polygamy. But this simple explanation is ignored by most male Islamic scholars and only the first verse is cited as reason enough for multiple marriages.

Another factor that I should highlight here concerns the counter narratives, those characters in both the drama serials that go against the hegemonic grain. Talib and Idrees (2012) propose that amongst the patriarchal representation of women in Pakistani drama serials, there are still characters who introduce to the audience the presence of a mindset that is counter-hegemonic—for example, the character of Rafia, and to some extent the character of Kashaf from *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012) and the character of Khirad, for a few episodes, in *Humsafar* (2011). Rafia believed in educating her daughters and fought for their rights, and instilled the same values in her daughters as well, but at the same time also taught her daughters to be subservient to their in-laws and husbands. Kashaf's character believed in gender equality, but also ends up with a very misogynistic man, Zaroon. And Zaroon's personality and worldview win out at the end of the drama serial. Khirad's character stood up for her self-respect and for her daughter's rights, but ends up forgiving Ashar, the same character who refused to believe her innocence. All this is done in the name of love.

My argument is that the number of hegemonic and heteropatriarchal representations far outnumber the counter-hegemonic representations, whether it is the portrayal of women, their labor, or social practices like marriage. Even the characters who show potential such as those who challenge the status quo, end up getting assimilated in the overarching sexist and chauvinist narrative. This does not help the countless Pakistani women who have to struggle to get their basic rights and freedom. These reductive portrayals divide women into innocent

and evil characters, where if they have their own views, they are immediately portrayed as 'not good enough' women.

A point I would like to raise further is that my thesis, in addition to contributing to the scholarly work about Pakistani TV and feminist theory and methodology, also contributes to the more public conversations around women's rights and equality movements in Pakistan. In a way, what Nayab Jan, Hira Hyder, and Kanwal Ahmed are doing on social media platforms, I did through my research thesis—critically looking at the drama serials and the narratives that they are proliferating on Pakistani television.

5.1 The Way Forward

One central question that arises out of my analysis is what kind of content could be beneficial to the women's movement or different feminist struggles in Pakistan. Cheema (2018) looks at different interactive genres on Pakistani television and the gendered content. She analyzed talk shows, morning shows, religious and political talk shows where the hosts usually invite a group of people for discussion. Cheema (2018) conducted focused group discussions amongst university students to find out how young women engage with this kind of content. The private/public divide that is prevalent in the Pakistani society is challenged by these talk shows because these interactive genres provide women with a means of entry and long-term access to the mediated public sphere. In her findings, Cheema (2018) found that some of the talk shows have been invaluable in highlighting gender-based issues such as honor killings, domestic violence, and sexual abuse and also that viewers are interested in finding out more about their rights under the Pakistani law. Cheema identifies this as an immensely progressive step in a conventional culture that uses religion to encourage secrecy and silence on gender-based issues.

Along similar lines, the Kashf Foundation is a non-governmental, wealth management, and microfinance institution in Lahore, Pakistan that helps people, mainly poor women and young girls financially. The organization has laudably collaborated with entertainment media to produce drama serials that highlight issues of Pakistani women such as domestic violence, forced prostitution, child rape, and acid attacks. Their drama serial *Udaari* (To Fly, 2016) was widely appreciated for depicting a child rape narrative where the silence culture was not practiced and the culprit was eventually criminally punished. As my analysis in this thesis demonstrates, these portrayals of gendered content are what is needed in Pakistan. The notion of the silent, subservient, domestic 'ideal girl' that Hyder (2020) talks about is harmful, especially to the young women who are victims of gender-based-violence, assaults and brutality. I contend that the notion of 'ideal girl' should be more women and female-friendly. The idea that if a woman partakes in paid employment after marriage means she is prioritizing her career over her family needs to be not only revisited but eliminated. What most people do not realize is that it helps alleviate the financial pressure the man of the house feels as well. Nida Kirmani, a feminist sociologist from Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), tweeted on July 9, 2020 that how women "who are engaged in paid work will still be told they are lucky for being 'allowed' to do so & of course will still be expected to take care of domestic tasks otherwise they will be accused of slipping in their duties as a good wife & mother". Although Kirmani is talking about actual women, as my analysis showed, Ghazala form *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2020) was viewed exactly as Kirmani described.

Another way forward could be to find and highlight issues that are common to both Islamic and secular feminists such as child and adult rape, forced prostitution, women's share in inheritance, and domestic abuse. Because of the contentiousness between different types of feminisms, the mutual concerns of both feminist movements are overlooked because of too much discussion on *how* they must be dealt with, forgetting in the process that they already

agree on the *what*. Shabir et al. (2013) discovered another interesting fact through their survey to determine the effects of Urdu drama serials aired on Geo Entertainment TV and Hum TV on Pakistani women. They found that the two shows are promoting and positively portraying the education of women, which is contrary to what I observed in my analysis, but could be a progressive step in the way forward. The stereotype that the more educated a woman is, the less likely she is to be 'domestic' and 'homely' is suppressive and remissive.

Asif (2013) also notes the divide of awareness of their rights between rural and urban women in Pakistan. According to the author, 63% of women in rural Multan had no idea about their rights and empowerment, but the ratio was better in urban Multan where female literacy rates were higher. An example of this is the *nikah nama* (legal marriage document). In Islam, when it comes to the dissolution of marriage, it is only the husband that can *give* a divorce in the relationship. If the wife wants to separate from her husband, she can file for *khula* but she has to return the *mahr* or dower to the husband. *Mahr* is a monetary amount given to the wife by her husband after marriage as a gift to spend as she likes. The Pakistani constitution gives a woman the right to divorce her husband, where she can keep the *mahr*, but in most cases, the clauses that deal with the wife divorcing the husband, in the *nikah nama,* are crossed out without even asking or informing the bride. Another step in the way forward could be widespread education and awareness campaigns for women, so that at least they know the rights the Pakistani law gives them. The platforms that these campaigns can use are the ones provided by social media, which is exactly what people like Hira Hyder, Nayab Jan, Kanwal Ahmed, and Nida Kirmani are doing. They are a ray of hope. Yes, they are not present in mainstream mass media, but their voices are being heard across the country by young men and women through social media, and therein lies the ultimate step in the way forward. I would like to end with a quote that I think aptly describes the social practices in Pakistan:

> We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful. Otherwise, you would threaten the man. Because I am female, I am expected to aspire to marriage. I am expected to make my life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important. Now marriage can be a source of joy and love and mutual support but why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage and we don't teach boys the same? We raise girls to see each other as competitors not for jobs or accomplishments, which I think can be a good thing, but for the attention of men. We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are. (Adichie, 2014, p. 28-32)

In this excerpt from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's book, "We Should All Be Feminists", the process of socialization that she describes is exactly the same as in Pakistan. The whole institution, the people who are doing the socialization and the supposed principles of that institution, are highly chauvinistic in nature. I agree, there are voices against this way of upbringing but as of right now, they are too opposed to make bring about any significant change, but then again, so were the first suffragettes and we know how that turned out.

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