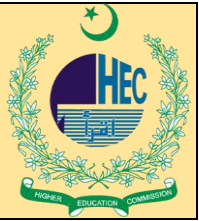




ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 02. Oct-Dec 2025. Page#. 606-616

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17386622>

From Domestic to Modern: A Study of the Portrayal of Women in Pakistani Drama (2000–2025)

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, Pakistani television dramas have influenced the gender roles in the mind of the people. The image of women has changed between 2000 and 2025 where women were dominated to an image of contemporary autonomy. This development indicates larger social and ideological shifts in the Pakistani society. The current research analyses the way female figures have evolved in the last 20 years, codes of language and visuality that create femininity, as well as whether these depictions represent true empowerment or hidden patriarchy. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been used to examine the selected dramas of 2000-2025 and identify similar patterns, dialogues and framing. Feminist media theory facilitated the understanding of ideological meanings that were enshrined in such texts. The analysis has shown a shift in the representation towards hybrid images, women are shown to be modern and ambitious but are trapped in the net of moral and family values. The Pakistani dramas show more and more challenging female personalities that represent the continuous negotiation process between the traditional values and the modern concept of womanhood.

Keywords: Domestic, Modern, Portrayal, Women, Pakistani Drama.

1. Introduction

The history of television dramas in Pakistan has long been used to indicate the changing cultural and social reality in the country. Women have played key roles in the narration since the inception of PTV in the 1970s- most of them are depicted as mothers, wives and moral custodians of the family. These stories strengthened domesticity placing women in their roles of domestic righteousness and self-sacrifice. But the beginning of the 21 st century ushered in major socio-political and cultural changes that slowly reshaped the role of women as seen in the social arena. Higher education of women, globalization and the growth of the private television channels in the early years of the new millennium provided new arenas of depicting women in other roles other than the traditional ones.

Modern Pakistani plays now often portray women as intelligent and self-reliant individuals, social reformers. However, this so-called modernization is not that simple. A large number of these depictions, although, seemingly progressive in the face of it, still cling to the patriarchal dimensions in which women value their significance in terms of morality, modesty and harmony of relations. Thus, the conflict of empowerment and conformity is one of the main characteristics

of the contemporary discourse in televisions. To interpret this diversion between the domestic ideal and the modern hybridity, it is necessary to analyze thoroughly how narratives, language and imagery create and challenge gender identities with the course of time. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers an adequate paradigm of such pattern's exploration. It allows the researcher to correlate the linguistics and visual components of the dramas with the larger ideologies influencing them. In this study, CDA is used to follow the connection between media, gender and modernity through the way, representations of women in Pakistani dramas in the period 2000-25 depict this process. Although, there is a significant amount of research on women representation in Pakistani media, the majority of the research is restricted to certain timeframes or the focus of the research like domestic violence, motherhood or morality. None offers a longitudinal perspective of the transformation of the portrayal over 25 years of digital transformation, urbanization and shifting gender expectations.

The main issue is the incompatibility of the progressive imagery and the ideology. Though, contemporary drama frequently shows women acting in strong positions, these women have to be bound by conservative demands of modesty, family obedience and subservience. Therefore, what is likely to be construed as empowerment, could be a restatement of patriarchy in new manifestations. This study fills that gap by critically examining the transformation of the role of women in Pakistani dramas to establish whether the change of domestic to modern in a real sense is really an ideological change or a mere adaptation of the symbols.

1.1 Research Objectives:

- To analyze how the representation of women in Pakistani drama has changed from domestic to modern from 2000 to 2025.
- To explore the narratives and themes used by Pakistani dramatists to characterize the change in women's portrayal from 2000 to 2025.

1.2 Research Questions:

1. How have the representation of women in Pakistani drama changed from domestic to modern from 2000 to 2025?
2. What narratives and themes have been used by Pakistani dramatists to characterize the change in women's portrayal from 2000 to 2025?

2. Literature Review

It is an important study due to its academic and societal importance. It also adds to the field of feminist media studies and cultural discourse analysis by providing a detailed longitudinal analysis of the Pakistani television drama. It is a transgression of the linguistic analysis and socio-cultural commentary, whereby, it employs the CDA to demonstrate how gender ideologies are coded in media texts. Television is still one of the most powerful cultural institutions in Pakistan socially, as it forms the perception of people regarding the identity and status of women. This study offers a clue into how the media affects and shapes societal attitudes by tracing back the role of women images as self-sacrificing homemakers and independent professionals. It also challenges the media producers to realize their contribution in providing progressive and authentic female representations. This study is an investigation into the path of the representation of women as domesticity to modernity, how the television dramas serve as strong cultural scripts that reflect as well as mediate the social change in the modern Pakistan.

2.1 Discourse and Gender Representation

The study of Pakistani television drama is based on critical approaches to media and media gender. The three-dimensional approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Fairclough (2013) has been one of the primary tools of correlating characteristics of the text with the discursive practice as well as the broader social framework; it is the analysis structure your study assumes

in order to shift the emphasis on dialogue to ideology. The ways in which gender identities are constructed, stabilized and challenged using mediated narratives are explained using complementary social-constructionist perspectives (Berger and Luckmann, 1991) and feminist theory (Butler, 1990; bell hooks, 2000). The work on representation by Stuart Hall highlights the role of meaning in the cultural practices and the way that images presented in media influence as well as reconstruct social identities. Combined these frameworks enable the researcher to interpret television not as a passive entertainment but as an active mode of discourse that constitutes the process of coding the concepts of modernity, virtue and agency as feminine. Theoretically speaking, the use of purposive sampling and thematic coding that is applied in the present project is based on the methodology of qualitative and interpretive research design texts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

2.2 Pakistani Drama: Historical Developments (Domesticity to Hybrid Modernities)

As observed by scholarship on South Asian and Muslim media, the dramatized domestic spaces have been long since a negotiating place of national, religious and gendered norms (Sreberny & Mohammadi, 1994; Morley, 1980). Reports on the history of the Pakistani television highlight the continuation of the domestic stereotype, where women are written to be wives, mothers and moral guardians, a view also reflected in the discussion of the PTV and early television in private channels (Shaikh, 2016; Awan, 2014). According to empirical content analyses, the dramatizations of the early 2000s tended to confine women in their own space and moral roles with the symbolic applications of camera framing, costume and interruption patterns (Fairclough, 2013; Raza, 2023).

Since the late 2000s and the 2010s, TV serials started to feature learned and professionalized women who, however, at the end of the story returned to the roles of relations or moral reconciliation, what some theorists refer to as tempered modernity (van Zoonen, 1994; Gill, 2007). The emergence of issue-based shows (sexual violence, legal redress, workplace harassment) indicates a discursive break as by the mid-2010s women are no longer a representation of virtue but a representation of justice (Rizvi, 2019; Ahmad, 2020). Recent literature indicates an emergence of a new age of hybrid femininities, in which professional visibility, domestic roles, religion and national discourses coexist an adaptive modernity that makes female publicity seemingly natural without necessarily undermining cultural norms (Raza, 2023; Hashmi, 2024).

2.3 Note-Telling Techniques and Theme-Based Devices

Three interlocking narrative devices by which dramatists reconfigure womanhood, which are identified in the literature are lexical choices and speech (voice), spatial framing (space), and outcome narratives (moral framing). CDA and interactional studies indicate that the longer speaking time, vocabulary rights and turn-taking, the higher the narrative centrality; researchers compute them as the measures of dialogic agency (Fairclough, 2013; Hall, 1997). Visualists focus on scenes of camera movement, lighting and costume, which shifts heroines out of static domestic scenes to mobile street shots, which signifies increased freedom of action (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). Lastly, the resolution of the storyline is also essential: whereas the notion of enduring in earlier series is rewarded, in many modern series it is the notion of legal claim, economical independence or social acknowledgement that is rewarded, though, of course, within the moral boundaries (van Zoonen, 1994; Butler, 1990). This trend is reflected in multiple Pakistani text case studies: programs addressing sexual abuse or legal injustice portray the redistribution of moral power to women through scenes in the courtroom, media campaigns and activism as authoritative narrative resources to address (Rizvi, 2019; Ahmad, 2020).

Despite the recent literature reflecting the distinct changes in representation, the literature reflects the presence of the ambivalence as well. The criticisms demonstrate that hybrid representations tend to reproduce normalizing virtues (modesty, family devotion) in spite of offering women more active roles in the public, which creates a negotiated, rather than completely changed gender hierarchy (Shaikh, 2016; Raza, 2023). Some formidable research is also being done on backlash: the extent of the reach of televisual feminism is constrained by regulatory censorship, audience conservatism, and political pressures (Sreberny & Mohammadi, 1994; Rizvi, 2019).

There are still methodological gaps and there are only several longitudinal mixed-methods studies that integrate discourse analysis, audience reception and production studies to trace how the economics and the interpretation of the viewer influence the portrayal together. The advent of digital streaming and transnational streaming since the late 2010s presents an encouraging direction to work in the future- particularly comparative work that determines how web series and streaming content are changing or following the trends of a broadcast television (Kraidy, 2005; Hashmi, 2024). Lastly, further disaggregation of intersectionality is required, such as class, ethnicity, region, age, and the interaction of these axes with gender is yet to be developed in terms of narrative construction (Mahmood, 2005; Abu-Lughod, 2013).

The literature reviewed has been able to come up with one main insight, which is that Pakistani television drama has moved away from a discourse of dominant confinement to plural and negotiated models of modern femininity. This development is not linear and unopposed rather it is mediated by industry economics, regulatory regimes, audience expectations and overall socio-political currents. The longitudinal mapping of the CDA-based history of the 2000-2025 (based on your manuscript) is relevant to this discussion as the text, visual, thematic evidence is woven together in four historical layers and drama is seen as both a reflection and mediator of gendered social change.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

It is based on a qualitative research design which is founded on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Content Analysis to examine the development of the female role in Pakistani television dramas between the year 2000 and 2025. The most appropriate paradigm in the study is the qualitative paradigm, as it places more emphasis on interpretation, the making of meanings, and the sociocultural background than on quantitative measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study defines the meanings of dramatists through his or her use of words, plot, and framing to express the transforming roles of women who are caregivers and independent agents in the society. The selection of CDA as the key methodological prism enables addressing the issue of the embedded power, ideology and gender into the textual and visual language of drama (Fairclough, 2013). In such a manner, the research transcends the superficial storytelling to explore how female representation echoes as well as replicates the social discourses of modernity, morality and patriarchy in Pakistan.

The study adheres to the interpretive and descriptive methodology and pays attention to social constructionism, which underlies the idea that gender roles are culturally constructed and discursively reproduced (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). The cultural text is the Pakistani dramas which are not only entertainment but also ideological tools in molding the consciousness of the population. Therefore, it requires a critical and qualitative approach in order to reveal the implicit messages that are subtextual in conversations, settings, and character development. Using the concept of the thematic discourse analysis in the framework of the CDA, the given study perceives the way the concept of the modern woman changes over the time. The analysis is

especially keen on the shift in the types of roles (domestic and professional), language (obedient and assertive discourse), and territory (private and public domain). This combined approach governs the macro-level ideological trends and the micro-level contents of the text.

3.2 Data Selection and Sampling

Since the time period (2000-2025) is long, the researcher uses purposive sampling to pick the dramas that reflect different periods in the history of Pakistani television. The sample consists of four chronological periods, indicating significant socio-cultural and media changes:

- **Phase I (2000-2010):** State-dominated and conservative period (Mehndi, Aanch, Kashkol).
- **Phase II (2010-2015):** Liberalization and transitional stories (Humsafar, Dastaan, Zindagi Gulzar Hai).
- **Phase III (2016-2020):** Feminist awareness and problem-based drama (Udaari, Cheekh, Kankar).
- **Phase IV (2021-2025):** Digital growth and hybrid modernity (Dobara, Kuch Ankahi, Sinf-e-Aahan).

Twelve dramas have been chosen, three at each stage. Popularity, critical acclaim, social relevance and the use of female protagonists were used as the selection criteria. The episodes were watched in their entirety and the scripts and transcripts were coded manually with thematic labels.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The information was gathered based on the publicly available scripts of dramas, internet sources (YouTube, archives of Hum TV), secondary sources that covered the topic of gender representation in Pakistani media. A level of analysis was applied to each drama twofold:

a) Textual Level:

- Analysis of dialogues, lexical and speech patterns of women characters.
- Determination of language signs of agency, obedience or rebellion.
- Focus on the interruption and turn-taking dynamics so as to examine power relations.
- Rhythm Thermostat: this type of thermostat can monitor the environment either inside or outside the home.

b) Thematic Level:

- Scenes (space, costume, camera angle, and lighting).
- Role typology (domestic, professional, hybrid) analysis.
- Themes like sacrifice, empowerment, honor and justice were categorized.
- The research was based on the three-dimensional CDA model by Fairclough (2013), who addresses:

(a) Textual analysis (language and imagery)

(b) Discursive practice (performance and production of drama)

(c) Social practice (renewal or disruption of gender ideologies)

Preliminary thematic coding was done in NVivo software and themes were narrowed down by reading again to ensure conceptual consistency.

3.4 Data Analysis

a) Phase I (2000-2010): Domestic Confinement and Idealized Femininity

Domestic archetypes were perpetuated in the Pakistani dramas mostly in the early 2000s. Women were represented on the national television PTV and the new private channels as the moral heads of the family. The serials like Mehndi (2003), Aanch (2000) and Kashkol (1999-2001) dealt with women who were trapped in the realm of domesticity (kitchens, courtyards and drawing rooms) and whose identity was built around marital virtue, patience and sacrifice. This

decade has been characterized by patterns of language that emphasize on obedience, silence and restraint of feelings. The female characters talked less and were interrupted by the male characters, and this is the language subordination that Fairclough (2013) relates to gender discourse, which is patriarchal. Visual composition supported this hierarchy: women were often put in motionless frames or low-angle domestic settings by the camera and it represented being trapped.

Thematically, dramas supported the ideal woman who is self-sacrificing and moral and rewards endurance and punishes disobedience. The small group of educated or working women was presented as moral deviants until they repented or returned to domestic sphere. Thus, the portrayal of the early-2000s was the conservatism of the societal-political situation in Pakistan, where respectability of the women was fixed on religion and family respect. Overall, this was a discursively paralyzing moment: the voice of women was not denied, but it was used, chiefly as a tool to teach morality and not even to define oneself.

b) Phase II (2010-2015): Transitional Identities and Negotiated Modernity

The second stage was associated with the growth of the private entertainment business including Geo TV, ARY, and Hum TV and urbanization of Pakistan. These aspects created the narrative duality, because the woman was modern in the ambitions and traditional in the result. Educated, career-oriented heroines were brought out in such dramas as Humsafar (2011), Dastaan (2010), and Zindagi Gulzar Hai (2012). Kashaf in Zindagi Gulzar Hai and Khirad in Humsafar are examples of women who managed the boundary of classes and their activities and work life representing the aspirational, self-made Pakistani woman. However, they were still morally policed in their independence. The solution came with professional fulfillment not with reconciliation, love or marriage- restoration of patriarchal balance. Analysis of the language proves that women speak more, challenge the authority, and make their own demands, but they do this with a less emotional voice in order to be called virtuous. This reflects what the feminist critics refer to as tempered modernity, which is a plot device that incorporates modernity without disrupting the hierarchies of culture. According to the content analysis (Awan, 2014; Shaikh, 2016), a statistical shift could be observed: women in the professional sphere rose to approximately 30 percent of the total number by the middle of the decade, which was approximately 10 percent at the beginning of the 2000s. Nevertheless, these types of representations tended to exist in the form of controlled modernity, which is only permissible through the moralist constraints of marriage and family. Therefore, the 2010-2015 stage represents an empowerment in a symbolic manner as women look contemporary yet their independence is negotiated instead of being absolute.

c) Phase III (2016-2020): Feminist Consciousness and Narrative Resistance

In the mid-2010s, Pakistani drama reached a socially responsive phase, influenced by a more pronounced feminist vocabulary conditioned by the worldwide #MeToo movement, NGO activism and female involvement in the media. This era generated stories of resistance and justice that went against patriarchal taboos. Some dramas, including Udaari (2016), Cheekh (2019) as well as Kankar (2013) discussed sexual violence, consent and legal unfairness. In this case, women became not merely symbols of morality, but moral beings themselves - pushing the story forward by protest and law suing. The argument shifted to the theme of endurance to the theme of justice and this was a major change in ideology. Meera deciding to publicly challenge her abuser and speak up on behalf of the rights of children in Udaari is an example of performative agency, in which voice and visibility are used as empowering actions. Equally, in Cheekh, Mannat does not tolerate social silence but instead attacks the murderer using institutional mechanisms, which is a feminist protest.

The linguistic tissue of this period is commanding and proclamatory: the characters use rights-prerogative words -Insaaf, Haq, Izzat- and reorganizes the moral authority to be gender-insensitive as opposed to male- dominated. Camera shots also support empowerment: women are in the focus, open spaces, and hit-and-miss courts rather than in closed domestic. These dramas can be defined as cultural interventions (Critical readings, 2019; Ahmad, 2020) and they redesigned the discourse on women rights within society. Nonetheless, negative reactions of the conservative circles and censorship on the part of the regulatory bodies PEMRA indicates that these representations are still debated, and the conflict between narrative modernity and conservatism in the society. Thus, the 2016-2020 era marks a discursive break, the end of moral conformity and the ascent to moral challenge, making women a subject of the national imagination in politics.

d) Phase IV (2021-2025): Digital Modernity and Hybrid Femininities

The new age is a period of intersect of television and digital media, where dramatists are accorded more creativity. The YouTube, Green Entertainment and OTT platforms promote experimental storytelling that is not limited by network conservatism. The recent serials Dohara (2022), Kuch Ankahi (2023), and Sinf-e-Aahan (2022) are examples of how hybrid femininity (in which empowerment has become normalized rather than radical) is being revealed. Female characters are entrepreneurs, military cadets and lone mothers with a sense of self respect as opposed to social disobedience. Dohara challenges the stereotypes of women by portraying them as middle-aged and rediscovering love and control. Kuch Ankahi integrates equality between genders into the genre of humor and realism by taking on the issue of property ownership and gender gaps in the work environment without explicitly victimizing women. In the meantime, Sinf-e-Aahan places the concept of empowerment in the context of nationalistic patriotism, and the power of women is associated with the national development and not as the uprising against nationalism. It is a reconciling as opposed to confrontational thematic tone. Modernity in this case exists in conjunction with morality meaning that there is acceptance of women visibility in their positions in the society. Cinematography supports this normalization, the female characters are filmed in open and mobile environments which is an indication of psychological freedom.

The academic and media commentaries (Raza, 2023; Hashmi, 2024) observe that this ambivalent representation is in line with the urban generation change in Pakistan, in which modernity is perceived as being in agreement with faith and tradition. In this way, the modern world is a state of discursive normalization- the period in which the independence of women is no longer a revolutionary one, but the one that reflects the changing social life.

3.5 Thematic Trajectories (2000–2025)

Over twenty-five years, the image of the Pakistani woman is subject to three thematic streams that are intertwined:

Contrasting the old, Silence to Voice: Early dramas were based on suppressed emotional perseverance; the new scripts are based on speech and outspoken conflict. All language turns into the place of power which is the moment of linguistic liberation.

Between Confinement and Mobility: The narrative of the space of the woman shifts to the kitchen to the courtroom, to the home to the place of work hence representing the transformation of the world and society through the visual metaphor.

Morality to Agency: Previously, morality of womanhood has been determined by sacrifice; newly, by dramas, morality is determined by their self-respect and independent morals.

These paths, taken together, are a series of change, not a revolution, that is, evolving, not revolutionary.

3.6 The Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators

Available content analysis and media review synthesis indicates change that can be measured: Domestic representations reduced to 45% (2020-25) (which was 70 percent in 2000-2005). Professional and empowered roles worked their way out of the under 10 percent to almost 35 percent in mainstream dramas. Dialogue agency measured in terms of length of speech and thematic control increased substantially suggesting narrative centrality of female characters. Linguistic emancipation, visual re-centering, and moral pluralization, which are some of the examples of discursive modernity, are qualitative aspects of the transition.

4. Findings and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the chosen Pakistani dramas during the period between 2000 and 2025, it can be concluded that the image of women has been changing, shifting to the more assertive, self-reliant and socially aware characters. This reformation is not only a sign of creative development of television industry, but also the shifting social awareness and the gender ideologies in Pakistan.

4.1 Transition of Domestic Ideals to Independent Identities

The female characters of the early 2000s, in such dramas as *Mehndi* and *Aanch*, were mostly restricted to domestic environments. They were shown as submissive daughters, good wives and self-sacrificing mothers whose identity was determined by their family prestige and relationship occupation. Thematically based, it centered on marriage, forbearance and moral persistence which strengthens patriarchal attitudes towards femininity. Shaikh (2016) states that these initial images were in line with national discourses that equated femininity with domestic virtue and social stability.

In comparison, even dramas written after 2015, a document of *Udaari*, *Cheekh*, and *Dobara*, feature women who defy gender expectations, seek education, and engage in the public life. The contemporary woman has now become a decent choice-maker that bargains her own and career identity. As an example, the study by Sinf-e-Aahan (2022) redefines femininity by portraying women in the military and leadership, and thereby challenges the traditional restrictions. This plot change proposes a slow affirmation of female liberation in the popular Pakistani media discourse (Raza, 2023).

4.2 Genesis of Feminist Narratives and Social Themes

One of the key discoveries is that since 2010, there has been a rise of socially responsive and feminist storytelling. Dramas started touching on taboo topics like sexual harassment (*Udaari*), domestic abuse (*Kankar*) as well as moral policing (*Cheekh*). These themes represent a discursive change of passivity to resistance. The language of female protagonists was transformed to less submissive to assertive and self-expressive and more indicative of agency, both in thought and speech. This development represents the idea of Fairclough (2013), who argues that the discourse changes are the reflection of changes in the social structures of power. Consciously or unconsciously, Pakistani dramatists have helped in redefining the gender ideology both visual and linguistically in a way that women become agents of change in an effort to portray women as the objects of oppression.

4.3 Cultural Duality Stagnation

Although, most of the developments are progressive, the analysis also identifies the existence of both the traditional and the modern values. Even in the recent plays, the ideal woman remains morally pure, emotionless and submissive to the family. The contemporary woman is tolerated provided she practices cultural decency and virtuousness. This dilemma indicates that as much as representation has increased, it is still negotiated within cultural, religious borders and not completely free of those boundaries. Therefore, the modern projections are indicative of the

hybridity of identity in that women are modern in thought and culturally in deed. This amalgamation is in line with the transitional socio-cultural contexts of Pakistan where transitional modernity coexists with conservative religiousness.

4.4 Greater Society Implications

Overall, the findings suggest that the Pakistani dramas have been important in changing the way people view gender roles. Television has been both a reflector and a catalyst of change, a reflection of changing female identities, but in a covert way, a challenge to society. The shift towards modernity and leaving domesticity is representative of a larger story of empowerment, visibility and self-identity in the Pakistani cultural world. Essentially, the study establishes that the representation of women in Pakistani drama between 2000 and 2025 is a discursive process of connecting silence to speech, dependence to agency and invisibility to empowerment, and it is a journey of zero to one hundred. With this development, it does not only mark the advancement of art, but also the continued disputing of the country with gender, modernity, and social reform.

5. Conclusion

The current research study has critically analyzed how the image of women in Pakistani television dramas changed between 2000 and 2025 using the Critical Discourse Analysis and Thematic Content Analysis. The findings indicate that the image of female characters has changed considerably, which is also reflected in the socio-cultural process of Pakistani society. A twenty-five years period has seen women changing the image of being trapped, domestic and submissive to being shown as independent, liberal and socially active. The early dramas especially those of the early 2000s did much to propagate the ideologies of patriarchy in which women were measured by their virtue and identity to family, marriage and sacrifice. These representations were indicative of the prevailing culture of belief that a woman was more morally powerful when enduring and silent. However, as media became liberalized, and feminist discourses started to emerge in the 2010s, dramatists started to question such presentations. Women characters were created to be the main characters in stories that covered the social taboos like child abuse, harassment, inequality. This era also saw the transformation of the role of women as victims to the role of change agents and strength.

In the 2020s, the image of the Pakistani woman became more various and multidimensional. The characters of Dohara and Sinf-e-Aahan represent a combination of cultural meekness and contemporary insistence, and become an allegory of negotiation between Pakistan and modernity. The co-existence of the domestic values and the modern values underscore the fact that there is no total break but a gradual change. So the Pakistani dramas are refractors and reflexes of social reality at the same time, on the one hand they are the reflections of the state of gender hierarchy, and, on the other hand, they open the discursive possibilities of female identity. On the whole, the study provides the conclusion that the change in the role of women in Pakistani dramas is not only aesthetic but also ideological. It represents a more general cultural shift in acknowledging women as agency, intelligent, and social beings. Even though the standard expectations are remaining the same, the introduction of the independent and empowered female voice is a critical re-establishment of the gender narratives in the Pakistani media.

6. Recommendations

The trend of creating complex female characters should be maintained by future dramatists and media creators who want to go beyond the conventional and the progressive female characters. Scholars need to extend this study to encompass digital web series and local productions to learn the different gender attitudes. In addition, policy-makers and the media outlets ought to

promote gender-sensitive narratives, which depict women as not as symbols of morals only but as agents of social and political change.

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