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## **Contested Images of ‘Perfect Women’ in Pakistani Television Dramas \***

### **Abstract**

*This paper seeks to demonstrate the representation of a ‘perfect’ woman and explores the specific stereotypes for good women and bad women in Pakistan television dramas. This study is based on the premise that these popular dramas play a significant role in shaping attitudes and beliefs of the society. The study involved qualitative content analysis of six television drama serials of three popular Pakistan entertainment television channels through purposive random sampling. The study revealed that the stereotypes for ‘perfect women’ in Pakistan television drama serials reinforce patriarchal system of Pakistan. They portray the lead women role as younger, ultra-slim, extra ordinary beautiful, wearing national simple dresses with ‘dupatta’, less educated, mostly belonging to middle class, humble, home bound and submissive. If these women must work, then they do only for financial reasons. It was also observed that stereotypes for side role women are mostly projected the characteristic of being bold, outspoken, highly modern, educated, career oriented who mostly belong to elite class wearing modern and western kind of dresses. Those characteristics highlight them as ‘imperfect women’, This paper makes a contribution to gender and media studies because it deals with neither gender discrimination nor gender equality rather it emphasizes on the representation of women versus women and compares the characteristics of women depiction in drama serials.*

**Keywords:** Gender stereotypes, Women representation, Television drama serials, Feminism in Pakistan, Culture.

### **1.0. Introduction**

Gender stereotypes are widely held beliefs about attitudes, characteristics, behaviors and roles of women and men (Endendijk, Groeneveld, & Berkel, et al, 2013). Bhargava (2009) argues that “gender stereotypes are a psychological process which illustrates structured sets of beliefs about the personal attributes of men and women”.

Setting stereotypes for women has been one of the major concerns of media scholars. Several studies have been conducted on the representation of women in almost all forms of media. Feminists scholars argue that the relationship

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of the media and the women is very significant because whatever the image the women have in the society is highly influenced by media. Especially, Television is one of the important and powerful media to influence people, shape their beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors and set stereotypes. People receive messages about gender issues by watching how and how often men and women are portrayed in television (Ford, 1997; Rivadeneyra & Ward, 2005; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). Although, all these studies are important and have made significant contribution towards media and gender studies, the major problem is the way they suggested the role of women. Majority of them aimed at analyzing the representation of women in media as passive, dependent and less efficient characters in the society as compared to men. Moreover, most of the current literature on gender stereotypes has mainly aimed at the west whilst less has been written on the influence of drama on gender stereotypes in Pakistan.

The current study, therefore, attempts to add to the existing academic discourse by focusing on a specific area of gender and media studies by analyzing ‘perfect women’ in Pakistani dramas. It addresses neither gender discrimination nor gender equality rather it focuses on setting the stereotypes and forming the characteristics for being a ‘perfect’ in Pakistani culture through television dramas serials. This study is a comparison of women in lead roles and side roles that is an ignored area of research. It focuses upon the representation of women versus women who were performing major and minor roles in dramas serials. Woman who performs the major role is called ‘lead character’ or ‘heroine’ in the drama because the story and the central theme usually revolve around herself while woman who performs a minor or opposite role is called ‘side role character’.

## ***2.0. Traditional Gender Roles and the Status of ‘Good Women’ vs. ‘Bad Women’ in Pakistan***

Being ‘good woman’ and ‘bad woman’, being ‘perfect woman’ and ‘imperfect woman’ are relative concepts that can only be interpreted within a specific culture and society. Pakistan is known as patriarchal society where women being more than half of the population are still dominated by men for their day to day affairs. The stereotypes of women are as they are bound to homes and their lives are meant to be obedient to their traditional social norms. They are supposed to depend on self-righteous and men for taking decisions; that is why they are recognized as inferior and sub-ordinate to them.

Tarar and Pulla (2014) argue, “despite cultural ethnic and linguistic diversity, Pakistani women have to face strikingly similar patterns of agriculture-based tribal, feudal, clan system and kinship network” (p.56). Though the women who live in urban areas have better access to education, employment and living standards yet they are still categorized as ‘good women’ and ‘bad women’ on certain parameters. These parameters are divided into two major categories: good woman and bad woman or a perfect or imperfect woman. A ‘good woman’, either educated or uneducated, is characterized as being generous, quiet, tolerant, compassionate, trustworthy, compromising, understanding and hospitable. She is expected to do household chores, have to follow her family’s decisions for her marriage and to take care for children, husband and in-laws after marriage. A ‘perfect woman’ is expected to understand her immediate relations, compromise

her own opinions, hide her own sentiments and emotions and sacrifice her own dreams and rights for her family. She is also expected to get permission from elders in her family before making any choice of her personal life such as making a decision about her career. A 'good married woman', a 'good wife' and a 'good daughter-in-law' must consider her in-laws as her own family and tolerate any mistreatment and unfairness.

On the contrary, a 'bad woman' in Pakistan is characterized as being selfish, noisy, open minded, liberal, modern, impatient, untrustworthy, egotistic, authoritative, uncooperative, verbally outspoken and inhospitable within the house. She is expected to focus more on her own ambitions, career and self-grooming. Though this is not a unique culture that only prevails in Pakistan rather it is a traditional system of characterization of perfect and imperfect women in almost all patriarchal societies.

### **3.0. Literature Review**

The existing literature on the representation of women can broadly be categorized into two major categories. Firstly, there are those studies, which look at the depiction of women in advertisements. Secondly, there are those studies which involve analyzing gender stereotypes in film and video. In the following section, we will attempt to discuss both of the above-mentioned categories.

Arguably, analyzing depiction of women in advertising may not be very relevant. However, as Singorielli (1989) rightly argues, exposure to gender role stereotypes in advertising often influences "gender-stereotyped attitudes" because after watching the representation of women in television, people perceive and develop an idea that how a woman should be and should not be. It is not just men who get influence by the images rather women also get influenced by the media representation that how they should behave. Seplov (1996) argued that "television is advertiser-driven. Advertisers desire women. The female audience is a 'key to shows' working. That means women like to watch themselves". Therefore, advertisements and television commercials promoted the stereotypes for 'perfect' beauty images of women. They depict the beautiful women as extremely white, ultra-thin, with a "tubular curvy" body, and blonde or thick black flowing hair (Dittmar & Howard, 2004; Lin & Kulik, 2002; Polivy & Herman, 2004; Sands & Wardle, 2003; Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2004; Tiggemann & Slater, 2003). As far as the assigned roles are concerned, women are depicted as dumb, dependent and housewives (Jean, 2006; Shahwar, 2013).

It is also important to mention that women are often objectified where their body or body parts are more important than their personality as humans. Lin (1998) argues that media representation is more on the bodies and looks of women than their performances and efficiencies. Therefore, they are usually viewed as a physical object to satisfy the sexual desire of men. This objectification approves and disapproves women's status and their presence in the society on the basis of their sex appeals and perfect body structure (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

This objectification and stereotyping continues in the dramas too. There are several studies that showed this from past to present. For example, Zheng (2011) examined the portrayal of women characters in the award winning Chinese

television series from 1979 to 2008. It was observed that stereotypical image of women had changed in Chinese dramas. They are portrayed as independent and powerful but the occupational depiction of female characters was totally opposite of the reality.

Kaul and Sahni (2010) carried out an effective study on the depiction of women in Indian soaps and its perception on couples of Jammu Kashmir. It was added that Indian dramas are portraying the women as young beautiful super housewives. Indian soap operas also lack the actuality of women's role in society and are promoting the stereotypical image of women.

Besides the women depiction in television dramas and commercials, the representation of violence against women has also been a significant dimension in gender studies. It was observed that the women is represented in news channels as a victim of violence especially in the cases of sexual harassment, rapes, child marriages, house burns, dowry violence and honor killings (Ahmed, 2014). It has been argued that the societies based on patriarchy system justify the violence against women to maintain the discipline of families. They consider women as their private matter. Therefore, the patriarchal societies emphasize that the media, government and any non-governmental organization should not portray and discuss these abuses.

Gender equality and its representation is also another issue of women representation, but it is beyond the scope of research. McNeil (1975) argued that the projection of women on television fiction content is lesser as employed women. They usually depict them in traditional female employment and indicate their home and family bound orientation. Ali & Khan (2012) also added that the television fiction content construct the image of women as devalued, inferior, dependent, emotionally and economically weak and sometimes depict as a creature which has no real human values. Women are rarely portrayed as an active and decisive member of society and home (Gallagher, 1979).

Iqbal and Abdar (2016) investigated the women empowerment, career orientation and decision-making power of the female characters depicted in eight soap operas of Hum TV. They found that education qualification and career choice of 70 % female characters was not specified in these dramas. They also observed that all depicted female characters in these dramas lack decision-making power and women of these dramas were living suppressed lives.

The studies on the depiction of female characters in Pakistani dramas often conclude that dramas are shifting from the traditional to liberal approach with reference to the representation of women characters. These studies also indicate that 3 out of 4 main female characters in all these dramas are represented as empowered educated women who know their rights very well (Roy, 2016; Jiwani, 2013; Khan & Zaheen, 2010).

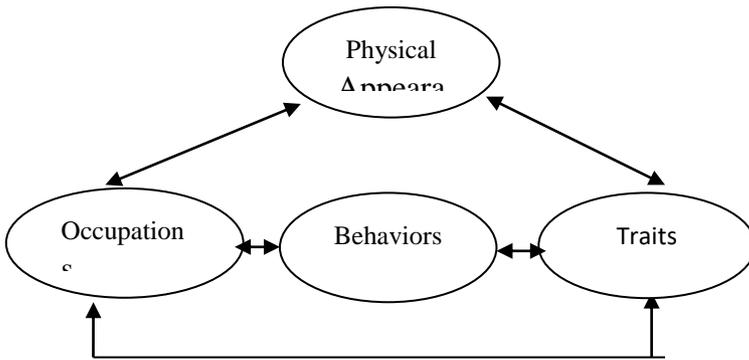
#### **4.0. Research Methodology**

To examine the stereotypical description of women as lead characters and supporting and side roles in television dramas, 6 most popular drama serials broadcasted at the prime time ( 8.00 – 10.00 p.m) on three most popular entertainment channels of Pakistan (*Geo TV, ARY Digital and Hum TV*), were

selected through purposive sampling. The titles of the selected 6 dramas are the following:

1. *Mann Mayal* (Attracted) at Hum TV
2. *Zara Yaad Kar* (Recall) at Hum TV
3. *Besharam* (Shameless) at ARY Digital
4. *Dil Lagi* (Infatuation) at ARY Digital
5. *Noor-e-Zindagi* (Light of Life) at Geo TV
6. *Ali Ki Ammi* (Ali's Mother) at Geo TV

Deaux and Lewis's Model analyzes the representation and formation of women stereotypes in television dramas based on the following four categories that were suggested in 1984 but are still very relevant to understand gender representation. According to the model, four components construct the gender stereotypes for men and women i.e. physical appearance, behavior, traits, and occupations (*Figure 1.0*).



**Figure 1.0- Components of Deaux and Lewis's Model of Gender Stereotyping**

All these components are relatively independent, but people associate one set of features from each of these with women that may categorize them as good or bad, perfect or imperfect and true or untrue. The characteristics of 'good' and 'bad' women are relative phenomena that are embedded into the specific societal culture and interpreted according to its norms, beliefs, and traditions. That is why, the following components are operationalized and will be interpreted in the following context in this research:

1. 'Physical appearance' refers to the age, beauty, looks, dress and the style to carry by female characters.
2. 'Occupation' deals with the social class, professions, and education.
3. 'Traits' and 'behaviors' refer to the dialogue, body languages, nature of speech.

## **5.0. Analysis**

This section describes analysis and findings of the selected six dramas in two sections: The first section discusses the plot of dramas whereas the second part analyzes the four components i.e. physical appearance, traits, occupations and behaviors of stereotypical leading and supporting female characters as described in Deaux and Lewis's model of gender stereotyping.

### **5.1. Brief Profiles of the Selected Dramas**

#### **5.1.1. Mann Mayal (Attracted)**

*Mann Mayal* produced by Momina Duraid Production (Writer: [Samira Fazal](#), Director: Haseeb Hassan) was aired on Hum TV in January 2016 during the prime-time duration.

*Mann Mayal* drama is based on the love story of Manahil (Mannu) and Salahuddin. Mannu is depicted as a beautiful girl who is fun loving, failed in the graduation exam, and belongs to a well-off family of a small city in the Sindh province. She respects elders, wears eastern dresses and always covers her head in front of males. Salahuddin is a well-educated, middle class and the self-made person who is the brother of Mannu's best friend and her tutor in the drama. Both fall in love during the tuition classes but cannot marry each other due to the social class differences. Mannu, being the 'pure Eastern girl', is forced to marry an uneducated but rich boy Mikaeel on the wish of her parents.

Mikaeel -Mannu's husband- is shown as a spoiled rich boy who often beats Mannu because she does not fit to his social class. This difference results in the divorce of Mannu with her two kids. On the other hand, Salahuddin, after facing many hurdles, becomes a successful rich businessman. In Salahuddin's office there is another girl named as Jeena who is an orphan, well educated, independent working women, wear western clothes falls in love with Salahuddin and wants to get him in her life at any cost. Jeena is shown as a clever girl who tactfully impresses Salahuddin's parents and gets engaged to Salahuddin. After Mannu's divorce, Salahuddin provide financial and emotional support to Mannu who tries her best to separate the two but gives up after some time and commits suicide. The drama concludes with the marriage of Salahuddin and Mannu.

#### **5.1.2. Zara Yaad Kar (Recall)**

*Zara Yad Kar* produced by Amna Nawaz Khan (Writer: Khalil-ur-Rahman Qamar and Amna Nawaz Khan, Director: Amna Nawaz Khan) was aired on Hum TV in March 2016.

The story of *Zara Yad Kar* revolves around the triangle of Hadi, Mahnoor and Uzma. Hadi loves his cousin Mahnoor is engaged to be married (Nikkah) with her whereas Uzma, who likes Hadi, is the daughter of his landlord. Uzma is a simple middle-class college girl who always wears eastern clothes with dupatta on her head. She expresses her likings to Hadi but when Hadi reveals about his marriage plans with Mahnoor, Uzma accepts it gracefully and moves on in her life. Unlike Uzma, Mahnoor is shown as a modern working woman who is bold and have high ambitions. After several twists within Drama, Mahnoor gets divorce from Hadi and ends up marrying an old man whereas Uzma finally wins Hadi.

### **5.1.3. Besharam (Shameless)**

*Besharam* produced by Six Sigma Plus (Writer: Sarwat Nazir, Director: Farooq Rind) was broadcasted on ARY in May 2016 during prime time.

This drama is based on the love story of Haider and Mishal. Haider is a middle-class politician, belongs to a traditional family and lives with his mother and sister Humna who is engaged to her cousin. While Mishal is depicted as a beautiful top model of Pakistan who belongs to upper-class family and always wears western dresses. Mishal and Haider decide to marry. However, Haider's uncle, after hearing Haider's marriage with a model, immediately breaks the engagement of his son with Haider's sister Humna. Mishal and Haider face a lot of criticism from the society but they both stand with each other. At the end of drama, it is shown that all ladies including modern and independent ladies must need a suitable man in their life so that they can avoid wrong decisions in their life.

### **5.1.4. Dil Lagi (Infatuation)**

*Dil Lagi* produced by Six Sigma Plus (Writer: Faiza Ifthikar, Director: Nadeem Baig) was broadcasted on ARY in March 2016.

*Dil Lagi* is the story of a headstrong girl Anmol and Mohid. Anmol belongs to a middle-class family and lives with her mother and sister in a disputed home. On the other hand, Mohid is depicted as a hooligan. After the rejection of his marriage proposal from Anmol and her engagement with a different boy, Mohid does all efforts to break Anmol's engagement and succeeds in his evil desire. On the other hand, Anmol fails to marry a second boy due to his accident and decides to take revenge from Mohid after marrying him. Things change after their marriage, as Mohid becomes a decent man whereas Anmol develops feelings for him and after few more twists, drama ends showing us a happy family of Mohid and Anmol.

### **5.1.5. Noor-e-Zindagi (Light of Life)**

*Noor-e-Zindagi* produced by Abdullah Kadwani and Asad Qureshi (Writer: Ali Sarwat Nazir, Director: Siraj ul Haq) was broadcasted on Geo TV in July 2016.

This drama is based on the life of Noor Jehan and Sofia. Noor Jehan is a traditional girl. She has a Bachelor's degree and has been married to Saleem, who is a less educated shopkeeper, at the wishes of her parents. Contrary to her, we see another modern girl Sofia marrying a man of his choice. We see that both girls face the issues of fidelity by their husbands who are not loyal to their wives. As expected from a traditional girl in Pakistani culture, Noor Jehan continues to be faithful to her husband who, after several flirts with other girls, finally realizes her mistakes and decides to remain faithful to his wife for the rest of his life. Sofia, being a modern educated girl, follows the same path and decides to stay with her husband despite of his bad character and moral issues.

**5.1.6. Ali Ki Ammi (Ali's Mother)**

*Ali Ki Ammi* produced by A& B Productions (Writer: Ali Moeen, Director: Wajahat Hussain) is broadcasted on Geo TV in November 2016.

This is based on a true story of a woman Maryam. She is the second wife of her husband Nadir. The story revolves around how Maryam struggles to fight for herself and her son Ali and bears rude behavior of her husband’s family and people around her. Maryam belongs to a middle-class family and she is not much educated. Nadir hides his first wife Sobia from Maryam. Sobia is a modern woman and mother of two grown up children. Sobia and her son come to know about Maryam’s residence, they both go there with a purpose to throw away Maryam from Nadir's life. After that Nadir disowns Maryam and his son while Maryam starts giving home tuitions. She refuses to get financial help from anyone and maintains her dignity by working hard. It is a clash between two wives.

**5.2. Women Stereotyping on the Basis of Deaux and Lewis’s Model**

Selected dramas are analyzed on the basis of Deaux and Lewis’s model of Gender stereotyping that include the analysis of ‘Physical appearances’, ‘Occupations’, ‘Behaviors’ and ‘Traits’ of the leading as well as supporting female characters.

**5.2.1. Analysis of Physical Appearances of ‘Perfect’ Leading vs. ‘Imperfect’ Supporting Women in Dramas**

The first component in the gender stereotypical model is the physical appearances of the characters. In this research, physical appearances of the leading (positive) female and main supporting (negative) female characters are analyzed. The findings of the analysis of physical appearances are given below.

<b>Drama</b>	<b>Name of Leading Vs. Supporting Female Characters in Dramas</b>	<b>Relations hip between Leading &amp; Supporting Female Characters in Dramas</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Complexion</b>	<b>Hair</b>	<b>Clothing</b>
Mann Mayal	Manahil (Leading) Jeena (Supporting)	Manahil and Jeena are in love with Salahuddin	Manahil’s age is shown between 18-20 as she is depicted as a student in the starting episodes while Jeena’s age is shown between	Manahil is depicted as a naturally fair girl whereas Jeena has fair complexion but she also uses makeup to enhance her beauty	Manahil has long hair that are always tied. Jeena’s hairs are average in size and she always depicts in open	Manahil is in eastern dressing with covered head in most of the episodes while Jeena wears shalwar kameez

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			25-30 as she has completed her studies and also doing a job		hairstyle	without dupatta
Zara Yad Kar	Uzma (Leading)  Mahnoor (Supporting)	Uzma likes Hadi while Mahnoor is wife of Hadi	Uzma age is between 18-20 as she is a college student. Mahnoor's age is between 20-25 as she has completed her education and is also depicted as a working woman	The complexion of both girls are fair	Uzma hairs are long and she always tied her hairs. Mahnoor's hairs are average in size and she always showed in open hairstyle	Uzma wears eastern dresses along with the covered head. Mahnoor also wears eastern clothes but does not cover her head in most of the episodes.
Besharam	Mishal (Leading)  Sara & Saba (Supporting)	Mishal is daughter of Sara while Saba is the ex-fiancé and cousin of Mishal's husband	Mishal's age is between 20-25 as she is a working woman, Saba's age lies between 18-20 because she is not depicted as a working woman in the starting episodes while Sara's age is between 45-50 as she is mother of Mishal	All women have fair complexion	Mishal's hair are average in size and mostly depicts in open hairstyle, Sara has short hair that are always open while Saba has long hair but she always ties her hairs.	Mishal and Sara wears modern dresses while Saba wears Eastern and simple dresses
Dil Lagi	Anmol (Leading)	Zulekha is the mother in law of	Anmol's age is between 20-25 because she	Anmol's complexion is fair while Zulekha's skin color is	Both of them have long hair that are	Both of them wear eastern dresses with

	Zulekha (Supporting)	Anmol	is a working woman while the age of Zulekha is 50-56 as she is mother of two grown up kids	is not so fair	always tied	covered head.
Ali ki Ammi	Mariyam (Leading)  Sobia (supportive)	Both women are wives of Nadir	Mariyam's age is 20-25, Sobia's age is shown as above 30 (in the first half of drama)  In second half the age of Mariyam is 45-50 while Sobia's age is above 50	Both of them have fair complexion	Both of them have average sized hair but Maryam's hair is always tied while Sobia is always depicted in open hairstyles	Both of them wear Eastern dresses but the dresses of Maryam is more simple than the Sobia's dresses
Noor-e-Zindagi	Noor Jehan (Leading) Sofia, Gulshan (Supporting)	Sofia is sister in law of Noor's sister and Gulshan is in love with Noor's husband, Saleem	The age of all women lies between 20-25 as Noor is depicted as fresh graduate while Sofia and Gulshan are also shown as Master students	Noor's complexion is fairer than Sofia and Gulshan	Noor has average sized hair that are always tied, Sofia's hair are average in size and always open while Gulshan also has average sized hair that are always depict in open hair styles	All of them wear Eastern dresses but Noor always covers her head with dupatta while Gulshan wear fitted dresses

***Table 01 Physical appearance of leading vs. main supporting characters in the selected dramas***

Table 01 indicates that the supporting and leading female characters are mostly related with each other due to the main male lead character of the drama. They are depicted mostly in love relationship with same male character while few are depicted as the male leading character's close relative who has personal conflicts and jealousy with the leading female character. They are mostly depicted as young girls, having fair complexion and beautiful. On the other hand, their depiction is predominantly different on the basis of their dressing and hair styles.

**5.2.2. Analysis of Traits and Occupation of 'Perfect' Leading vs. 'Imperfect' Supporting Ladies**

The second and third component in the gender stereotypical model includes the occupation and traits of the characters. The occupation analysis includes the description of characters profession, education and financial problems in the drama while the traits analysis is based on the presence/ absence of aggression and Innocence in the character which is categorized as personality while their choice of marriage/ love relationships and their acts that are against the norms and values of the society, are categorized as social unacceptable habits. In this research, the occupation and traits of the leading (positive) female and main supporting (negative) female characters are analyzed. The findings of the analysis of occupation and traits are given below.

Name	Social class	Education	Profession	Personality	Marriage/ Relationship	Socially unacceptable habits	Financial problem
Manahil (Leading)	Manahil & Jeena both belong to upper middle class	Manahil is a BA fail girl while Jeena is depicted as a well-educated girl	Manahil is not interested in doing job while Jeena is working in the office of Salahuddin	Manahil is innocent while Jeena is aggressive.	Manahil's marriage is arranged though she was in love before marriage she sacrifices love for her parents.	Manahil does not have any kind of such habits. While Jeena tries to give poison to Manahil and also commits suicide in the last episode.	Manahil has to face some financial problems after the death of her parents in law while Jeena is financially stable.
Uzma (Leading)	Uzma belongs to middle class	Uzma is a college student while Mahnoor has completed her higher studies	Uzma is a student while Mahnoor is working in an office	Uzma is innocent and lacks aggression while Mahnoor is aggressive	Uzma agrees to marry her cousin on the wish of her father although she is in love with Hadi. Mahnoor marries Hadi on his own wish and in later episodes, she herself ask Waqar to marry her	Uzma has no such habit depicted in the personality of Uzma while Mahnoor asked for divorce from Hadi and also want to remarry the Hadi for her own benefits	Uzma has to face some financial difficulties while Mahnoor does not face any kind of financial difficulty

ishal (Leading)	ishal and Sara belongs to upper class while Saba belongs to middle class	M	identified	ishal is a Model, Sara is depicted as modern women but her profession is not specified while Saba wants to become a model	Il the characters are aggressive	M	ishal marries Haider on her own wish, Sara experiences two failed marriages but both of them are love marriages and she also has love relationship with a businessman while Saba is also interested in Haider	M	ishal smokes in few episodes, Sara gets divorced from her two husbands and starts flirting with a new man while Saba goes for modeling audition without informing her parents	M	ishal has to face few financial problem after the marriage but Sara and Saba are depicted as financially stable
nmol (Leading)	nmol belongs to middle class while Zulekha belongs to upper class	A	nmol is graduated while Zulekha's education is not specified	nmol is a librarian while Zulekha is not a working woman but she is depicted as the influential woman of the area	oth of them are aggressive and are not innocent	A	nmol marries Mohid by her own choice while Zulekha relationship with her husband is not depicted	A	nmol leaves her house to marry Mohid while Zulekha wants to abort the baby of her daughter without her will	A	nmol has to face some financial problems before the marriage but Zulekha does not have to face such problem.
aryam (Supporting)	aryam belongs to middle class while Sobia belongs to upper middle class	M	aryam is depicted as Matric pass girl while Sobia's education is not specified	aryam is depicted as tutor while Sobia is a housewife	aryam is depicted as innocent while Sobia is aggressive.	M	aryam and Nadir got married by their own choice while Sobia's marriage with Nadir is arranged	M	aryam marries Nadir without informing her parents while Sobia beats Maryam and Sobia does not allow Nadir to give the rights of wife to Maryam.	M	aryam has to face financial problems but Sobia does not face such problem.
oor Jehan (Leading)	oor Jehan belongs to middle class while Sofia and Gulshan belong to upper middle class	N	oor Jehan is BA pass while Sofia and Gulshan have completed their master's degree from the University	Il of them are not working women as Sofia and Noor are depicted as housewives while Gulshan traps man to gain financial benefits from them	oor Jehan is innocent while Sofia and Gulshan are aggressive	N	oor Jehan gets married on the wish of her father, Sofia gets married to a boy with her own wish while Gulshan starts love affair with Saleem because of his wealth.	N	oor does not have such habits whereas Sofia has left her husband house without any major reason and Gulshan is depicted as a woman who uses men and gets money from them.	N	oor has to face few financial problems while Sofia and Gulshan do not face such problem

**Table 02 Occupation and Traits of leading vs main supporting characters in the selected dramas**

Table 02 explains that the traits and occupation of leading characters and depicts that apart from Mishal and Manahil, all leading female characters belong to middle class, financially unstable, house wives, less educated and innocent who

always stay calm and never lose their temperament in any critical situation. Almost all sacrificed their love for the sake of their parents' wishes and got married as per their parents' desire. While the supporting female characters mostly belong to upper class, financially stable, mostly working, comparatively highly educated and aggressive by nature. They are confident enough to get married as per their own wishes.

### **5.2.3. Analysis of Behavior of 'Perfect' Leading vs. 'Imperfect' Supporting Women**

The fourth component in the gender stereotypical model includes the behaviors of the characters that are depicted in the selected dramas. In this research, the behaviors of the leading (positive) female and main supporting (negative) female characters are analyzed under the light of Pakistani cultural definitions of 'perfect' and 'imperfect' women described in the beginning section.

#### **5.2.3.1. Stereotypical Behaviors in *Mann Mayal***

The positive and negative stereotypes in behaviors of leading and supporting female characters of each of the drama were analyzed. The analysis of the drama indicate positive and negative stereotypical behaviors of leading and supporting female characters in *Mann Mayal*. All the positive stereotypical behaviors are associated with the female lead Manahil. Manahil is a kindhearted soft-spoken human being, obedient daughter, loyal wife, and respectful daughter in law and devoted mother. She respects her parents, parents in laws and elders, and she is obedient to her husband and does not hide anything from him. Manahil is religious, wise, helping and forgiving. She is well aware of right and wrong and also regrets on the things that she does emotionally. She is happy in others happiness. In short, she is a 'perfect' woman of drama that gets all the happiness after lots of hurdles at the end of the drama. On the other hand all the negative stereotypical behaviors are depicted in the drama are associated with the supporting characters. The supporting character Jeena is shown as selfish, disrespectful to others, wants to get her desired things at any cost, does emotional blackmail to get benefits, not attached with Allah, has socially unacceptable habits and does not like to help others.

#### **5.2.3.2. Stereotypical Behaviors in *Zara Yaad Kar***

The positive and negative stereotypes in behaviors of leading and supporting female characters of *Zara Yaad Kar* are portrayed by the following acts.

The analysis of the drama points out that Uzma and Nafeesa are the 'perfect' women of the drama as they both show positive stereotypical behavior in the drama. Nafeesa thinks that girls should not wear makeup before marriage, she saves money and also depicts as religious woman. Uzma who is the leading lady of *Zara Yaad Kar*, is a selfless girl who helps other and also feels happiness in other people success. She is a perfect daughter who respects her father a lot and does not hide anything from him. She also tells her fiancé about her feelings for Hadi as she does not want to start a new relationship with a lie. Therefore, she gets Hadi at the end of the drama as a reward for all her good deeds. On the other side, Geeti and Anousay who are modern and educated women selected males for their

marriage without the consent of their family. They do not respect anyone are quite selfish. They do not care about the feelings of other. Due to all these bad behaviors, Mahnoor, Geeti, and Anousay face bad consequences in life and depict as ‘imperfect’ women.

#### **5.2.3.3. Stereotypical Behaviors in Noor-e-Zindagi**

The positive and negative stereotypes in behaviors of leading and supporting female characters of *Noor-e-Zindagi* are characterized by the following acts.

The Leading Character, Noor Jehan is depicted as the perfect daughter, sister, wife and sister in law. She loves to help and forgive, wakes up early in the morning, respects everyone, close to Allah, does all households, silently bears the harsh behaviors of others, and does not hide anything from her husband and father. Therefore, she gets all happiness at the end of the drama. The two female supporting characters are educated women. Both of them are depicted as jealous, disrespectful to others, wake up late in the morning, wear makeup to enhance their beauty, fall in love at the end of drama, Sofia gets happy ending as she realized her mistakes but Gulshan gets bad ending and remains imperfect woman of the drama.

#### **5.2.3.4. Stereotypical Behaviors in Ali Ki Ammi**

The positive and negative stereotypes in behaviors of leading and supporting female characters of *Ali Ki Ammi* are represented by the following acts.

Maryam as a lead is perfect wife and mother; she does households and also takes tuition to run her expenses . She is loyal to her husband and even ignores his cheating behavior, she also concerns about family of her husband despite of their bad behavior, she raises her son in good manner. Because of her deeds, she gets all the respect and happiness at the end of the drama. Few other characters of the drama also depict positive stereotypical acts as Saadia has pure heart; she is religious and also supports Maryam in front of her mother while the neighbors of Maryam also help her in every matter. The negative stereotypical acts by the supporting characters of the drama as Amma and Sobia are shown as clever and cruel women who can go to any extent to achieve their benefits. Rasheeda who is another supporting character in the drama is portrayed as disrespectful to others and she blames others without any sound proofs. All of these characters are the ‘imperfect’ women of the drama.

#### **5.2.3.5. Stereotypical Behaviors in Besharam**

The positive and negative stereotypes in behaviors of leading and supporting female characters of *Besharam* are depicted by the following acts.

The analysis of the drama shows that Mishal, the leading character and perfect woman of the drama is a girl who has a strong relationship with Allah; she is helpful, humble, respects other, accepts her mistakes, always speaks truth, does not pretend anything, loyal to her husband, supportive to her in laws and does all household work although she is a model. Along with her, Humna and Khadija are also shown as ‘perfect’ women because they love to help others, respect guest and also aware of their mistakes. We also see that all of the supporting female characters are liars, disrespectful to others, cunning, criticize others, interfere in

others matters, love to hurt others and try to create problems in the life of main leads of the drama. At the end, only the lead, Mishal, as the 'perfect' woman of the drama, gets the happiness in life.

#### **5.2.3.6. Stereotypical Behaviors in Dil Lagi**

In Dil Lagi, the leading female character acted the positive as well as negative stereotypical behaviors. So unlike the other five dramas, Dil Lagi is the only drama in which all female characters are depicted with positive stereotypical behaviors as they take stand for themselves as well as for the rights of the others, they have strong belief on Allah; they help others and also support the justice for everyone.

### **6.0. Discussion**

It was observed that the usual and common pattern of the storyline in almost all selected drama serials of Pakistan reinforces the cults of women hood by which the perfect woman is judged by herself and by her society on the basis of four cardinal virtues suggested by Welter (1978), "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (p. 313). The presence of these four virtues provides the promise to happiness, peace, power and successful life of a true woman. In this study, the virtue of piety depicts a central lead character of woman at the winning end and the side role women at the losing end. The dramas disempowered the women with active, bold, and decisive roles while depicting the lead actresses. On the contrary, to show the women in opposite role who is always at the losing end in the drama serials, the characteristics of being bold, outspoken, well-educated and decisive in their walks of lives are being highly depicted.

The age of the lead women characters is usually depicted between 18-25. The lead women characters are portrayed more as teenagers rather than as middle-aged women. These set physical traits of the characters in five of the six dramas set the stereotype of a 'perfect body standard' for a 'perfect lead woman'. This depiction conforms to the norms of the society where fair skin colour is considered as a sign of beauty. Not only is their fair skin but also how slim and smart they are. We found that the lead characters are depicted as ultra-thin and extra ordinary beautiful with fair complexion and long black hair. They are portrayed as simple women with almost no makeup and cosmetics. This, the society calls as, 'natural beauty' and they do not need to do anything extra in order to enhance their beauty. Contrary to the lead actresses, these characteristics change when the role changes. Those women who play the side role are depicted in the glamorous with modern looks, wearing makeup, dark lipsticks, usually short and stylish haircuts. It feels as if the side role women are forced to keep working hard for their acceptance in the society within the drama.

In terms of dress, the same situation goes on. The lead women are dressed up in simple and traditional national dress of 'Shalwar Kameez' in almost all television drama serials discussed in this study. The national dress is usually a long shirt with straight trouser. For them, *dupatta* (scarf) is an essential necessity for their modesty and righteousness. They continue to wear Dupatta in order to cover their heads when they are out in public. On the other hand, the side role female characters are either portrayed in westerns dressings including jeans, t-

shirts, maxi dresses or in modern and designer made traditional dresses with modern cuts. They do not seem to give much importance to wearing of *dupatta*.

Moreover, it is examined that lead characters are usually depicted as women who belong to the middle class. They are educated but not holding any professional degrees. They are usually depicted as homebound. If they work then the reason is just to support their family financially and fulfilling their responsibilities as a responsible daughter, sister and mother. On the other hand, the side roles women are usually depicted as highly educated and career oriented who work professionally regardless of their financial or social status and lead the luxurious lives. It is observed that ‘perfect women’ are expected to be weak, dependent, timid, soft spoken, emotional and submissive. They are always ready to sacrifice for their families. To put it into the nutshell, it is observed that dramas are reinforcing the patriarchal concepts of ‘perfect’ and ‘imperfect’ women in Pakistan.

### **7.0. Conclusion**

Gender representation is not a universal phenomenon rather it is a cultural dependent stereotype that sets the way of the representation of any gender. Pakistani television dramas are reinforcing the patriarchal ideology in the society where obedience to family, wearing of *dupatta*, focusing on households and non-working women are considered to be the good women. Interestingly, most of the dramas were either written or produced by women, yet, they prefer to use the stereotypical depiction of women. This depiction of positive image continues even when they do not have any higher qualification. They are equally accepted by men and women. In case if any of these women is independent, modern and educated, she is considered as a woman with ‘bad character’. Hence, they would always be at losing end regardless to the different aspects of life. This depiction is exactly what Kishwar Naheed has argued in her seminal work *A Bad Woman’s Story* (2009) in which she refers to the political and social injustices which are the reasons which keep the women dominated and have developed a discourse where the criteria of good and bad women depends on the set standards and perception of the society. Any women who defies or challenges these set stereotypes is a bad woman. This project is summarized on the following poem by Kishwar Naheed translated from Urdu to English by Sultan Jehan Begum:

“Hum Guneghaar Auratein– We Sinful Women”

It is we sinful women

who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns

(who are not intimidated by the magnificence of those who wear robes)

who don’t sell our bodies (lives)

who don’t bow our heads

who don’t fold our hands together (in supplication).

It is we sinful women

while those who sell the harvests of our bodies

become exalted  
become distinguished  
become the just princes (gods) of the material world.  
It is we sinful women  
who come out raising the banner of truth  
up against barricades of lies on the highways  
who find stories of persecution piled on each threshold  
(find tales of punishment at every doorstep)  
who find that tongues which could speak have been severed.  
It is we sinful women.  
Now, even if the night gives chase  
these eyes shall not be put out.  
For the wall which has been razed  
don't insist now on raising it again.  
It is we sinful women  
who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns  
(who are not intimidated by the magnificence of those who wear robes)  
who don't sell our bodies (lives)  
who don't bow our heads  
who don't fold our hands together (in supplication).

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