
Exploration of Public Perception About Drama Serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”: A Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of doing this study is to record and collect the views and thoughts of people about how women are portrayed by our media and to what degree this portrayal matches with real life situations females face and the treatments they get in their real lives. Several issues have been raised in past decades regarding denial of women’s existence, brutality on women, resistance against the higher education for women, status of women in Islam, women rights and more. Few issues like higher education for women, forceful marriages, and injustice with women were considered for this study and respondents were asked about these issues and the acceptance or rejection of these issues by using Drama Serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” as a tool for content analysis. Respondents were asked about the situations in the drama and the real-life situations and incidents they face; close to the story line of this drama. The result of the study was somehow positive; it was found that the intellectual level of people is comparatively better than those from the last two decades. People have started being positively inclined towards giving basic rights to females and they appreciate higher education for women in a pretty higher ratio now.

Key Words: Portrayal, Self-Esteem, Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan, Holy Quran, Patriarchy, Education

Introduction

We are living in the era of Information & Technology. Communication is the crucial and integral part in our lives these days. Media is considered to be the main source of communication and today, nobody can deny the importance and significance of media in our lives. Among all the sources of communication and forms of media, TV is one of the most powerful and influential form. There are many different reasons why people watch television, and that the reasons vary for each individual. Many researchers have done research regarding the enormous effects of TV on our daily lives and behaviors, and varying perceptions of people about the influence of TV on human lives.

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One of the famous dimensions of research since decades till now, is the portrayal of women in media, role of media in current status of women in society, gender roles, characteristics attached on the basis of gender etc. using Feminist theory of media. This particular study is also based on the mediated presentation of women and on the basis of this presentation the analysis of opinion of people.

This study notices the achieved & ascribed status of “empowered” and “victimized” women characters portrayed frequently in media and entertainment world in context of Pakistani TV novel-based Urdu drama serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”. This study analyzes the public perception about the drama and the portrayal of women in the drama. This study is done within the domain of Feminist perspective. This is a survey-based analytical research of public perception, conducted on Geo TV drama serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” which was very popular among masses.

The purpose of this study is to examine the link between the presentation of women in the drama and the public opinion about this presentation of female characters. This study will try to determine the views of people about the story, dramatization, portrayal of women, and the reasons of popularity of this drama among public. Literature review about the feminism, portrayal of women in different forms of media, different studies about the portrayal, drama studies, and portrayal of women in Pakistani dramas, survey and feedback of audience of the drama are included in this study to draw conclusions about the matter of study. Suggestions will be made on the basis of findings about how to improve this presentation and to resolve stereotypes about women; also, about the further research works in this dimension.

Feminism is defined as the struggle to promote female individuality, a fight for the rights of women in society and a measure to eliminate the oppression of women in the society. Feminist movement in general is to emphasize the validity of women’s experience in social world (Sydie, 1987). Feminists argue that society and culture promote gender distinctiveness which encourages the differences between men and women. These differences cause inequality in the status of men and women in the society making males superior while females as inferior. A latest research reveals that females make up a third of primetime television characters, but for every five men that have careers in science, technology or math-related fields, there is only one female character in such a profession (Smith, 2012).

The role of media, in terms of status and view of women, can be positive or negative, and can be powerful enough to create awareness about the issues or to reinforce the traditional male-dominating ideology of the society. If one analyzes this role, he/she can easily find out that although media played important role in highlighting women’s issues; it has many negative aspects as endorsing violence against women. Overall media treatment of women can best be described as narrow. Women are rarely portrayed as rationally active or decisive (Gallagher, 1978). The media projects an image of devalued, inferior and economically and emotionally dependent women. In spite of being the central character of the fiction, in most of the cases, she has no real human value (Pervaiz, 2010). It’s no secret that women are underrepresented in TV and other

media. The women portrayed on the small screen seldom appear in roles of leadership and are routinely exploited in the workplace (Smith, 2012).

TV images of women in programs, ads, dramas etc. highlight attractive faces, stylish dresses; make ups, accessories, inclined towards family roles i.e., efficient housewives, loving daughter-in-laws, caring mothers, healthy and happy women and having no individuality. The media treatment of women is narrow and continually reinforces stereotyped gender roles and assumptions that women's functions are that of a wife, mother and servant of men (Sharma, 2011). These images have indirect but significant effect on ideology of the society and behaviors and attitudes of members of society. Media has the greater power to influence the public perception about issues. Media has the power to present images to the world (Lippmann, 1922).

Many researchers have been conducted to analyze the impacts of these dramas on society and still there is lot more to be done. Many researchers believe that TV dramas are very powerful than programs in shaping public opinion. It is an assumption that TV industry is the female oriented industry. But these are also popular in children and males of the family now almost equally. But the problem in that is, like all other media products dramas are also reinforcing the patriarchal ideology of the society. TV dramas are always thought to be a female-viewer-attracted industry, especially for soap operas. However, the same as other types of TV programs, TV dramas represent and reinforce the majority's ideology of western culture; patriarchy (Ingham, 2007).

Researchers have proved that women are under-represented not only in terms of coverage but also in terms of stereotypical view of them. They are shown stubborn and obstinate, they are portrayed in objectified ways, endorsing division of social labor between genders i.e., domestic works for women and professional roles for women etc. They are portrayed negatively.

The topic of this research is to explore the public perception about portrayal of women in Geo TV drama serial "Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan". The main focus of this study will be to evaluate the public perception about different aspects of the drama i.e., the present research focuses on finding out the drama serial Meri Zaat Zarra-Benishan's positive or negative portrayal of women, factors behind this portrayal if positive, different issues highlighted in this drama etc.

Drama Serial Meri Zaat Zaara-e-Benishan is a Pakistani play based on a novel written by Umaira Ahmed. It is produced by Humayun Saeed and Abdullah Kadwani. The emotional and tragic story of the drama revolves around a girl named Saba and her daughter Sara. Saba was disowned and thrown out of the house by her elders because of a sin she never committed. Jealousy, hatred and lies of another woman (Arfeen's mother) ruined the life of Saba as well as the life of many other people in the family. Arfeen's parents were not willing for him to marry Saba and that's why Arfeen's mother conspired against Saba, proving infidelity of Saba with other cousin Adil by taking swear on Quran. Saba's family forced her to marry an illiterate 50 years old man with 4 children who after brutally treating her for many months divorced her when she was pregnant and after that had a daughter (Sara). Arfeen also got married to another girl in America and had a son Haider. On the other hand, one of Arfeen's sisters got divorced while other one got widowed. On death bed, dying with cancer Arfeen's mother accepted the wrong deed she had

done. After Saba died, Sara was sent to Arfeen's home where she got to know about the past of her mother and later on married Haider by forgiving whole family.

1. This drama highlighted many issues of women and almost depicted reality of society. One main issue, as reflected by the title itself that women have no status in society, they are simply useless and nobody cares about them and their existence, they are not trustworthy even for their family.
2. Another issue highlighted by this drama was that we are living in the era of information and technology, our society is highly advanced and highly educated in comparison with past but still old-fashioned belief of society is against women education and backward philosophy that highly educated women cannot be the perfect daughter-in-laws, wives or mothers.
3. Drama emphasized another issue that people frequently use Quran to swear to prove they are truthful. Drama pointed out the conservative belief of society that if a girl laugh loudly, enjoys weather from her balcony and even if she interacts with boys, she is immoral and not to be married in good families.
4. Another very important point highlighted by this drama like all other media programs that men are not against women but the worst enemy of any woman is another woman. Conspiracies and evil plots are done by women; they are jealous of other women, and do not like dominance of other women. Women are always get trapped by their own sisters, mother-in-laws, friends, sister-in-laws etc.
5. Another issue highlighted by the drama is that women are cruelly and viciously treated by the society and even by their families in the name of their so-called pudicity. They are being killed by the families, verbally and physically abused, mentally tortured, forced to attempt suicides, forced to marry persons twice or even thrice of their age, divorced or widower, just because they are found guilty of behaving against stereotyped thinking of society.
6. This drama enforced the theme of "consequences of actions". Being Muslims, we truly believe that one has to bear the penalties of his/her actions in this world and even in the life hereafter i.e., punishment for wrongdoings and rewards for good deeds etc.
7. Another, perhaps the most important aspect which was highlighted in this drama serial "Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan" is that although the women are pressurized, forced to bear the illicit treatment of society but the strength and morality which is born-in quality of the women and also groomed by the society during her socialization process, never changes which is effectively portrayed by the character Saba.

Rationale for the Selection of this Topic

Mostly the dramas being produced these days are based on female themes. One of the famous dramas of recent times in the same feminist perspective is "Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan". This drama serial is based on very famous novel of writer Umaira Ahmed. This novel gained popularity at very rapid pace after its publication which led the producers to dramatize this novel.

This novel-based drama also gained huge fame with the starting episodes although there were slight changes in the drama in comparison with the novel like character of Arfeen's wife was very supportive and positive in the novel but it was presented negative in the drama; relationship among both of them was even better in the novel as compared to drama etc.

It was highly praised by the public and widely popular among audience. It is considered to be the one of most successful drama serials of the recent times as it generated highest ratings for any programs being telecasted in prime-time TV of Pakistan (Wikipedia).

To admit the popularity of the drama serial among the audience, it was also released on DVDs in mid of 2010, and the producers of the drama included a thanking letter to audience for their appraisal, in the drama.

This made this topic to be undertaken for a research to dig out the facts about the popularity of the drama and the public opinion regarding images and characters of women presented by the drama.

According to ratings in a review of a well-known website for online dramas in December, 2012, drama serial *Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan* was at 2nd position among the most popular dramas of 3 main channels of Pakistan i.e., Geo TV, Ary and Hum TV; with TRP rating 10 while the 1st drama was *Humsafar* with TRP rating 13.8 (DramasOnline.com, 2012).

Faisal Qureshi won "Best Actor (Satellite)" Award for 10th Annual Lux Style Awards, 2011. Umera Ahmed also won "Best TV Writer for all channels" in 10th Annual Lux Style Awards, 2011 whereas Samiya Mumtaz was nominated for "Best Actress (Satellite) in same 10th Annual Lux Style Awards, 2011" (Daily Times, July 07, 2011).

Significance of the Study

The study that has been selected is of considerable importance as it will counter the nature of portrayal of women in Pakistani dramas. The objective of the study is the evaluation of different roles played by women in society in reference with drama serial *Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan*. The purpose of the study is to find out that either this drama was right or portrayed false picture of females. This study will also analyze whether this type of portrayal has reduced the value of women in society. This drama was very popular among audience, so another purpose of the study is to analyze the reasons of popularity of the drama.

Another purpose of the study is to analyze the impacts on attitudes and behaviors of viewers of this drama *Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan* regarding status of women in the society. This drama portrayed a girl with high level of character (Taqwa), despite everything happened to her she believed in Allah and remained satisfied with her fate and what was given to her by her Allah, and in the end, she was rewarded with lots of happiness and blessings for her daughter while the women who conspired against her was punished for her sin. This study will analyze what women have perceived about this and whether they learned to believe in Allah and to achieve the highest level of character (Taqwa). People can give so-called respect to Quran by kissing it and touching it with their foreheads, they can kiss their thumbs on hearing Prophet's (PBUH) name but

ultimately, they will prefer their own convenience. We live an Islamic Republic and everyone here knows the hadiths and Quran, they can fight to death with one another over Quran but no one is willing to lead their lives as per teaching of Quran. (Excerpt from “Man-o-Salwa: Umaira Ahmed”).

By understanding this entire phenomenon, this topic was chosen because all the media products are mainly and solely produced for audience, it is very important to find out what actually audiences think these media products. Another significance of this study is that such types of researches about public perception regarding portrayal of women still have not been done especially in Pakistan.

Problem Statement

One of the famous dimensions of the research since decades till now is the portrayal of women in media, role of media in current status of women in society, gender roles, characteristics attached on the basis of sex and gender etc. Presentation of women in media has restricted women, their bodies, and soul to amuse and please men. In media women are under-represented not in the quantitative perspective but also in stereotyped roles. The media is largely and mainly responsible for promoting these stereotyped roles of women in society. But it is impossible that everyone perceives it similarly, because people perceive and interpret things in the light of their existing attitudes, values, behaviors and experiences; cultural background and other social, moral, economical etc. factors which also play important role in shaping and reshaping the public opinions, this study will be focused on different predispositions of public about the drama “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” and portrayal of women in this drama. No one can deny the importance of media in influencing public opinion, this study will analyze what people think and perceive about the status of females after watching this drama. The overall concern of the study is to find out and present clear perception of the public about females and their images in media i.e., what are they perceiving and learning after seeing such dramas.

Objectives of the Research

1. To analyze the public perception about women and their status in society from drama serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”.
2. To evaluate the frames which audience assigns to innocent and vamps’ characters with reference to the drama serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”.
3. To evaluate the different roles which women play in a society by analyzing the public perception about drama “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”.
4. To investigate the evaluation criteria of women to identify positive and negative characters in drama “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”.
5. To find out the effects of extensive commercialization of women in media on viewers.
6. To find out role of media in reshaping public perception about women.

Literature Review

Since decades, researchers have focused on mediated image of women in society and the role of media in women oppression through conducting various different researches. By conducting a study of drama serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”, exploring the public opinion about it, this article will demonstrate how dramas portray women in violent or victimized roles; oppressed or progressive view of women in context of public perception. This article will reveal the facts which played important role in the success and popularity of the drama. By doing this literature review it was cleared that almost all the researches in this field of research were based on content analysis and almost nothing has been done to find out the public perception about the issue.

Walby S. (1996) conducted a study and addressed key concepts of feminism, different roles assigned to women, gender relations, and women’s participation in public sphere. She found that segregation, exclusion, integration, participation are important concepts. She concluded that all women actively make choices but many circumstances under which they act are not suitable.

Offen K. (1988) wrote an essay which was conceived over the historical content of feminism. This study was based on definitions and explanations of concepts like feminism, feminists, feminism across national boundaries, across cultures and across countries etc. She suggested that with compromises and concessions on sides of the society and by establishing a better discourse, a different society can be achieved.

Mojab S. (2001) conducted research on theorization of the politics of Islamic feminism. He examined developments in Islamic feminism, and offered a critique of feminist theories which constructed it as an authentic and native emancipatory alternative to secular feminisms. He argued that the Islamization of genders has created an oppressive patriarchy that cannot be replaced through legal reforms, because people used Islam and its teachings for their own interests.

Seggar et al. (1973) conducted a study on Ethnic and Sex representation in TV drama. They explored the increasing use of minority groups in TV programming. They conducted this research to show the changes and variances in comparison of portrayal of minority and Americans in dramas of time period of 1971. This study also enhances this research article in a way it provides content analysis of TV programming on portrayals of minority but no survey research was conducted.

McNeil J. (1975) did content analysis of prime-time TV programs to analyze the representation and depiction of women in these programs. He found that women were under-represented than males and their depiction was not fair in terms of roles.

Dominick J. (1979) conducted a study on Portrayal of women in prime time during 1953-1977. It was a very extensive study as he included 1,314 TV programs and 2,444 characters appearing in these programs on prime time. This study proved that the number of female roles was constant during this time period and these were mostly presented in comedy roles but there is a decline in number of roles for females as housewives or doing domestic works from 1950s to present. He found that there was no relationship in the presentation of women in TV with real

life employment patterns for women. Findings support that women were underrepresented on TV and were mostly portrayed in stereotyped roles.

Hafen et al. (1981) analyzed TV portrayal of minorities and women in dramas and comedy dramas during 1971-1980. This study revealed that the presentation of women has increased in these years and there was also a significant change in role given to them i.e., proportional representation of minorities especially women has decreased.

Cantor et al. (1988) summarized the content analyses of articles on US-TV commercials published since 1971 on portrayals of male and female. They compared data from present study with previous studies to illustrate the changing trends over the time period. They found that there were several changes among portrayal of men and women but the main gap was decreasing gradually i.e., men and women were given equal representation in prime-time commercials. These findings were based on possible effect of exposure to stereotypical presentation on sex roles.

Davis D. (1990) examined demographic variables to generate a fractional depiction of women in current TV networks. He collected data from all prime-time TV programs of all networks. They found that there were very few changes in the portrayals of women that were in 1970s and 1980s in terms of demographics.

Atkin et al. (1991) conducted a study and found that there was increase in female producers in male-dominating Hollywood which changed the portrayal of women on TV. Their study revealed the changes in TV networks about taking women as leads in their programs during 1980s. They found that the number of roles and professions for women increased and networks offered comparable level of lead roles to females in drama series.

Streckfuss et al. (1992) conducted the study on the presence and portrayal of women in prime-time TV programs by doing content analysis of attributes and the action of characters in organizational settings. They found that although there was increase in representation of women and also portrayal in non-traditional jobs but they were still under-represented in prime-time organizational settings. Women were portrayed in interpersonal roles while men in decisional, political and operational actions.

Collette et al. (1997) examined the changing faces on TV: A demographic analysis of TV's new seasons, 1966-1992. This study examined census of 1,757 major characters introduced in broadcast TV lineups through new seasons of programs during 1966-1992. These characters were studied in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, professions across 27 years. This study was different from other studies as previous researches were based on samples over the period of time, that's why it was difficult to generalize these independent findings to draw conclusions.

Hasegawa et al. (1999) conducted content analysis of woman portrayal in prime-time TV programs during 1992-1993. They found that women were more presented in minor roles, more single women, having dark colored hairs, less violent but highly victimized, less involved in romance and intimacy and under age of 50. This study contradicts the traditional image of women in media and the characteristics assigned to females like caring, nurturing and being

housewives etc. This study enhances this particular study by providing some popular patterns and themes in media portrayal of women in early 1990s.

Demarest et al. (1992) conducted a content analysis by taking a sample of articles published in Ladies Home Journal and Good Housekeeping magazines during 1954-1982. He found that there was a decrease in the presentation of women as wives, mothers and housekeepers etc. And there was increase in presentation of women in political, social and economic roles.

Glascock J. (2001) studied gender roles on prime-time TV networks on the basis of demographics and behaviors. This study also proved that males were presented as physically stronger, more aggressive, but females were verbally aggressive especially in comedy situations. They found that on-camera demographics were influenced by behind the camera demographics.

Anderson et al. (2002) analyzed presence and portrayal of social groups on prime-time TV by doing content analysis of portrayal in terms of age, gender, and ethnic groups in all dramas of prime time and comedy dramas of major TV networks in 1999. They found that older adults, children, females and minorities were under-represented and were portrayed in negative roles while middle-aged, men, and white characters were over-represented and were presented in positive roles. The analysis was done also including attractiveness, dressing, personality etc.

Carter C. (2002) conducted study on the topic of challenging the media's portrayal of male/female relationship: *Journal of Health Education*. Objectives of the study were; students would be able to identify and list the values presented in media, to categorize values presented in media as positive/negative or realistic/unrealistic, and to find out how values presented in media has influenced behaviors and affected health.

Kwak et al. (2003) conducted content analysis of TV programs to analyze the relationship between exposure to gender-based representations of women on TV and the public perception about women's status in society. Secondary analysis of lifestyles of 1997-1999 was also conducted to analyze this relationship. This study revealed that traditional drama, progressive drama and situation comedies were significant in establishing relationship between portrayal and public opinion. But this study rarely examined the prime-time TV audiences and their socio-political opinions about the rights of women in society.

Xiaoming et al. (2007) did research on media portrayal of women by conducting case study of women in China. The purpose of the study was to study the relationship between mass media and society to analyze whether media were playing role of agents of social change or reinforced the status quo. They conducted content analysis of 352 cover pictures of women of China, China's official English women's magazine for foreign publicity. They investigated whether and how the media portrayal of women related to China's social changes. They found that the image of Chinese women presented by covers was influenced by socio-economic and political-ideological changes in China.

Sharma A. (2011) conducted a research on Portrayal of women in mass media especially in context of advertising in various forms of media. The findings of this study were that there was no change in the projection of women in media in negative ways and also that society had no

regret and shame for it. This study includes the data about portrayal of women in ads of print and electronic media but lacks logical and factual proof about the finding of society having no regrets. This particular will analyze the public opinion about positive and negative treatment of women in media.

Corman C. (1984) directed modern drama studies to record current trends, and criticisms about dramas. They divided dramas into various categories i.e., general, American, British and Irish, Canadian, Hispanic, French, Italian, Germanic, Scandinavian, Eastern Europe, Post-colonial and Asians and then analyzed various aspects of these dramas.

Carlson J. (1988) showed that a research on portrayal of women in romantic dramas and conducted that the vulgar men didn't know the dignity and she analyzed the merits and intentions of romantic style drama overall. Sparks R. (1992) analyzed TV crime drama and demonstrated the centrality of TV crime on key issues in criminology. They explored the relationship between crime dramas and public fear of crime. They analyzed effects of TV violence, the prevailing images and their attraction to audience. They also provided insight on the ways in which images of crime, law enforcement, and punishment are incorporated into expressive characteristics of modern culture.

Theoretical Framework

Media presents women in weak and dependent characters while men in strong and independent characters. Men are presented as strong, aggressive, and heroic whereas women are weak, passive and dependent (Radway, 1984). This particular study applied this theory to establish the link between the feminist perspective and the portrayal of women within the context of drama serial "Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan".

Efforts are made to establish a causal link between the cultivation of the certain attitudes and behaviors regarding the status of women in society by the drama serial "Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan" and the public mindset. This particular study applied Cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1980s) particularly with reference to drama serial "Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan" in context that what different values and themes media is cultivating in the minds of viewers through TV dramas.

It is argued that people unintentionally learn things from what they watch and hear on TV. This particular study tried to find out what different people learned from the drama serial "Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan". This social cognitive principle has been widely applied to explain the various effects of TV in reference with variety of issues like aggression, ethnic stereotypes, alcoholic attitudes (Bandura, 1977).

Research Questions

- i. In what perspective media have portrayed women; positive or negative?
- ii. Did the people perceive the highlighted issues in the drama correctly?
- iii. What are the viewers' perceptions on the basis of predispositions about the drama?
- iv. What is the public perception about the presentation of women in this drama?

- v. Does the public find this drama close enough to reality?

Research Hypothesis

- H1. This drama has more likely promoted the idea of “Women Beware Women”.
H2. Presentation of women would have been different if the writer was not a female.

Research Methodology

In this particular study, survey method has been applied to collect the quantitative data from respondents who are diverse in nature. Surveys are well suited to descriptive studies, to exploratory studies of aspects of situation, to explanatory studies and also to collect data to test hypothesis (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). The survey helped in collecting information directly from the viewers of the drama “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” so that a proper analysis could be made. The effects were then figured out through the information collected on quantitative scale. This study applied the combination of questions of both descriptive and analytical type of surveys together in a single survey.

The study used survey including descriptive survey questions to find out what are the different perceptions and pre-dispositions of the viewers about the particular drama and presentation of women in that drama. Analytical surveys attempted to describe and explain why certain situations exist i.e., by analyzing two or more variables finding answers for research questions.

Survey Research

A questionnaire was designed to be used as a tool for data collection. The questionnaire comprised of seven sections which included opinions about writer, religious issues highlighted in the drama, feministic perspective and more. All of the questions were closed ended and maximum questions were designed using Likert scale as a measurement tool.

Population

The total population of this study comprised of females and males from Bahauddin Zakariya University, males working in a renowned organization and housewives. Population was so diversified because it was intended to include people from different educational backgrounds.

Sample

Sample was selected with the help of purposive sampling technique. Sample was selected from the viewers of drama “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”. A purposive sample is judgemental sample, is the one that is selected on the basis of knowledge of population and the purpose of the study. The subjects are selected because of some characteristics they possess regarding the study (Babbie, 2001).

Sample Size

The sample size comprised of 15 males and 15 females which included students, professionals, and housewives. They were divided into 4 educational backgrounds; matriculation, intermediate, graduation and post-graduation.

Statistical Analysis

Because it is the simple and descriptive analytical research that is why data distribution technique was applied at first place in which data is placed, distributed and presented in the form of tables and graphs. It is very easy to establish data distribution but usually it is difficult to draw conclusions from them so researchers use frequency distribution, so, frequency distribution was applied in which collected data was distributed on the basis of Likert scale with respective frequencies and finally the collected data was converted into percentages for the purpose of making final results and conclusions.

Variables

The variables for this study are relationships, thought, patriarchy, self-esteem, treatment and personality.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy was taken as independent variable against two dependent variables; relationships and thought. This variable helped us measuring that how wrong decisions of patriarchs can destroy the families and relations. Patriarchy refers to the concept of one male family head that is very influential, made the major decisions for the whole family and has control over them.

Relationships

Relationship was taken as a dependent variable of patriarchy. It was measured that to what extent other family members can second the wrong decisions of the family just to keep their relationships safe with the family. The relation of family members with the family head normally depends on the mindset and behavior of the head towards them.

Thought

This was the second dependent variable for patriarchy. Different types of thoughts related to patriarchy and portrayal and status of women were measured. Gradually and unknowingly the mindset and thinking style of other family members is inclined in the same direction as of the patriarch.

Treatment

Treatment was taken as an independent variable against two dependent variables; self-esteem and personality. It was analyzed that what type of changes different types of treatment cause in

women. Treatment of females in our society and families defines and sets their behavior and confidence level.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was taken as a dependent variable. It was used to measure that self-esteem and urge to win self-esteem can make one go to an extent beyond the thoughts of others. Self-esteem is directly proportional to the positive treatment and inversely proportional to negative treatment a female gets from her family and society.

Personality

Personality was taken as a dependent variable. It was analyzed, if wrong treatment can damage one's personality or not. Either a person owns a damaged personality or a stable personality depends on the treatment one gets from their surroundings and people.

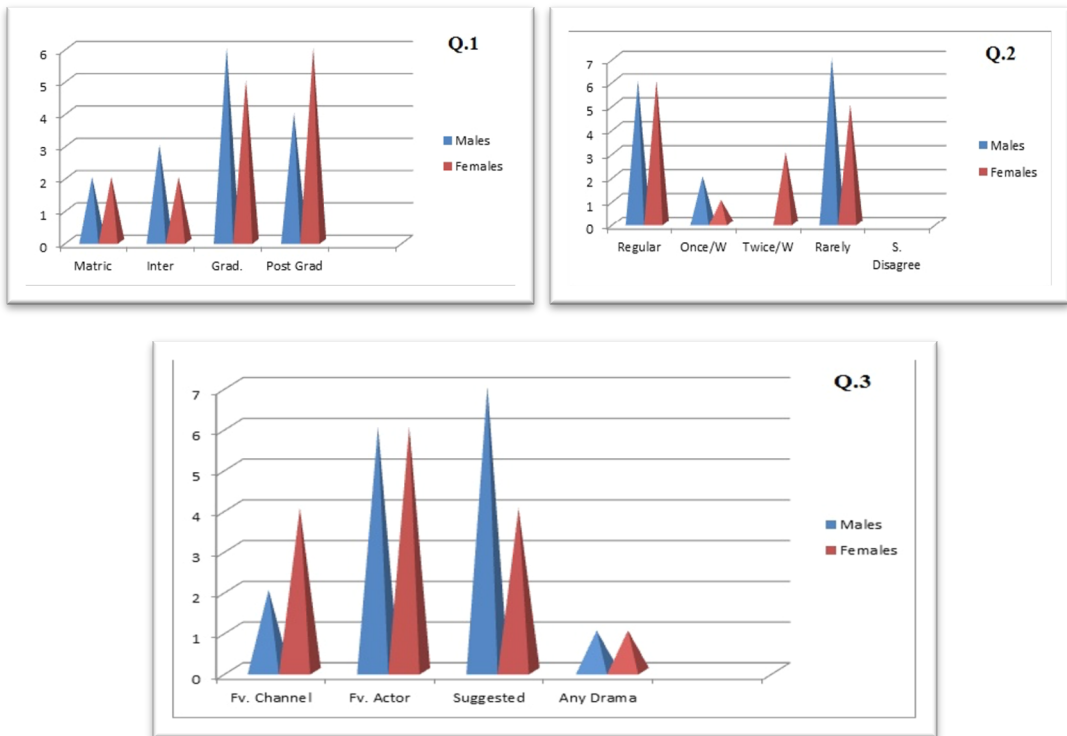
Data Presentation, Interpretation & Discussion

The purpose of doing this study is to testify the impact and influence of drama serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” on the basis of gender. For accomplishment of this goal, a questionnaire was developed which comprised of seven sections including theme and plot of the drama, religious issues, social approaches and more. A sample of fifteen males and fifteen females was asked to fill the questionnaire. Subjects were from different educational backgrounds and hence on the basis of their education they belonged to any of the four categories on base of their education; matriculation, intermediate, graduation or post-graduation. This portion will analyze and discuss the thoughts of the subjects towards each section and questions in each section.

Section – I

1st section of the questionnaire was dedicated to gather the information about the education level of the subject and their personal preference to watch a TV drama. In male category maximum number of the subjects were graduates (40%), while among females' maximum number of subjects were post-graduates (40%). Respondents from matriculation level were the least in both categories (13.3% for both). Maximum number of males said that they watch a TV drama rarely (46.7%) and they watch only a drama suggested by someone (33.3%) or may be any random drama on air during their leisure hours (33.3%), while maximum number of females claimed that they watch TV dramas regularly (40%) and the preference of maximum females was to watch a drama on their favorite TV channel (33.3%) or a drama suggested by someone (33.3%). Reason behind a narrow preference of watching TV dramas as compared to females could be the span of broader other outdoor activities males enjoy. In our society females preferably stay at home and hence TV

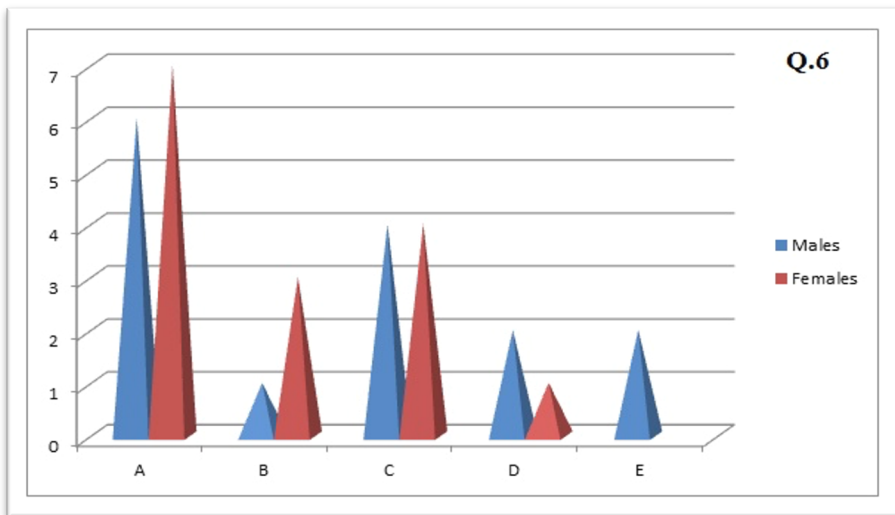
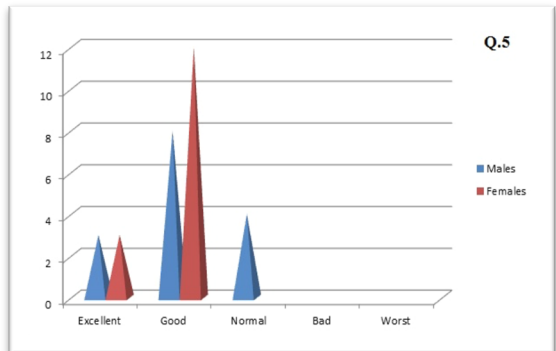
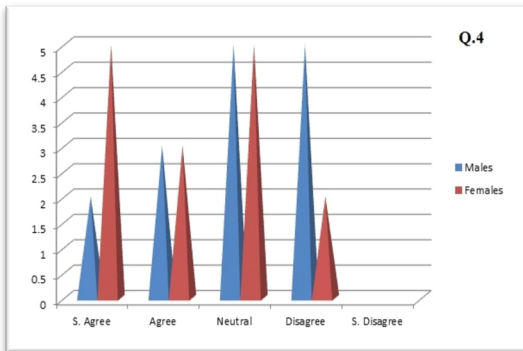
is their biggest entertainer, this may be the strongest reason behind the higher count of female viewers.



Section - II

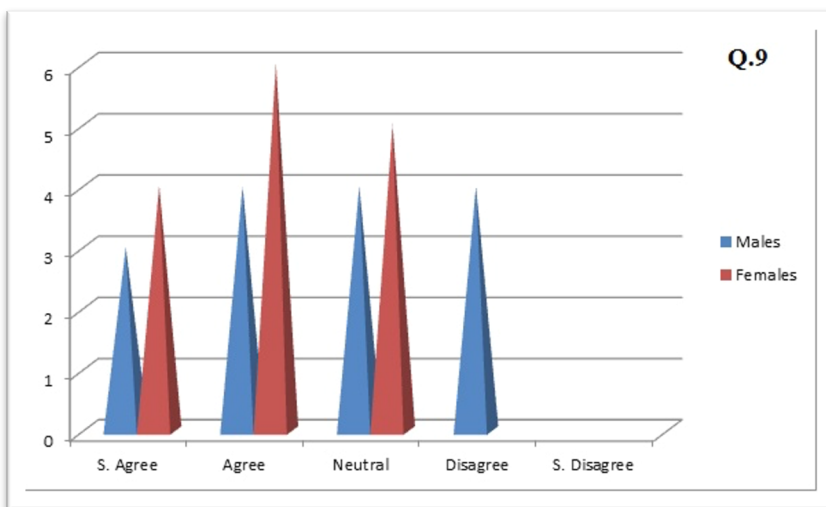
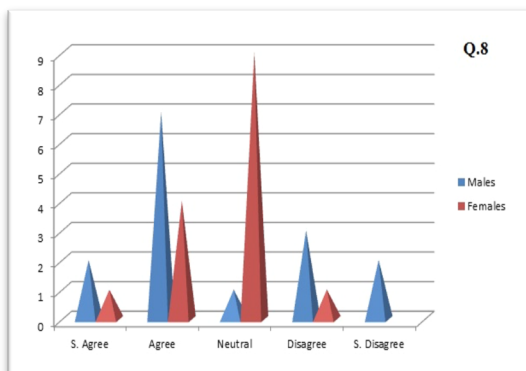
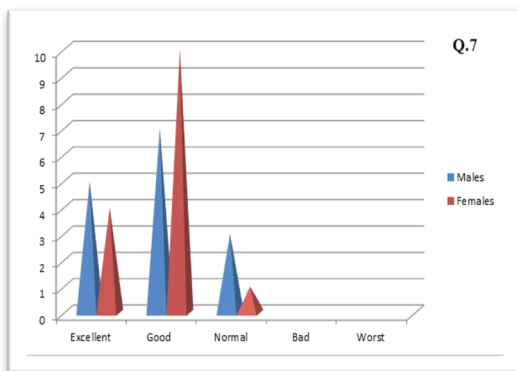
In this section, the likeability of the storyline of Drama Serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” was analyzed with the help of Likert scale, among males’ maximum number of subjects were neutral (46.7%) about the likeability of the story line of the drama which means according to them the story line was average; not so good not so bad. While maximum number of females agreed that the story line of the Drama was likeable (66.7%). Subjects were also asked to rate the Drama on the scale of 1 to 5; 1 was excellent and 5 was worst. Maximum number of males gave the Drama a rating of 2 (Good) i.e., 53.3%, female respondents who gave a 2 rating was also maximum (80%) but the number of female’s respondents who chose this category was pretty higher than male respondents which means that the drama was more popular among females. Respondents were told that this drama promoted several social issues i.e., Unnecessary swearing on Quran, some people are still not in favor of higher education for females, women beware women, Honor killing still exists, and Forced marriages are still acceptable to most of us. They were asked to select an option which was highlighted in a best possible way through this Drama. Maximum male and female respondents selected “Unnecessary swearing on Holy Quran” as an issue which was highlighted in a best possible way (40% and 46.7%; males and females respectively). Being a Muslim we all believe that unnecessary and false swearing on Holy Quran is prohibited and is

one of the biggest sins to commit respectively, and one has to pay for this sin somewhere in their lives and the same happened in the storyline of Drama Serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan”.



Section – III

There was another section which was placed to gather information about what people think for the writer of this drama, Umaira Ahmed and about other female writers. At first place, subjects were asked to rate Umaira Ahmed on the scale of 1 to 5 whereas 1 was excellent and 5 was worst. Maximum count from both male and females’ respondents agreed that Umaira Ahmed was a good writer and gave her a rating of 2 (46.7% and 66.7%; males and females respectively). Here the case was same as the rating given to the Drama, i.e., females respondents who think Umaira Ahmed is a good writer were larger in number as compared to male respondents. In another question from the same section most of the male respondents (60%) disagreed that Umaira Ahmed is not biased toward females in her writing while most of the female respondents (60%) agreed that Umaira Ahmed is not biased toward females in her writing.



Section – IV

The story of “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” is based on four main characters Saba, Arfeen, Sara and Arfeen’s Mother. To proceed further with the research, it was very important to know that what subjects think about the characters in the Drama, their personalities and the decisions taken by these characters. Hence, we dedicated a whole section to know about the public opinions and perceptions toward these characters and their roles. Expect one male respondent (6.7%) who agreed, and 2 other male respondents (13.3%) and one female respondent (6.7%) who were neutral, all other respondents disagreed with statement that Arfeen’s father was rightful to beat Saba. This was a very positive sign that maximum respondents had the sense that one should not raise their hand on females and that the education has done a lot in changing the thoughts of people in this regard.

Swearing on Holy Quran is a normal but very wrong practice nowadays. The story of the drama takes a twist when Arfeen’s mother takes a false swearing on Quran and Saba refused to swear on Quran without telling anybody that she was innocent. She did not give any justification to anybody which make others believe that she was guilty. When asked about this decision of

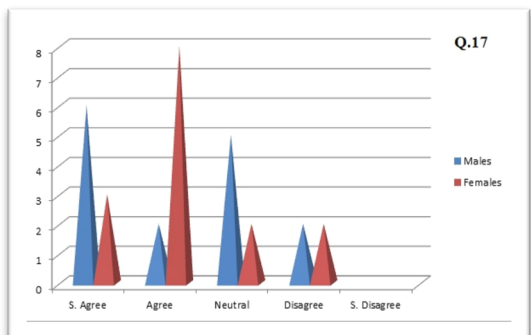
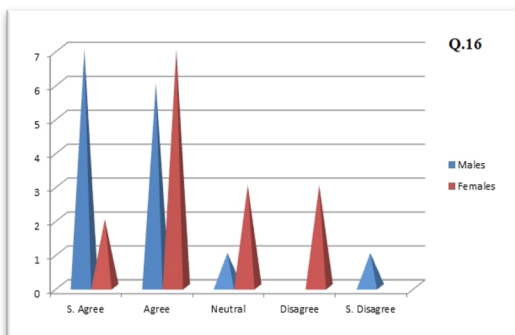
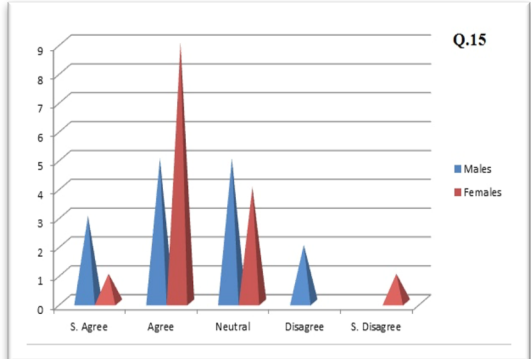
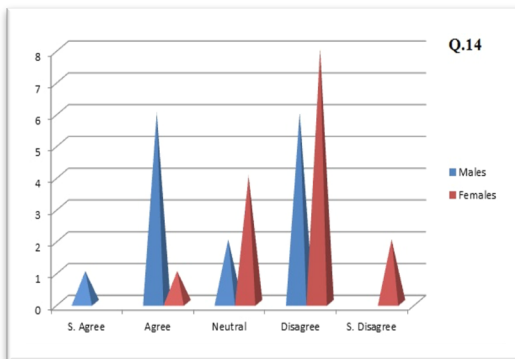
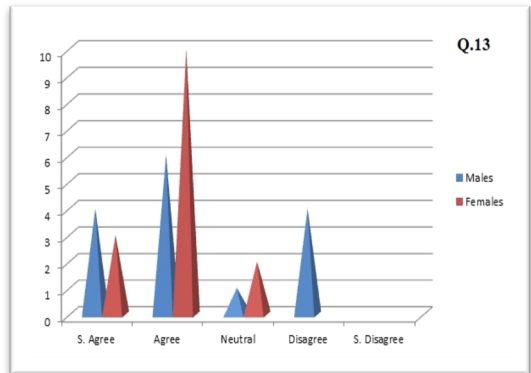
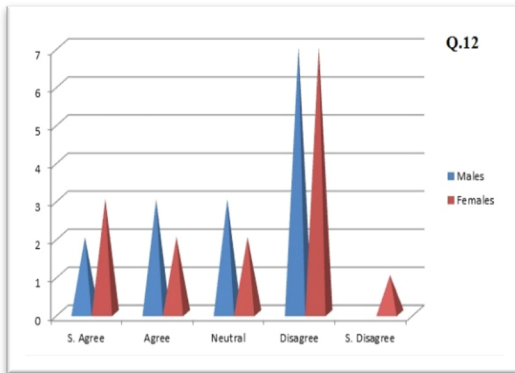
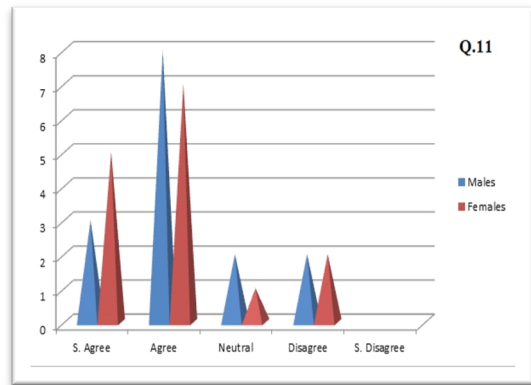
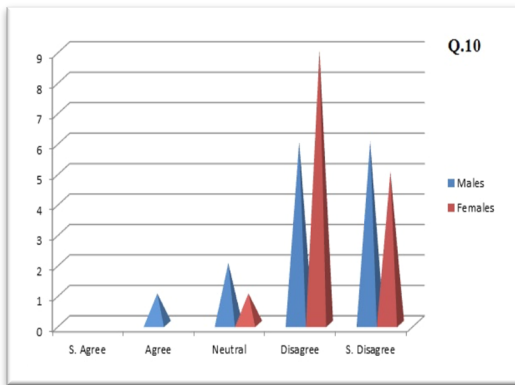
Saba, maximum number of respondents (73.3% and 80%; males and females respectively) agreed that Saba's decision of not swearing on Quran after Arfeen's mother false swearing was right. But a couple of respondents also disagreed with this decision because maybe they think that Saba should have fought for her right and should not have strengthened the wrong person by giving up.

Later on, when the truth about the false swearing of Arfeen's mother was disclosed, everyone was astonished and shocked. They looked for Saba and begged her to forgive Arfeen's mother for what she did and requested her to live with them again. Saba forgave Arfeen's mother and other family members but she decided to not to return home and she preferred to spend the rest of her life in disguise along with her daughter, Sara. Most of the respondents from both male (46.7%) and female (46.7%) category disagreed with Saba's decision of not returning back to her family and to live her life in disguise. In-fact the males and females who disagreed with this decision were in the same ratio. One of the female respondents also strongly disagreed which raise the disagreed female respondents' count by 1. The reason behind this response could be the fact that our society encourages joint family system and directly or indirectly all of us are somehow associated to this system. It is strongly believed that female(s) should not live alone as they will not be safe; our religion teaches the same. Even if a female has the guts and courage and is bold enough to live alone, the people around her will not let her live-in peace.

In the drama it was shown that Saba's strong believe in Almighty Allah gave her the courage to live her life in the way she did. Respondents were asked if they believe that Saba had a strong personality because of the ultimate faith in Almighty Allah and his justice. Maximum number of respondents from both categories (66.7% and 86.7%; males and females respectively) agreed that Saba had a strong personality and she had very strong faith in Allah. Most of the respondents who agreed with above statement were females, there were only 4 (26.7%) respondents who disagreed that Saba had a strong personality and all of them were males.

Those who watched the drama know already that when Arfeen did not believe in Saba's innocence and disowned her, then she actually broke as Arfeen was her last and only hope and she was so sure that anybody can go against her except Arfeen. Respondents were asked do they think Saba had a damaged personality because of what Arfeen and family did to her. Most of the respondents disagreed that Saba owned a damaged personality. Maximum count of female respondents (66.6%) disagreed that Saba had a damaged personality but the male respondents who agreed and disagreed (i.e., 40%) with this statement were almost in the same ratio and 1 male respondent (6.7%) strongly agreed with statement.

In the end of this section most of the respondents (53.3% and 66.7%; mles and females respectively) believed that Arfeen's decision to make his son Haider marry Saba's daughter was only because he wanted to minimize his guilt for what he did to Saba. In this area greater count of respondents who agreed that Arfeen was only minimizing his guilt were males (53.3%).



Section – V

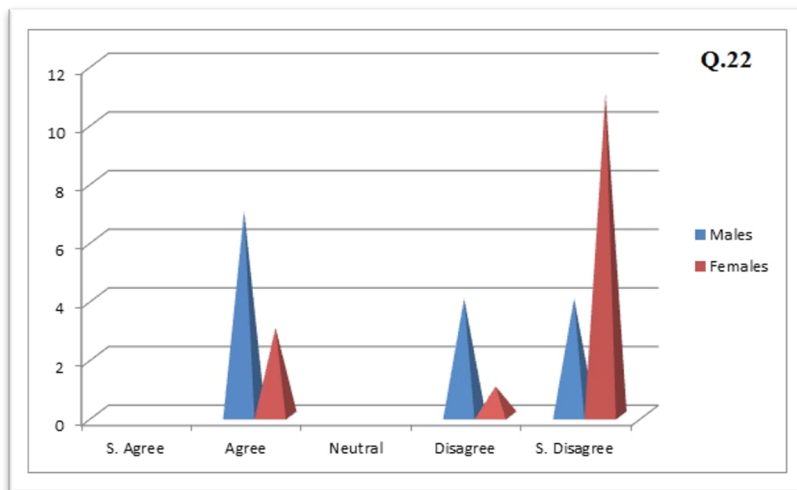
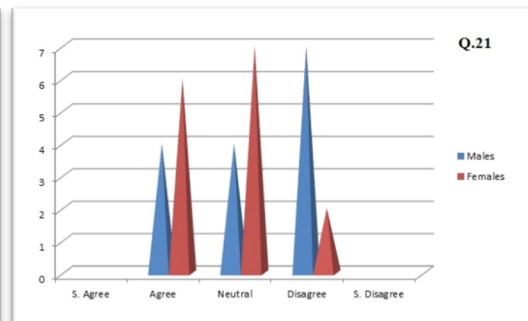
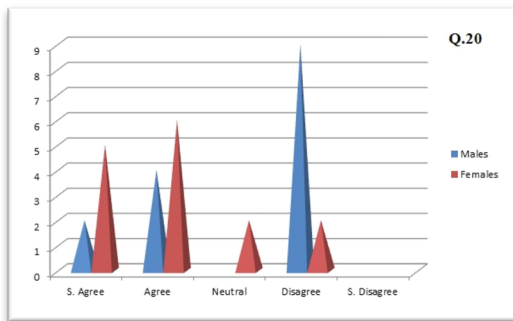
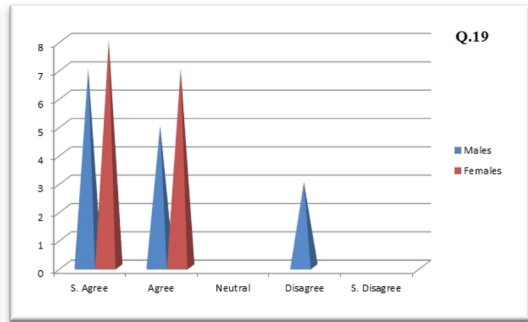
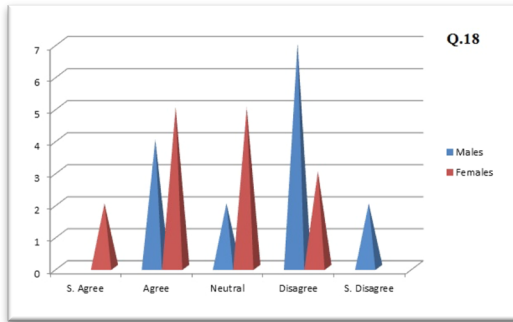
In the “Feminist Perspective” section we tried to gather views of respondents about how behaviors and roles of women may affect their families and society by asking some general questions and a couple of questions related to the storyline of the drama. Maximum number of respondents (86.7% and 60%; males and females respectively) agreed/strongly agreed that women should beware of other women as a woman could be a greater enemy of another woman. Most of the respondents who agreed that women beware women were males. Respondents who disagreed with this statement were very few; 1 male respondent strongly disagreed while 3 females disagreed with this statement. Maximum number of respondents (53.3% and 66.7%; males and females respectively) also believed that a woman’s jealousy and hatred can ruin a family or a generation, count of female respondents who agreed with this statement was comparatively higher as compared to male respondents.

When asked that either this drama has changed public perception and thought about the females, most of the male respondents (60%) came out with the opinion that this drama has not changed public perception about women while most of the female respondents (46.6%) believed that this drama played a vital role in changing public perception about women. This contradiction of opinion between male and female respondents emerged because of the fact that most of the males take TV dramas and movies just as an entertainment and time pass while females take these TV plays very seriously and try to apply these fictitious stories in the real-life situations. As a matter of fact, some of them also try to judge and compare their lives with the fake stories broadcasted by mass media. This practice of judging real life situation with fictitious stories has done nothing good to families and their peace but has created clashes and fights most of the time.

We go through the news every day about the brutality of males toward females. We cannot ignore the fact that the most of these males in newspapers are either illiterate or from a very ignorant family backgrounds and most of them belong to small towns or villages. It doesn’t mean that educated or highly educated males do not practice cruel behavior toward their families and particularly women but we can say that the ratio of educated males who raise their hands-on females is comparatively very low. Subjects were also asked about what they think about the statement that higher education of females is still not acceptable in our society by most of us. Most of the male respondents (60%) disagreed with this statement and believed that now higher education for women is accepted and appreciated while the count of males (40%) who believed that higher education for women is still not acceptable was not that low either. On the other hand, maximum count of female respondents (13.3%) believed that higher education for women is acceptable today and those who agreed with this statement were 11 (73.3%).

Most of the male respondents disagreed that Drama Serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” has portrayed a positive and strong side of female while most of the female respondents played it safe and preferred to stay neutral in this regard. If we count the responses from female subjects on the

scale of agreeing and disagreeing only then most of the female respondents agreed with the statement that this drama has portrayed a positive and strong side of female.

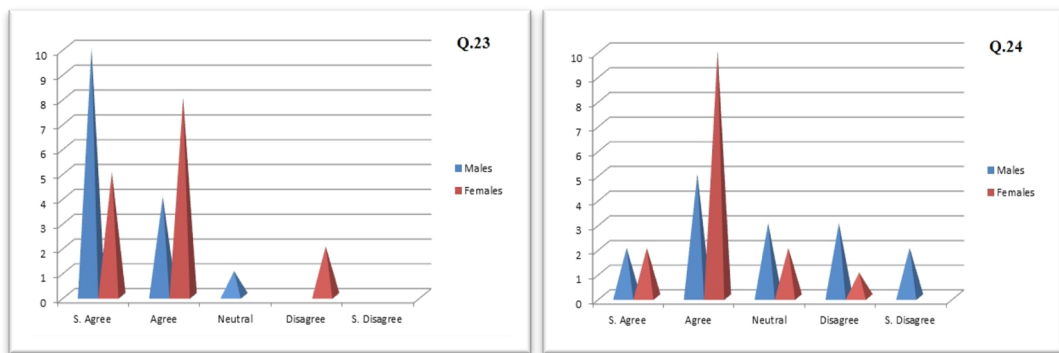


Section – VI

In this section, a couple of question related to religious issues were asked. First one was about what subjects think about raising hand on females (sister, daughter, wife etc.). They were given 5 options; a man can raise hand on a woman if she is found engaged in immoral activities, if she is characterless or if she is stubborn, fourth option was that a male can raise his hand for any of above-mentioned reasons and the last option was that a male should never raise his hand on a

female, under any circumstances. Most of the males (46.7%) said that a man should raise his hand on female if she is characterless while the males (26.7%) who said that a male should never raise his hand and the males (26.7%) who said that man has the liberty to raise hand in all mentioned situations were in the same ratio. On the other hand, maximum count of female subjects (73.3%) said that a male should never raise his hand on a female, 1 female subject (6.7%) was in favor that a male should raise his hand in all of the mentioned situations while 3 respondents (20%) agreed that a male should raise his hand only if a female is characterless.

When Saba was thrown out of the house she was forcefully married to a widowed and illiterate man with four children. Except 1 male respondent (6.7%), who was neutral, all others (93.3%) agreed/strongly agreed that the forceful marriage of Saba was wrong, in-fact maximum count of male subjects strongly agreed with this. Among female respondents, 2 disagreed (13.3%) that it was a wrong decision while all others (86.7%) agreed/strongly agreed that forceful marriage was not acceptable.



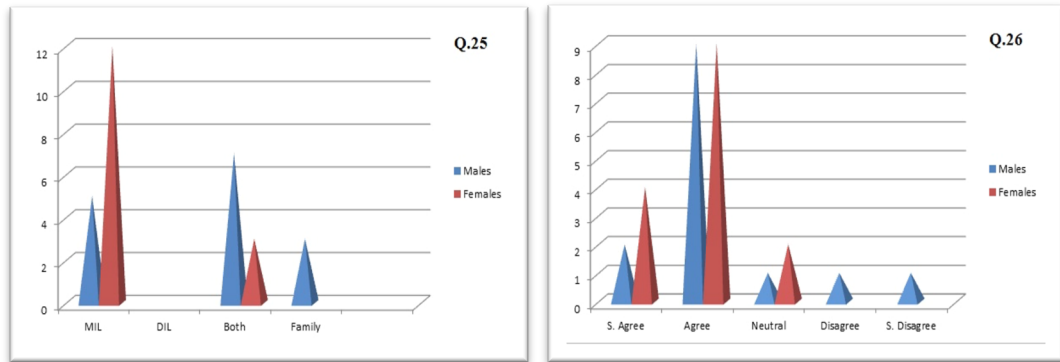
Section – VII

This was the last section of our questionnaire and it included the general thoughts of people regarding what is happening inside the domestic boundaries and who is responsible for what. Most of the male respondents (46.6%) agreed/strongly agreed that our media intentionally make TV dramas and plays in which mother-in-laws are portrayed cruel because this theme always get the higher TRPs and ratings. While maximum count of females agreed (80%) that media is intentionally broadcasting such plays and dramas.

When asked who is more responsible for the clashes in domestic boundaries, most of the male respondents (46.7%) said that both mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws are responsible for these clashes and fights. Maximum count of female respondents (80%) claimed that mother-in-laws are responsible for these fights and clashes, only 3 respondents (20%) were in the favor that both sides are equally responsible for the vice.

The respondents were also asked; do they really think that males can actually control these fights if they want. Maximum number of respondents (73.3% and 86.7%; males and females respectively) agreed/strongly agreed that males can control these fights. The male and female respondents who agreed with this statement were in the same ratio while on the whole the

females who agreed/strongly agreed with this statement were higher in number as compared to male respondents.



Conclusion

The core purpose and agenda of doing this study was to measure the authentication and reality of the degree to which females are portrayed through our media with the help of how females were portrayed in drama serial “Meri Zaat Zarra-e-Benishan” and to find out the extent to which this portrayal of females is close to reality of actual behaviors of males and society toward females. To meet this core purpose a survey research was conducted with help of a close ended questionnaire which was used as a tool for data collection from the sample of 30 individuals from different educational backgrounds and gender. Data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed on the basis of gender differentiation.

It was found that story line of the drama was liked by both male and female respondents almost equally and hence most of them rated the drama as a good one. People thought that this drama portrayed several social issues and ill-doings of our society but unnecessary and false swearing on Holy Quran and its consequences were portrayed in a best possible way. Today people have sense of understanding that one should fight for their right but on the other hand they also know respect of their Holy book, few respondents said that it was a wrong decision to not to swear on Quran when one is right and innocent but most of the responds believed that condemning the act of swearing on Quran by not swearing was the right thing to do. Most of us will believe and second that the swearing on Quran is a wrong thing to do and it should be eliminated but still it is a bitter reality in many real-life cases where people are ready to swear on Quran for no reason and for little things.

People opposed the act of raising hand on female in a greater ratio which was very positive; especially the response from the males was very unexpected and appreciable; opposing the act of raising hand on females. Most of the people believe in joint family system and in the concept of patriarchy where head of the family takes decisions for the whole family and people are expected to forget the mistakes of others and practicing forgiveness and to sacrifice their personal preferences for their family. According to the concept prevailing in the society, whatever happens

and however one is treated by their family, at the end it is mandatory for one to forgive them and to stay unite with them.

Whatever the status of a woman is and from whichever background she belongs we cannot ignore the fact that the jealousy and hatred among women for other women is a reality and it has always existed. Jealousy and hatred of a woman affects the family and their lives very badly because some females can go to any extent for taking revenge or for just satisfying their urge to prove them better as compared to her opponent (woman).

Maximum male viewers do not take TV dramas very seriously and watch these dramas just for getting some entertainment and for passing their leisure time. But female viewers most of the time are found very much engaged in TV dramas and it is a normal practice for them to compare their brothers, fathers, husbands and other males with the behavior of the male characters in fictitious TV dramas which ultimately result in higher level of dissatisfaction and clashes among family members. Women expect their husbands to treat their lady as Shahrukh Khan treated his lady in some XYZ movie, but the funny fact is Shahrukh Khan is paid multiple billions for treating his lady like a princess, while real life husbands and their situations are quite different from the movies and dramas. Exaggerated riches and luxuries lives portrayed by media has definitely done nothing positive about the image of female in the minds of people and society but it has played a definite role in raising the level of dissatisfaction among both male and female but this level of dissatisfaction is higher in females.

Higher education for females is appreciated and accepted by a lot of people now. The clear evidence for this is the comparatively higher number of female students now and the representation of females in almost all the available fields. Also, there are people who are in the favor of higher education but against co-education. We also have separate colleges, universities and professional institutions now. In villages and small towns maximum count of people is still against the higher education of female because they think that a female's duty is to manage her home after marriage and to cook food for other, hence there is no need for higher education and degrees.

Media plays an important role in how females are portrayed and how their image is constructed in the minds of the people and society. Most of the media channels have always presented and used females as a showpiece and as a tool for attracting viewers for gaining higher ratings and viewership. Others has portrayed females as vamps or a very weak personality with no power and her character do nothing in the drama but bears the brutality of others (mother-in-laws, husband, brother(s) or father) or they have to sacrifice their happiness and wills all the time. In real life situations relation between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law is not very friendly and exemplifying but we cannot ignore the fact here that even stories based on true incidents are always exaggerated by media.

Islam has given females liberty, respect and power of making decisions for their lives. If a female is not willing to marry a particular male, then no one is allowed to force her. Even if a female denies marrying at the time of Nikah she will not be found guilty for her act. Marriage is

a long-term and life-time deal; hence it should be carried out with the will of male and female. We should not ignore the fact that Islam strictly discourage and forbids pre-marital and extra-marital affairs, and these are one of the biggest sins to commit.

Media has portrayed several issues in different TV dramas but most of the time the lesson and story conveyed through TV dramas is a short-term memory for most of the males and they do not learn things from these dramas but prefer what they think by default and what their education level make them think i.e., they analyze what they see and hear in the light of their existing knowledge and ideologies. As far as the females are concerned, they take these dramas very intensively and try to apply these things in their real lives. Media cultivation level is higher in females as compared to males. It is claimed by many drama producers and actors that their drama helped in social learning in this way or that way. TV dramas may help in social learning of people to some extent but on larger perspective it is not possible for a fictitious TV drama to give and navigate the people towards social learning. Social learning is a natural and gradual process which comes with time through family, friends and the company one keeps.

Limitations

Due to the shortage of time, it was not possible to judge the thoughts and mindset of people on the basis of their education level. So, final decision was made to judge the respondents and their thoughts on the basis of their genders. Moreover, it was difficult to find out the viewers from lower education group with reasonable intellectual level for responding our questionnaire.

Future Possibilities

Intellectual level and thoughts of the people fluctuate with their educational level. If the following study and questionnaire will be committed and analyzed on the basis of education levels, we will come up with totally different and better results. Analysis on the basis of the education level could be the future dimension to proceed further with this research. Content analysis of TV Dramas made on different social and religious real-life issues, can be carried out to record and analyze the views of the people and society on those issues.

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