

# Portrayal of Women in Pakistani Dramas and its Impact on Pakistani Society and Culture

Iqra Tabassum<sup>1</sup>, Salman Amin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Researcher, Department of Arts and Media, Foundation University Rawalpindi Campus, Rawalpindi.

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of Arts and Media, Foundation University Rawalpindi Campus, Rawalpindi.

Correspondence: [iqratabassum05@gmail.com](mailto:iqratabassum05@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Everyone knows the impotence of television and its content to us. We cannot deny the fact that TV dramas affect our lives in many ways. Pakistani entertainment channels e.g., PTV, ARY Digital and HUM TV are major channels that telecast various drama serials having a huge impact on women and men life and playing a great role in showing various cultural aspects. So, to examine the effect of dramas on behavior and mindset of women and men, a sample size of 100 women and men was selected to investigate the objectives of the study. Study was conducted in Foundation University Islamabad, Rawalpindi Campus. The study concluded that these TV channels are more likely to blur our Islamic values and are encouraging the great number of men to divorce women and most importantly portraying the negative image of women. Such content affecting people's mentality negatively and fading true cultural values of Pakistani.

**Keywords:** TV Dramas, Pakistani Society, Culture.

## Article History

Received:  
June 7, 2020

Revised:  
September 6, 2020

Accepted:  
September 11, 2020

Published:  
September 15, 2020

## Introduction

The televised serials that are being produced in Pakistan are known as Pakistani serials or Dramas. The most common language used in the dramas is Urdu but the other languages are Sindhi, Balochi and Punjabi (Safdar & Khan, 2020; Safdar et al., 2020). These Pakistani serials are even popular in South Asian countries like India. They attract great number of audiences across the countries for example Bangladesh and Nepal. We know that in this age, we cannot deny the fact that television is almost present in every home of Pakistan (Safdar & Khan, 2020a; Safdar et al., 2015). The Pakistani dramas are great source of entertainment. Most of the Pakistani serials are about the Women, they are centered on women. Women are critical element in the society. Their role as a mother, sister and wives is shown. In some serials, there are progressive and gender sensitive messages and in most of them patriarchal values are reinforced and orthodoxy is denounced. When the general public is provided with such mix content and such contradictory messages, they get confused and it is difficult for them to understand (Safdar & Khan, 2018).

The TV programs affect our societal values (Wear & Skillicorn, 2009). As one of the most important components of the societal curriculum or informal curriculum, television has received increasing scholarly attention (Cortés, 1979). One study reported that adolescents in America spend an average 28 hours per week watching television (UNESCO, 2000).

Values of person are judged by their actions in society especially in women. Being a Muslim, knowing Islam is initially a matter of faith. This faith stands for certain beliefs, including the belief in the unity of Allah (the Almighty), belief in the last prophet hood of Muhammad (SAW), belief in the Holy Quran and

other Holy Books revealed by Almighty Allah to the Prophets from time to time, belief in Angels, belief in the life after death and belief in the destiny. These value systems are classified as social, moral, and religious etc. (Faizi, Shakil & Akhtar, 2011; Shabir *et al.*, 2015).

In today's age men and women is considered as wheels of same cart. But the image of women portrayed never be equal. Women are always criticized and men are shown as dominant. The most important element highlighted in the dramas is the increasing divorce cases that how they are quickly divorced even when they have not committed any sin or mistake. Giving birth to a daughter is considered as a sin while it is much clear that in today's time women are more progressing in society. They are blamed for giving birth to a daughter and are divorced because of it. The rights of women in dramas are shown as totally neglected, for example when they show their desire of love marriage it is considered as big crime and they are violated and abused even when they have done nothing wrong (Shabir *et al.*, 2015a).

It is shown that how the working ladies are viewed in public. Although it is good that women get independent and works for themselves and their home, but it is shown as a negative act that society views as someone not good enough and positive. The character of women is questioned because of this which is totally unfair. When the people see these kinds of dramas, they set their value and belief system according to it and treat their sisters, wives and daughters the same way.

Writers of Pakistani dramas sets an image of women that they have to bear the pain in order to save their homes. They should bear the violence quietly in order to get their home going or otherwise they are divorced and not given any kind of importance. Dramas show the harsh reality that how women are abused by the men, the violence and the increasing rape cases. When the general viewing women see such content, a fear in their mind is inserted because the dramas shows that most of rape cases are by their own close family members which leads to fear in general public that includes teenager girls and women. It is also shown that the sexual harassment is shown due to which a working lady fears going out of home.

Ahtesham (1998) carried out a research on "the effect of PTV dramas on wedding ceremonies and Islamic thoughts proved that the marriage ceremonies in PTV dramas were under the influence of Indian and western culture. Islam teaches simplicity. PTV dramas have unlimited glamour and these dramas were playing significant role in putting the viewers in psychological conflicts".

Yoshii (2001) conducted the research on "Transformation in media and society: laying the ground work for cultural ecology proved that how changing in communication and diffusion of new media changes the whole society and culture. The flow of information is speeding up with the help of new media, radical changes has occurred in the world such as never been occurred before. The world will change to a value system that disclosure changes. If new media used inappropriately, not only serious social problems bring out but also create communication and information gap between rich and poor and between those who do not decisively need to create awareness about media literacy and media ethics".

Pakistani culture shown in Pakistani dramas is quite realistic. These are the reflective of our culture and society. They portray different aspects of Pakistani culture by showing their life style and lives of people having different classes, caste and background and how they are affected by issues emerging with in the society. It also highlights how some people are divided on the basis of different sects and beliefs especially when it comes to marriage.

When the culture of India is copied and highlighted in Pakistani dramas, people of Pakistan adopt it and their real culture gets distorted. They adopt the life style which in not included in our culture, their living standard get changed according to the western culture. The bad depiction of culture has a bad impact on youth as well. The freedom given to youth is shown and many other demoralizing materials as well such as western culture which has started giving our youth ideas.

Saleem (1994) researched "Cultural imperialism. A case study of the impact of Dish Antenna on Pakistani society" found that "most of the people like to watch Dish Antenna and they are the regular viewers. Most

popular channel among the viewers is ZEE TV. Mostly Hindi and English language used in majority of programs.” Mostly women are attracting towards dresses, hairstyle of Indian and western models. It also has great effect on themes and production of PTV and STN programs. Butt & Sehar (2000) researched “An Analytical study of the role PTV dramas in educating the masses about women problems (July 2001-June 2002)” analyzed dramas of prime time and Khawateen time from July to June 2002. Study concluded that PTV dramas failed to educate the people but succeeded in highlighting women issues. The theme of PTV dramas lost diversity and every drama has same subject to appear. Due to this PTV has less viewership than cable TV network. Due to exposure to other channels hobbies and perceptions have changed with the passage of time.

## **Problem Statement**

The aim of this research study was to investigate the negative affect of dramas on Pakistani culture and to examine the portrayal of women. In Pakistani dramas, women image is portrayed very negatively. They showed as they are deprived of their rights and mistreated. Western values and culture such as dress code, living style etc. is being adopted. So, by using qualitative research, researchers conduct interviews and focus group to find out the image of women in Pakistani television dramas.

## **Objectives**

- To investigate that these dramas are promoting Pakistani culture.
- To examine the portrayal of women in Pakistani dramas.
- To examine the effect of these dramas on women and society.
- To examine how Pakistan’s own culture is distorted.

## **Research Questions**

- RQ 1: To what extent Pakistani society is affected by TV dramas?
- RQ 2: Does Pakistani dramas promote their own culture or not?
- RQ 3: Do they portray right image of women?

## **Literature Review**

Ayesha et al., (2018) study regarding the “Perfect” woman image which actually further is portraying the stereotypes which are in Pakistani dramas for bad and the good women. The serials of Pakistan actually play an important role in shaping the opinion of men and women in the society. These dramas influence the patriarchal system. In Pakistani dramas different roles are shown. The lead role is more like home bound and the side roles are shown as bold and outspoken and the one doing some job and are independent. Due to such characteristics, they are portrayed as imperfect women as well for the society.

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. Seplow (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).

The image of women that is portrayed in television actually shows that as compare to their personality or moral values, their body parts are more important and they should be pretty to be accepted and loved by society. Lin (1998) argued 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).

Violence against women is highlighted in dramas. Even when they are sexually harassed, they are shown as the victim of violence in the news and same stories are then used in Pakistani dramas as well. Patriarchal societies think that the women are their personal matter and it should not be interfered by non-governmental organizations, media or any governmental organization as well. They are always shown as home bounded rather than employed and independent which actually puts a negative thought in men that they should not all their wives or sisters to go outside and work whereas there should be no such gender discrimination and they should be allowed to work. Pakistani dramas show that women lack the decision-making power.

Shabir et al., (2013) the HUM TV and GEO TV serials are portraying the culture of Pakistan. The study analyzed how much importance is given to the culture in any Pakistani serial. Cultural and traditional values are more portrayed in the HUM TV dramas. Saleem (1994) researched on "Cultural imperialism. A case study of the impact of Dish Antenna on Pakistani society". She conducted the survey research. In her research she found that "most of the people like to watch Dish Antenna and they are the regular viewers. Most popular channel among the viewers is ZEE TV. Mostly Hindi and English language used in majority of programs." Study concluded that mostly women are attracting towards dresses, hairstyle of Indian and western models. It also has great effect on themes and production of PTV and STN programs.

Butt & Sehar (2000) researched on "An Analytical study of the role PTV dramas in educating the masses about women problems (July2001-June2002)". Study was based on survey and content analysis method. They analyzed dramas of prime time and Khawateen time from July to June 2002. Study concluded that PTV dramas failed to educate the people but successes in highlighting women issues. The theme of PTV dramas lost diversity and every drama has same subject to appear. Due to this PTV has less viewership than cable TV network. Due to exposure to other channels hobbies and perceptions have changed with the passage of time.

## Research Methodology

This research explored in depth that what affects are Pakistani dramas having on our culture, how our own values are being blurred and western culture is making its place in the society. The portrayal of women in Pakistani serials is not in a way in which it should be. So, to examine the effect of dramas on men behavior and women mindset, a sample size of 100 women and men was selected to investigate the objectives of the study. Study was conducted in Foundation University Islamabad Rawalpindi Campus. Survey method was used for the data collection. For the such purpose, self-administrative questionnaire was designed. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted for data collection. For the analysis, data was organized and then reviewed until got the final result.

## Findings

Q.1 - How frequently do you watch the following private entertainment channels ?

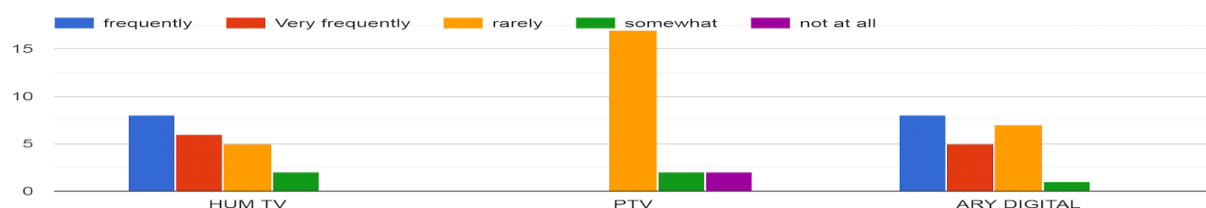
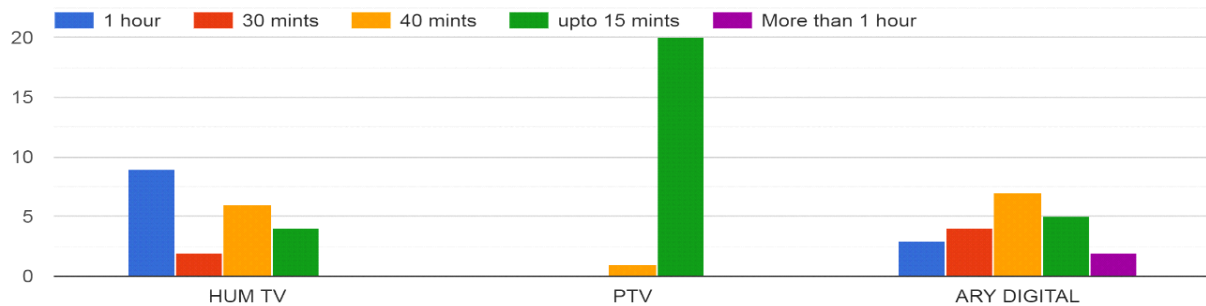


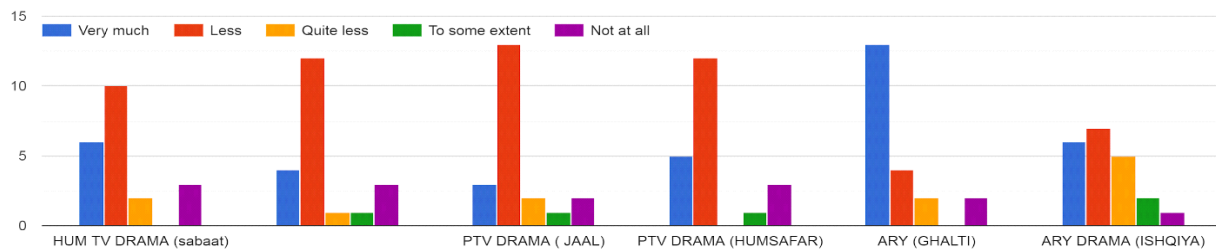
Figure 1 shows the interest of the respondents regarding TV channel. According to the results, HUM TV dramas are watched frequently and very frequently by the viewers. The dramas of ARY Digital are also watched frequently and very frequently by the people. In comparison to these, PTV dramas are watched rarely by majority of the people. There are few people who watch the PTV dramas frequently.

Q .2 – How much time you usually spend on watching Pakistani serials on each channel ?



In figure 2, shows that time spent on HUM TV dramas found maximum 1 hour and then ARY digital dramas are watched by many people for 1 hour or more than 1 hour. Majority people who watch PTV dramas spend just 15 to 40 minutes only.

Q.3 – which channel dramas do you think are influencing or portraying Pakistani culture more ?



According to the figure 3, the dramas of all these channels mostly are representing the Pakistani culture very less. ARY drama was representing more Pakistani culture as compare to other channels i.e., HUM TV and PTV.

Q.4 – Which channel dramas are affecting your mindset regarding the men dominance in society ?

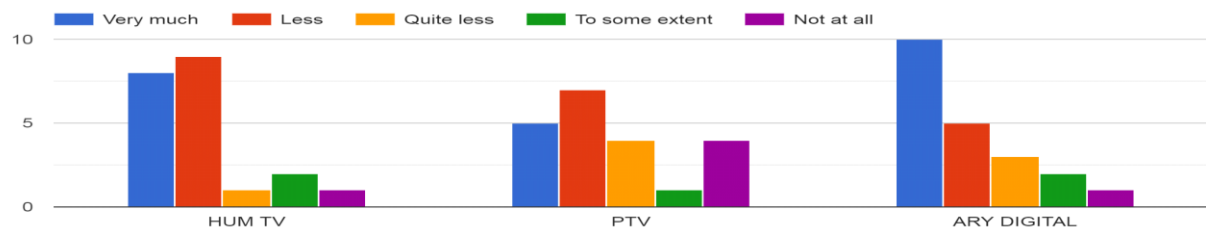


Figure 4 shows that ARY digital dramas found promoting mostly the men dominance in society more as compare to PTV and HUM TV.

Q.5 – Do you think you are adopting the western values and culture shown in Pakistani dramas of following channels ?

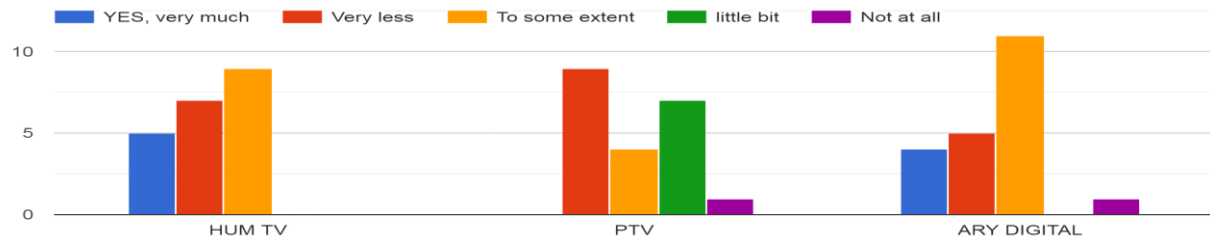


Figure 5 shows that majority found adopting western values shown in these private channel dramas. ARY digital found promoting these values more as compare to HUM TV and PTV.

Q.6- Does the violence shown in Pakistani dramas affect the behavior of men and women while solving household problems ?

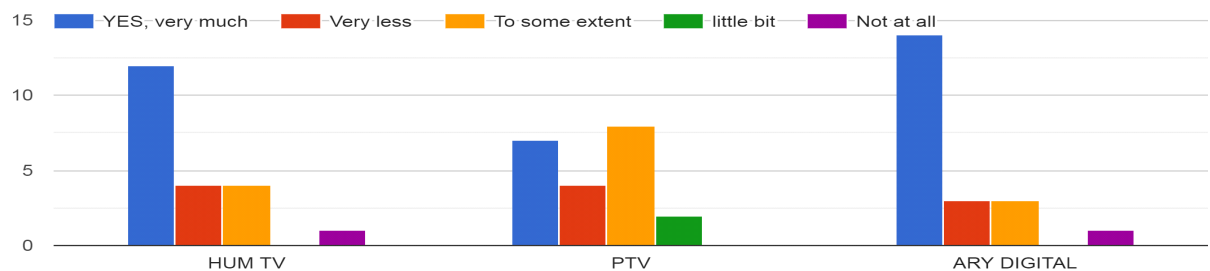


Figure 6, shows that ARY digital and HUM TV dramas are affecting the behaviour of the public majority in solving household issues while PTV to some extent also affecting the people.

Q.7 – which pakistani dramas are most likely to blur our own Islamic values ?

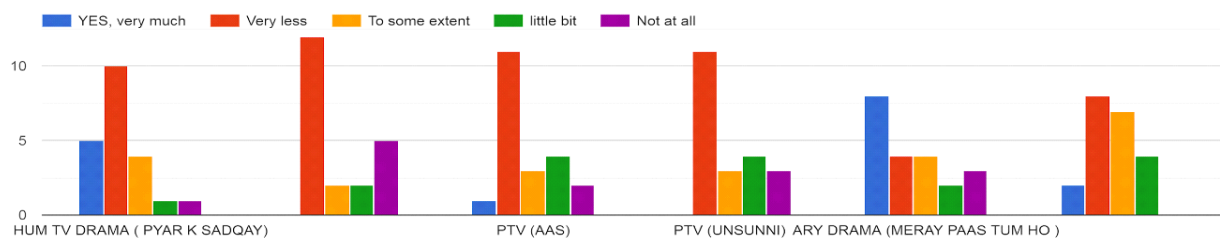
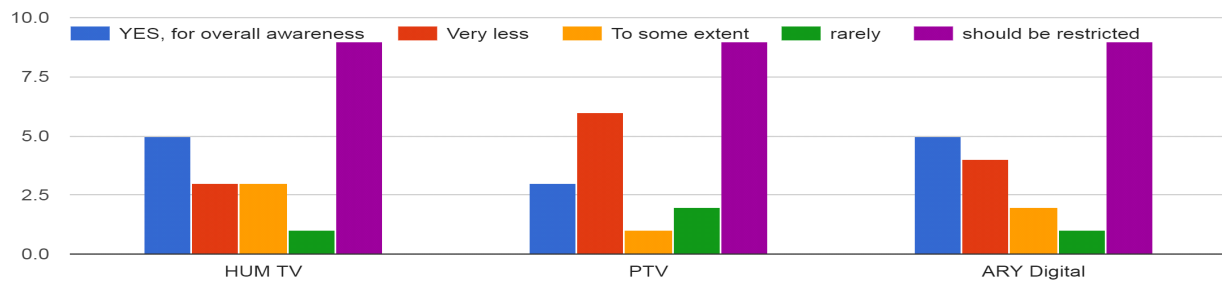


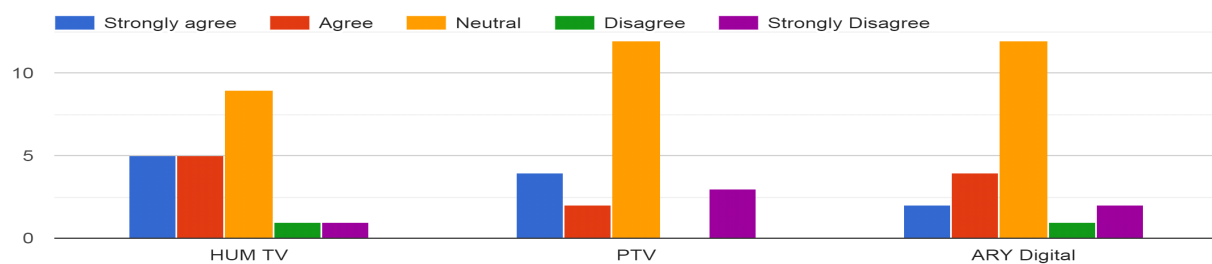
Figure 7 showing that ARY and HUM TV dramas are most likely to blur the Islamic values while PTV also doing this but to some extent.

Q.8 – Do you think dramas Of following entertainment channels should continue highlighting the divorce issues while it is encouraging men to divorce without even thinking ?



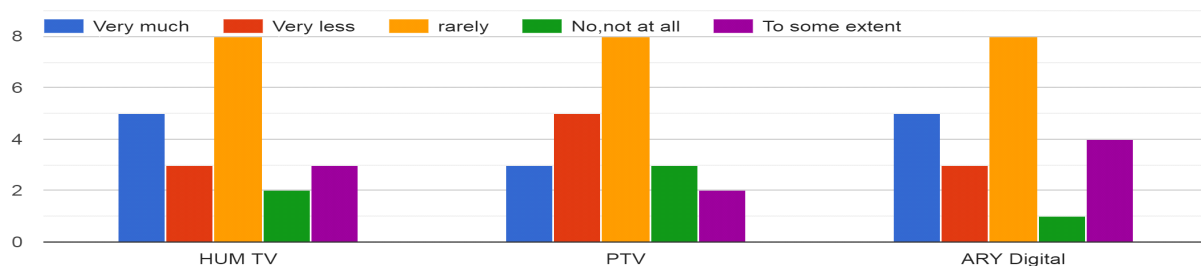
According to figure 8, all the selected TV channels i.e., ARY, HUM TV and PTV should restrict such content and according to some people, it should highlight is for awareness.

Q.9 – Are you satisfied/agreed with the content ideas of entertainment channels ?



According to the figure 9, people are not satisfied with ARY digital content, mostly are satisfied with HUM TV content while majority of the respondents found neutral.

Q.10 – Does the following channels content is under the influence of indian culture ?



According to the figure 10, HUM TV and ARY dramas do reflect the Indian culture norms and values weather directly or indirectly. On the other hand, PTV dramas reflects local culture. Majority people are adopting the western values which are shown in the dramas of private entertainment channels and they are affect majority of people in the society. Similarly, men dominance is being promoted and applied by men in our society. These dramas especially of ARY and then HUM TV are blurring our own Islamic values

by promoting the western values and majority of people found agreed with this. Also, to some extent the content of these channels is under influence of Indian culture because of portraying of their values.

## **Discussion**

According to the findings of the current research study, majority are giving much of their time in watching these dramas like more than 1 hour or an hour specially the ARY and HUM TV. Many few people give time to watch PTV dramas, they rarely watch it by giving it only 15 to 30 minutes. It is found that ARY is not portray its own culture in dramas and similarly HUM TV while PTV dramas to some extents are portraying the Pakistani culture. Not everyone is satisfied with the content of these channels due to ideas represented by these channels again and again are not acceptable for promoting wrong values. These dramas especially of ARY and then HUM TV are blurring our own Islamic values by promoting the western values and majority of people agreed with this. Also, to some extent the content of these channels is under influence of Indian culture. Majority people are adopting the western values which are shown in the dramas of private entertainment channels. Similarly, men dominance is being promoted and applied by men in our society. Dramas of these channels are encouraging the men to divorce the women without giving it a second thought according to majority of people.

## **Conclusion**

The current research study proved that how Pakistani serials are slowly spoiling our society by the values they are presenting and by the image they are portraying of women. Dramas of Pakistani entertainment channels are mostly presenting the stereotypes. They are showing and injecting the idea of good and bad women in the mind of people in the society. By showing such stereotypes, people are forming different opinions without even knowing whether they are right or wrong. Women which are shown as independent is considered wrong which should not be promoted. Such ideas affect the society badly and they start taking such women wrong. There should be no gender stereotypes. The western values and even the Indian culture is being shown in the dramas and shaping our society into something which actually we are not. Pakistani own culture and values should be promoted in these channels as they are widely seen audience so that people remain stick to their Islamic values and culture.

## **Acknowledgements**

None

## **Conflict of Interest**

Authors have no conflict of interest.

## **Funding Source**

Authors received no funding to conduct this study.

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