Crazy Girls: Female Delinquency in Pakistani Movies

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Abstract

Scholars have argued that films are being widely used as a source of entertainment and cultural communication in this modern world. No doubt, COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted film industry, but it has also increased digital mobility of content across borders to the large audience through sophisticated online media services. Now, through the production of content for streaming services this powerful medium of storytelling has become the center of attraction for global population to introduce new trends in a society. These trends effectively empower society particularly women empowerment is significant through this medium, however, regardless of their advantages, films produced also exhibit negative factors against cultural and societal norms. This study is based on the quantitative content analysis of six Pakistani films on aired in last decade during 2015 to 2019 to identify the frequency and evidence between films and female delinquency. Content was analyzed under three categories, dressing, language, and behavior, about female lead and female support characters. Data resulting from this analysis reveals diversity in female characters according to the culture and status. But, in nutshell, portrayals of female lead and female young support characters were not with accordance to the Pakistani culture.

Keywords: female delinquency, female portrayal, film, gender stereotyping, social norms.

1. Introduction

Film, an incredible source of visual correspondence, is a vehicle of diversion which shapes social, cultural and religious norms of a society through reality and illusion (Bilal, 2017; Elsaesser, 2002). It is believed that film can acquire change in the contemporary society with great pace due to its best wellspring of amusement. It has become a blend of chosen realities from life that is built around one's feelings and plays out a significant work. It makes a little world dependent on rationale and mental truth, which appears to be delightful to watchers, while preparing them inwardly. Now, film is the most mainstream vehicle of amusement and assumes an imperative part in the development of a coordinated civilization (Gokulsing, Dissanayake, 2004). Further, the current era of modernization and digital platforms have made it more influential around the globe. Digitalization has not only enhanced penetration of films among masses but it has provided alternative to film industry of such nations which were in decline after the fall of cinema culture. In case of Pakistan, film production of the Pakistani industry was 80 movies a year, but it went down to 20 movies a year due to certain reasons such as lack of innovative ideas, and social and cultural differences of the producers and audience (Rizvi, 2021).

In early 2010s, after a major breakdown of Pakistani film industry, digital world encouraged producers to take a chance again with new ideas. A progression of movies was delivered in which themes of the films significantly shifted focus on social issues like patriarchy, fanaticism, women's

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liberation, rights and status of females, religion, culture and illiteracy. Films additionally put glamorization, feeling of dressing, reconnaissance and self-guideline as a piece of woman's rights. Whilst, there is unnecessary portrayal of ladies in films (Steeves, 1987), however, some individuals had made an idea that innovatively people ought to be bargain in an unexpected way. The recent films have considered lens of women liberation vastly which has again moved public debate on the connection between film and gender relations, especially portrayal of female character (Agbese, 2011). The question of women's liberty is under discussion among the intellectuals, and this study is set to analyze the rhetoric of portrayal of women liberty in film focusing on social norms of Pakistani society.

Developing nations such as Pakistan, family organization is strongly patriarchal, and most people live with large extended families, often in same house or family compound (Khan, 2011). The eldest male, whether he is a father, grandfather, or paternal uncle, is a family leader and makes all significant decisions regarding the family and its members. Traditionally, a woman's place in society has been secondary to that of men, and she has to fulfill the role of a dutiful daughter, sister, wife and mother, and they have been restricted to the performance of domestic chores (Awan, 2020). In Pakistani society women seek their protection with family and prefer to live with the family decision and believe that they are doing well for them. This research firmly focuses on the themes of female depiction against social and cultural norms. A focal presumption in this exploration is that all media talks are the results of philosophies or ideologies which are basically the arrangement of convictions and thoughts (Stokes, 2012). The study will address how leading and prominent female characters deal with norms of Pakistani society.

Research question: Is young women portrayal in Pakistani films challenging social norms of Pakistan?

2. Material and methods

Study used quantitative content analysis method to examine the portrayal of female characters in contemporary Pakistani films as content analysis supports social scientist to develop a distribution and range of some social features, or examine certain behavioral trends, or attitudes (Ohaja, 2003; Zurmuehlen, 1981). Six movies selected for this study based on their ratings on internet. Only top rated movies were selected for analysis released since January, 2015 to December, 2019. Study focused on portrayal of female characters in Pakistani cinema measuring dressing, language, and behaviour. These three categories were analyzed with multiple factors, dressing (attire, body covering, and modesty), language (figure of speech, personification, contention, tone), and behaviour (expressiveness, passivity, gentleness, empathy, response, humility). Further, the context of this study is to examine the portrayals of female lead characters, female support characters (young), and female support characters (elder) in order to gain effective insights and overall review about movies. These three characters were selected after a pilot study, and portrayals of characters were examined in contrast to the cultural norms of Pakistani society. Design of content analysis was kept as simple as possible and as short as possible because the overall contribution of factors for each character was crucial to be identified in a detailed manner and easy for other scholars to determine actual information. However, results of content analysis were carefully discussed in detail by researchers and it was constrained for a specific study of female portrayal in Pakistani films.

3. Discussion

Women and films are a critical and appealing field of examination for media researchers which plan to discover picture of ladies projected through media and movies. Research on females and media stated that picture of females projected through film, in general, build up conventional perspectives frequently presenting a victimized and submissive image of females (Mishra, 2015). Social researchers, scientists and global organizations working for women liberation recognized that the picture of females projected from film comprises a significant hindrance to dispense with oppressed females all through the world, and it is a primary factor in saving conventional misogynist mentality towards them. However, there is an inclination in media to extend a generalized picture of females, supporting conventional ideas of the characters of females (Perveen, 2011).

Film involves an essential spot in the round of force connection with in a social development. When female are portrayed as mean, vulgar and surprisingly obscene to the youthful. It is considered as an instrument of scattering philosophy of humanism that serves the interests of the

chauvinist who practices for social and political control (Bingham, 1999). United Nations Organization censured debasing abuse of female as a sex image and instrument of financial interest by media (Kumar, 2019). Intellectuals reproved the current chauvinist pictures of females in broad communications which don't represent genuine ladies, or manage the real factors of female's experience, and appeal to females all around the world to investigate these pictures to understand a real sense living (Kaur, 2014). Emergence of a new proliferation and current trends of females revolve around fashion and fun.

Media must be utilized in such a way that it may support bringing mindfulness up in females, and enhance their characters and status in the global community as vigorous engagement in global growth (Redvall, 2018). The strategy further focused on making it a responsibility for governments and dependable associations to advance and energize in mass media of their nations, the projection of a noble and positive picture of females, redirecting them of their roles or characters as vehicles for exposure and as focuses for offer of buyer merchandise, with end goal of achieving changes in mentalities and perspectives of all kinds of people and their full cooperation in public eye. In 2019, after a decade for women liberalism, United Nations Organization and Global Women Year brought out extraordinary endeavors looking like explores, just as courses, studios and round table conversations, to prepare all powers to change this picture, and supplant it by an honest, legit and helpful portrayal of females (Kumar, 2019).

Investigation of females' depiction in films is also firmly identified with feminist exploration which has involved a critical spot in postmodern examination throughout the previous twenty years. It has added to the beginning of different methodological thoughts as point of view, positional and reflectivity (Reinharz, 2010). Its primary concern is to challenge hushing of a lady's voice in public arena and exploration. It likewise challenges a limited gendered sort of science which projects ladies in an inactive and subordinate job which have become a reason for their rejection from sociology rehearses as they are considered passionate and unequipped for reason. However, recent research on female depiction includes a promise to further develop life chances for young females; it includes an investigation of unexamined suspicions about females and their predominant types of knowing and doing which is crucial while carrying out evenhanded expert and individual practices (Weiner, 2012).

But, films depicting culture of a society deviate to the norms and values of community. Females are shown in oppressed characters while helping their family and performing household chores and the image they depict on media is far from reality (Mishra, 2015). However, world top film industries are trying to picturize actual face of the community focusing different genres like drama, history, and documentary. These films reflect social norms and playing a significant role in recreating cultural norms of a community. No doubt, female characters are changing the dynamics of gender equality and conventional system but it is not really accompanied by a true positive difference in methodologies through which females are depicted especially in dramas, news, and advertisements (Jayati, 2020). Current Hollywood movies seems focused on female empowerment but it has opened a debate particularly on female liberalism with new stereotypes and standards around the global cinema. Because most of the literature talks about the idea of liberated females and reveals that those films which are feminism based either carry ideology of feminism or they have a bold modern lady working as a lead in a movie (Warnakulasuriya, 2017).

Radical media and cinema of any nation plays a significant role in breaking true norms of a society and enable individuals of a community to establish their own way of life with modified norms. Female depiction particularly dress code has opened new ways of compromising in religious society as well. Movies challenge religious norms of females by using different approaches and metaphors (Nazemi, 2014; Ziba, 2007), and reflect, advance and proliferate a new belief systems (Buckland, 2011). That is why we can see film scripts dubbed in foreign language been modified due to compliance of cultural and religious norms. The concept of morality is more signified in religious society than the concept of absoluteness and ideal female is depicted following norms of the society (Nazemi, 2014; Ziba, 2007). Female delinquent may empower female audience however, bad behaviour could produce negative results. Intellectual around the globe are not happy to the portrayal of callous traits of young girls (Behm-Morawitz, Mastro, 2008).

4. Results

Table 1. Females in Pakistani Films

Measure	Female Lead		Female Young		Support Female Support Elder	
	Pro Norms	Against Norms	Pro Norms	Against Norms	Pro Norms	Against Norms
Dressing	229	366	110	262	214	83
Language	426	725	239	344	517	111
Behaviour	436	836	368	551	554	113
Total	1091	1927	717	1157	1285	307

Selected movies for this study are top rated movies of Pakistani cinema.

Use of language by female lead and female support young was highly against the norms particularly against the factors of persuasiveness and tone. However, the personification of these two characters somehow remained balanced in almost all movies along with contention and visuals. Similarly, the speech of these two characters slightly challenged norms of Pakistan. On the other hand, in case of female support elder, most factors of language were aligned with cultural norms of Pakistani society and their overall depiction was positive and productive. Behaviour of the characters, female lead and female support young, particularly movies of love stories and filmed in foreign country, was portrayed in a negative way. Similarly, in case of these young girls movies based on domestic themes and were produced locally have also shown most factors against the norms overwhelmingly due to portrayal of liberalism. Their expressiveness, response, passivity and attitude remained against the norms of Pakistan. However, humility, and empathy remained in accordance to the norms of Pakistani society. In case of female support elder all factors of the category of behaviour, expressiveness, attitude, humility, empathy, passivity and response, remained in accordance the norms, especially in themes based in Pakistan.
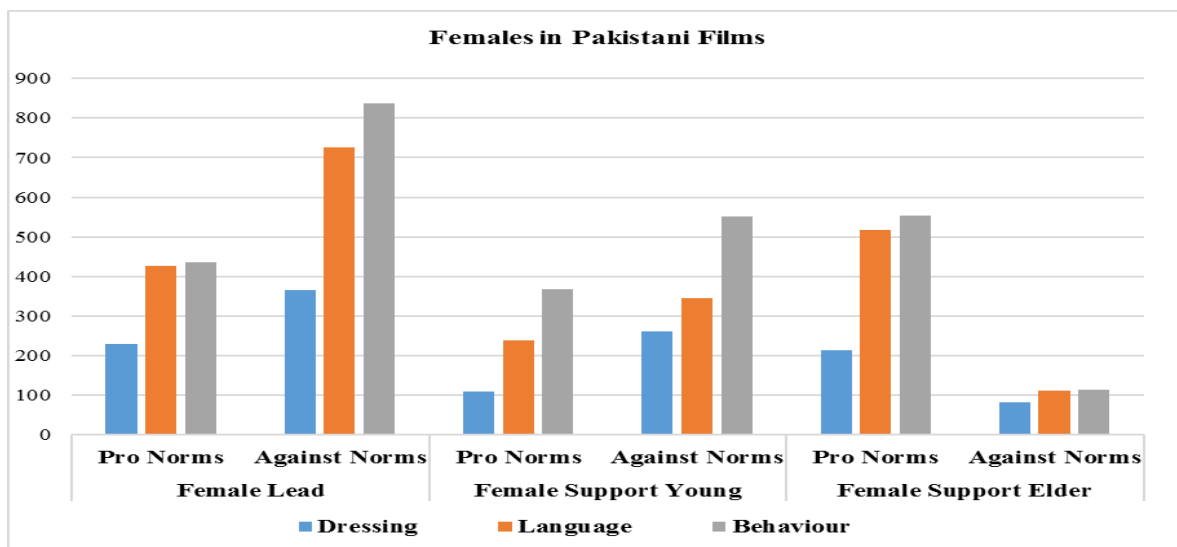

Fig. 1. Females in Pakistani Films

Content was analyzed according to the norms of Pakistani culture where majority of women, wealthy peasant and landowner households and in urban middle-class families, practice full body covering, purdah. Even cultural attire is mostly observed among urban middle-income group, women into workforce and into government service (Zaheer, 2020). Some women have gained distinction in different professions; some of Pakistan's leading politicians, journalists, and teachers have been women, and women has served as prime minister and as speaker of parliament as well

(Sohail, 2020). However, irrespective of the remarkable authenticity of a claim to a particular title, classification of social status and adherence to the local culture persists (Almas, 2017); the *shalwar-kamiz*, a long knee-length shirt over loose-fitting pants, is the most common traditional form of attire here in Pakistan (Malik, 2006). It is also important to acknowledge that Pakistani men are supporting women for their growth, because Pakistan is an Islamic state and Islam gives rights to women (Farooqi, 2022).

If we compare pre-Islamic and post Islamic sociocultural and political status of women, a gradual increase in their position is well noticeable. Islam as a religion has provided ample status and opportunities to women for establishing themselves as an important part of the society. Islam provides equal status to women and she has an independent personality, which cannot be subjugated (Khan, 2011). However, impact of media and westernization has led these norms to diversified values and principles. These norms are linked with social life of women in Pakistan. This mostly includes their daily social activities, styling, and living values. Norms of any nation plays a critical role in national development (Bicchieri, 1997). It is the responsibility of Pakistani media to portray image of each character in accordance to the true Islamic principles as being a Muslim nation and failing to do this can lead generations of population into wrong way of life. It is significant for any nation to keep intact true values and principles of social norms in the right way to prosper.

5. Conclusion

Basic assumption of this study is to investigate the portrayal of female characters in contemporary Pakistani movies and significance of the dressing, language, and behavioral factors employed in selected movies to depict female characters. Objective of this research was to clarify actual depiction of female characters be it lead or support character. Surprisingly, this research reveals that there are diverse types of depictions of the female characters. For instance, a lead female, in foreign country is shown to be aligned with Western culture and if she is in Pakistan then her portrayal will be aligned with the Pakistani society however, if the case is of elite class female character, depiction remains intact with Western trends. Most of the lead female characters are shown against the cultural norms of Pakistani society, however, some of the female lead characters were portrayed in accordance to the cultural norms of Pakistani society. Similarly, portrayal of young female support characters has mostly been aligned with Western trends and against the Pakistani culture. Furthermore, depiction of elder female characters remained intact with the norms of Pakistani society. There were some elder female characters had some negative attributes however, their overall significance was positive.

Moreover, content analysis of our research revealed that the depiction of negative liberalism was common in almost every movie that may influence brains of the young females of Pakistani society. Furthermore, current research also outlines that the selected movies have tried to balance their portrayals of women. For instance, a female lead in Western colony has been shown to wear Western dressing, her behavior and language is also shown in accordance to Western standards. While same female lead wears dressing, uses language, and behavior in accordance to the cultural norms of the Pakistani society. However, the factor of modesty, and liberalism was common in these movie for lead characters and young support female characters. Even if they are shown to be wearing dressing of Pakistani society, their body covering, cleavage, and various other unethical factors remained intact. The overall depiction of female characters in contemporary Pakistani movies were against the cultural norms. Findings of current research have revealed that the portrayal of female characters are mostly done against the values of Pakistani society. The overall situation of such portrayal is unprecedented and pessimistically influence the young generation of Pakistani society.

Recommendations

Further research is required to improve the understanding underlying the depiction of female characters in contemporary Pakistani movies. In future, more research can be carried out on some other Pakistani movies as well. In addition, a study on Pakistani female stars and their roles can be carried out in future to extensively calculate the impact of each female start in their respective movies. Moreover, there is a need for empirical studies that investigate the impact of Western trends in the youth of Pakistan through comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, the use of framing in appropriate way must be carried out in order to hide scenes which are likely against the values of Pakistani society. Such framing technique can help in resisting the contemporary movies to depict Western trends. It is

recommended for the government of Pakistan to impose new rules and regulations in order to effectively constrain the movie makers of Pakistani cinema. Western standards thereby signifying the focus on depiction of cultural and religious values of the Pakistani society.

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