



Date of Receiving: 05.11.2024

Date of Publication: 10.01.2025

Media-Constructed Image of Female Rape Victims via Pakistani Drama Serials

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Abstract

Mass media plays a very significant role in bringing change into society, through its various genres, with dramas being one of the most vital categories. TV dramas have the potential to spark debate among its viewers about social and sensitive issues; rape is one of them. This research study analyzes the content of rape-themed dramas on Pakistani private entertainment channels (ARY Digital Network and HUM TV), to examine the projection of rape and rape victims in the storyline of their prime-time dramas. The drama serials from each channel were selected as sample based on content via purposive sampling. This study examines the content of two rape-themed drama serials: “Akhir Kab Tak” of HUM TV and “Ruswae” of ARY Digital Network, using feminist media theory to examine the portrayal of rape incidents and victims. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the representation of rape incidents and victims in dramas, guiding stakeholders to create content that shapes the audience's perception of victims in a more sensible and responsible manner.

Keywords: *Discourse analysis, Feminist media theory, Media representation, Pakistani dramas, Rape victims*

Introduction

Television is one of the most influential forms of mass media, as it possesses more influence over the minds of its audience as compared to newspapers and magazines due to its visual story-telling technique. It endeavours to have a significant and persistent effect on the mass audience because of its opinion-forming character (Juni, Kareem, Alam, Haider, & Ashraf, 2014). It constructs the image and builds perception of its audience about the event, social issue and happening by showcasing it in its content.

Television plays its vital functions by means of vast types of programs, and among different sorts of programs TV dramas are the most remarkable due to their attractive and relatable content with the viewers. Pakistani dramas are the most popular mode of entertainment among viewers. Its content primarily revolves around women, their gender roles and issue. Due to the shift of consumer behavior, the drama content also evolves from in-laws' issue, sister rivalry or love stories to progressive or reformist female characters and gender-responsive content (Safdar & Khan, 2020).

Due to its mass audience and perception-building role, it plays an important role in discussing the gender sensitive and taboo subjects in a very captivating manner that can help to vanish the decades old myths about women and gender-based violence. GBV is the violence and mistreatment that women face in the society solely due to their gender.

It includes physical, mental, and emotional torture. As the UN reports, six out of ten women face violence (both sexual and physical) in their lifetime (UN women, 2019).

Rape is a taboo subject for discussion in Pakistani society due to cultural and societal pressure. Drama serials that are based on rape themes can uplift public discussion and participation on taboo subjects. It can also question traditional norms and values. This study examines how rape theme dramas illustrate rape and rape victims in their storylines, as they possess the opinion-building and opinion-altering power that construct the image of rape incidents among viewers.

Literature Review

The portrayal of rape and rape victims in the media has been a subject of critical analysis because of the potential impact of the media on communal perspectives and perceptions. Pakistani dramas, as a compelling part of mass media, play an important role in educating public about sensitive issues. This literature review aims to explore the portrayal of rape and rape victims in Pakistani dramas, considering its implications for cultural norms, audience perceptions, and the broader discourse.

Drama as the component of television world that introduce latest trends and fashion in the society. In the world of television, the drama has brought modern trends and styles that are unprecedented. It occupies contemporary stories to tell people that have a great impact on them (Krasner, 2016).

In Pakistani drama industry, the storyline of mostly drama serials is based on the sensitive topics and social issues. The nature of Pakistani drama serials is contradictory than the western style, due to the different psyche of the Pakistani audience. Pakistani dramas adopt the emotional approach to establish strong connection with the audience (Anjum, 2014).

The TV dramas are the mirror of the society, it shows the happening of reality in their storyline by spicing up the context. The researchers find out that the Pakistani dramas, reinforce the traditional gender-specific roles in their storylines and act as a reflection of society (Khan & Ahmad, 2019).

Rape is tremendously an underreporting offense due to the stigmatization of the victim. Rape victims prefer silence over asking for justice by society and law enforcement due to the dread of lifelong humiliation by society and even the family. This stigma is based on the roots of patriarchal system and institutional sexism, where the honor of family (specifically of male figures) revolves around the woman's body (Shadma, 2016). Rape

myths refer to the erroneous stereotypical beliefs and assumptions about forced sexual intercourse or rape, rape victims and preparators of such incidents. These myths not only dispirit the victim, but also favor the criminal. It fundamentally shifts the blame of crime from rapists to the victims (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

The narrative linked to the projection of rape victims in drama requires special attention. Some dramas portray the victim as a weak and subordinate character and force the victim to prefer silence over justice in their storyline, while others portray the victim as a survivor who seeks justice and acts as a role model for others.

Rape like sensitive topics need responsible coverage, because the opinion of the media feeds the perception of the audience. But the patriarchal society includes male dominant departments and lack of Journalism ethics build loopholes in the coverage that leads towards the victim blaming a patriarchal society, male-dominated institutions and lack of journalism ethics lead to loopholes in covering sensitive topics (Amina, 2021).

As Barton, conducted research to find out the way media represents gender-based violence to its audience. The result of study shows that media sensationalized sensitive topics for the sake of their higher viewership and high rating. The irrelevant and emotional coverage have nothing to with the facts of incident and it didn't help in securing the justice and promote victim shaming (Barton, 2017)

Similarly, research was conducted to find out the relation between media coverage and number of sexual assault cases titled as, "Does Rape Culture Predict Rape? The study found that there is more occurrence of rape in communities where media keeps the rape culture alive. The researchers find a correlation between media coverage and a constant increase in sexual abuse incidents. The researchers also point out four components that are characteristics of rape culture implying survivor's consent, questioning the credibility of victim, victim blaming and empathy for the accused (Cohen, Zhukov, & Baum, 2018)

The researchers analyzed Pakistani prime-time dramas to examine the depiction of women's sexual assault in their content, and the results show that women are projected as victims of male misdemeanors. The dramas also show that women are dependent on male figures even for the sake of justice (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2010).

Similarly, researchers analyzed the content of famous Pakistani dramas and concluded that some dramas keenly discussed rape as a sensitive issue, and some dramas were reluctant in addressing such issues due to cultural sensitivity, emphasising the need for a balanced approach in addressing such narratives (Jamal & Haq, 2021). In similar

fashion, Malik and Khan explored how viewers interpret these portrayals and found that such projections encourage public discussions about victimhood that can challenge decades-old societal norms (Malik & Khan, 2022).

Likewise, Sehriban analyzed the content of highly rated Turkish drama serials (rape themed) and reach at the conclusion that drama serials play both positive and negative in formulating the perception of the audience about rape incidents, rape victims and rape myths. Drama serials promote hegemonic masculinity and take violence as a significantly male dominated activity. The dramas clearly straddle a line between “Good girl” and “Bad girl”. A girl subordinate to his family ready to sacrifice herself for the honor of her family and fit in the scale of marriageable (free from the evil of rape) is considered as a good girl. Dramas shows that rape of a woman is directly related to the honor of her family (Sheriban, 2019).

In the same way, Anam finds out from the selected sample of drama serials that 57% of the seven drama serials shows that the victims forgave their oppressors, while 43% shows retaliation. The reason that enforces silence over justice is the societal pressure of acceptance, rape as the disgrace for the victims and rejection from their families, as the serials shows rejection of families to accept their raped (dishonored) women to restore their lost honor (Anam, 2019).

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the depiction of rape victims in prime-time dramas on ARY Digital Network.
- ii. To evaluate the latest trend of rape victims and incidents in prime-time dramas of HUM TV.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does the ARY Digital Network portray the rape incidents and rape victims in the storylines of their dramas?

RQ2: How do the dramas on HUM TV present rape and rape victims?

Theoretical foundations

The theoretical foundation gives a structure of concepts and theories that help the researcher to find the right pathway for research. The theory relevant to the topic provides a strong foundation to the research and guides the researcher to analyze and investigate the topic. The feminist media theory originated in mass media as a response in opposition to the exploitation of women in patriarchal society. Their primary aim is to raise voices against the stereotypical projection of women in mass media (Samia &

Ayesha, 2022). The feminist media theory is based on the concepts, views, philosophies, and principles of feminism (Linda, 2014).

Likewise, MacKinnon in his research considers rape as a form of violence against women committed by men to suppress the identity of women (MacKinnon, 1989). The basic focus of radical feminism is to highlight the stereotypical gender role of women that is assigned to them in society by male supremacy. Radical feminism considers rape an act to strengthen patriarchal society (Projansky, 2001). Radical Feminism views rape as a product of patriarchal systems that formulate gender roles and reinforce male-oriented social systems. It highlights the oppression of women and criticizes the media for promoting the patriarchal system.

The postulates of feminist media theory are employed in this study because it is crucial to analyze how dramas represent rape and rape victims in their storylines, as the number of rape cases is constantly increasing, and it is incredibly crucial to do so through a feminist lens that highlight deep down engraved message in the content, because the way media portrays any issue influences thinking process of people and society.

Research Methodology

The methodology adapts for the study leads research process and helps to collect and analyze relevant data. The methodology of the research being conducted would be a qualitative content analysis of two highly rated entertainment networks' (HUM and ARY) dramas. The sample was selected based on the content (rape theme).

Content analysis is a commonly used research methodology that helps the researcher to examine or analyze the content. The content can be in the form of symbols, images, words, or audio data (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017). This research has employed the technique of content analysis to examine how HUM TV and ARY Digital Network portray rape and rape victims in their storylines.

Population and Sample

This study is restricted to the rape theme dramas to fulfil the objectives of the research. The population of this research is all rape-themed dramas on private entertainment channels in Pakistan. The sample selected by means of purposive sampling includes the two most viewed entertainment channels of Pakistan i.e., HUM TV and ARY Digital Network. The drama serial from both channels were also selected based on purposive sampling (the prime-time dramas based on the story of rape and rape victims). The dramas are as follows, "Akhir Kab Tak" by Radain Shah of HUM TV and "Ruswae" of ARY

Digital Network, written by Naiks Ansari. The unit of analysis for this research is the episode of the selected sample, Ruswae of ARY Digital Network and Akhir Kab Tak of HUM TV.

Analysis and Interpretation

Storyline of Ruswae

The first drama serial selected based on purposive sampling is "Ruswae" of ARY Digital Network (2019-2020), written by Naila Ansari and directed by Rubina Ashraf. The main character of the drama serial "Ruswae" is Sameera, a rape victim, and a major plot revolves around her family and her husband Salman's family with the entry of Dr. Firoz (Sameera's senior and her well wisher).

The story unfolds with the entry of passionate doctor Sameera and her love story with Salman, a pilot. There is a little twist in the story that Sameera's brother Hamza is in Nikkah with Salman's sister Warda. Salman's mother is not in favor of their marriage due to their class difference. But after some arguments, Sameera gets Nikkahfied with Salman, and after their Nikkah, she goes for dinner with her brother Hamza, Warda, and her father. After dinner, Warda, Sameera, and her father wait for Hamza, who forgets his phone in the restaurant. Meanwhile, a group of drunk men were standing outside the restaurant. They were discussing how today's girls consider themselves superior and reject them. The thought of rejection makes them angry, and they decide to take revenge by physically assaulting girls and labeling it as "Niyat kharab hogae thi", and as male they can't control their natural desire.

While discussing all this, they have an eye on both Sameera and Warda, who are waiting outside the restaurant for Hamza. That group of drunks come close to them and start dragging them into the car. Unfortunately, they haul Sameera in the car. But Warda managed to escape as Sameera's father protected Warda over Sameera. When Hamza came it was too late, they already took Sameera, in coming scenes Hamza forces his parents to file a complaint, his mother also pressurizes his father, but he refuses their request to avoid embarrassment, and due to the fear of society.

Episode 5 starts with the sun rise, and then the camera pans over unconscious Sameera, torn clothes, bruises all over her body and bleeding wounds body lay on the beach and not in state to face the people gathering around her. A woman from the group comes forward, covers her body with a scarf and takes Sameera to her house. The episode shows as the days pass, Samera's trauma highs, she even fulminates her father for choosing Warda over her. When Salman's family came to know about the incident, they

visits Sameera, but Salman refuses to meet her, as he is in denial phase about the rape of his wife.

As time passes, Salman decides to meet Sameera. On his visit, he pressurizes her to not file a complaint in the name of family honor. In the next episodes, story moves ahead as both Warda and Sameera move with their in-laws. As Sameera was still in the shock of rape incident, she avoids intimacy with Salman, and it troubles him. He forces Sameera to simply quit her job and gives time to him and his family, and she agrees. But Dr. Firoz doesn't accept her resignation and tells her she is a survivor who survived the incident, not a victim.

On the other hand, story unfolds with Salman being not supportive and toxic, who beats Sameera severely. Even she is unable to move herself. Her mother and sister came to see her and were shocked to see her horrible condition. They bring her to the hospital. Sameera insists on taking her home with them, she cries a lot, but her mother still drops her to her in-laws. Hamza, her brother, is unaware of what is happening to his sister living a happy life with his Warda and is going to start his family, as Warda is expecting. After some time, he learns about Sameera and he brings her to his house, irrespective of their parents' refusal.

While in next scenes, Salman was shown being involved in an extramarital affair with his friend Pinky. Sameera starts working again in the hospital and Dr. Firoz supports her in her decision and appreciates her for being strong. As time passes, he feels soft corner for Sameera. Salman got married to Pinky in an intimate family function, Warda attended the function without informing Hamza, but she caught red handed as Rohina (Sameera's sister) sees wedding pictures on her phone. Due to ill treatment of Salman with Sameera, his second marriage and feeling of guilt to not save her daughter, Sameera's father being not mentally stable, dies in a car crash.

After all this, Hamza sent Warda back to her house. But Pinky mistreats her. The scenes show that all these events cause mental breakdown to Warda, but Sameera takes stands for her and tells her brother and mother to bring Warda back to their house. Sameera takes good care of Warda. The story moves ahead by showing Salman realizes he made a mistake by proffering Pinky over Sameera, his mother also feels about her behavior with Sameera, Hamza brings back Warda to his home.

The legal trial of Sameera's case starts, upon Sameera complaint, Salman came to know that those rapists are dangerous, he tries to warn her, but she refuses. And suddenly one from rapists try to shoot her, but Salman gets shot. Police officers kill the rapist on the

spot. The drama ends with showing as few years pass, Sameera finally wins a battle against rapists, married to Dr. Firoz. In the final scene, Mukhtaran Mai, a real survivor of gang rape, walks in and congratulates Sameera on her victory.

Storyline of drama serial Akhir kab tak

Akhir Kab Tak (2021), written by Radain Shah, directed by Syed Ali Raza of Hum TV Network is the second drama selected for this research. This drama is the tale of two sisters, Fajar and Noor, consisting of 32 episodes. Fajar is a shy, weak, and hesitant girl, who later become rape victim by her academy teacher (Sir Zafar), because she is the easy and most vulnerable one. While Noor is strong ready to face the world. Their family have deep rooted patriarchal system, where females are inferior. Both sisters observe domestic violence in their childhood, which becomes the major reason for Fajar's traumatic personality. The drama shows the female harassment at home by their close family member, as the main lead harassed by her uncle's son Bisam. He harassed Fajar, because he knows that everyone loves him because he is the only male inheritor of this house, and nobody loves and believe Fajar.

The story unfolds as Fajar and Noor join tuition center, unaware that their teacher, Sir Zafar, is a womanizer. He realizes that Fajar is an easy target for him. At first, he makes her comfortable with him by showing extra care and later calls her on an off day for extra class. Unfortunately, unaware of his intentions Fajar becomes his victim, he raped her and filmed her. This incident completely shatters her. Somehow, as time passes, Fajar learns about the incident, he visits tuition center and beat Sir Zafar. Their mother overhears their conversation and pressurizes them to stay silent, otherwise their father will kill them. The story moves with the marriage of Fajar with Saim, a kind and loving man. He supports Fajar and respects her denial in intimacy.

Meanwhile, their father becomes paralyzed. But as Noor is strong, she manages his business very well, even by facing numerous challenges because labor is not willing to work under the supervision of female, as male dominated society doesn't accept female lead. During this phase, a new hero Nasir (police officer) enters in Noor's life. He has his own rules and ways to settle this ruthless world. He falls for her and uses many right or wrong means to impress her.

In Fajar's storyline, her mother-in-law is not happy with her strange behavior. She forces her son Saim to remarry and starts his new family, but he refuses. And bring Fajar to therapy sessions for her recovery. Saim advised Fajar to stay at her mother's home until term between her and his mother become normal. With the passage of time, Fajar's

condition improves, and she starts trusting men, just due to the constant support of Saim.

The story moves ahead as Bisam harasses Fajar's mother in dark thinking she is Fajar. She realized that Fajar was right all that time about Bisam, but she didn't trust her. And then she beat him well. Nasir arrests Bisam under the case of harassment. The story progresses with Fajar's well-being and acceptance of married life with Saim. She starts a new, happy life with Saim. However, the tragic entry of Zafar creates a new twist in the plot. He is Saim's cousin; he again harassed her and threatened her to leak her video which will affect her relationship with Saim. Noor came to know about Zafar, she scolds him well. She advised Fajar to talk to Saim about all this, but Fajar doesn't want to lose Saim at any cost. Due to so much pressure, she commits suicide.

After Fajar's suicide, Zafar hides himself. Nasir tried his best to find him but failed. Eventually, Zafar surrenders himself in front of court. But the case against him is weak, due to lack of evidence. But case flips as his ex-wife appears and gives evidence of his action. During this scene, Fajar makes a dramatic entry in the court, revealing her death was a lie, she gives the video evidence to the court against Zafar. He is declared guilty, fined five million, and sentenced to lifetime imprisonment by the court.

The final scenes are very emotionally strong, and thought provoking as Fajar is giving session to girls about staying silent on any type of harassment is not a solution. It makes rapists or harassers stronger. Noor advises girls to speak out against injustice, emphasizing that staying silent is not a solution.

Discussion and Findings

Character of a Rape Victim

In the drama serial *Ruswae*, the rape victim (Sameera) is a strong, confident doctor who knows how to take stand for her. But after becoming the victim of gang rape, her confidence shatters completely. It delves into the emotional journey of the survivor, highlighting the internal struggles of the rape victim, who later collects strength and stands against everybody to seek justice for herself.

The drama serial "Aakhir Kab Tak" shows a rape victim (Fajar) with a very weak character because she has observed domestic violence since childhood, which shatters her confidence, due to which she becomes an easy target for rape by her teacher. But as the story develops, she undergoes many therapy sessions, and with the support of her husband and family, she becomes determined to seek justice.

Patriarchal Culture and Family Dynamics

The drama serial selected as a sample sheds light on how families react to the rape incident and deals with the trauma of survivors. Both serials also show a strong, deep-rooted patriarchal culture in our family system. In the drama serial "Ruswae" of ARY Digital Network, the reaction of the family towards victim is weird, irrespective of their link with a qualified class. They even forced her to forget about the incident and live a normal married life. Her in-laws mistreat her, blame her for the rape incident, while ignoring the fact that this incident can be happen with their daughter too as she was also with Sameera, at that time. Her husband emotionally and physically abuses her, cheats on her with his friend. The husband's rude, supercilious, and inhuman behavior with Sameera (rape victim), clearly shows how the patriarchal culture undermines in family dynamics and reflects itself. "Ruswae" projects victim blaming within families, with the survivor facing rejection from their loved ones.

On the other side, "Akhir Kab Tak" portrays a family with rigid patriarchal foundations, where the victim prefers silence over sharing her trauma with them. It also displays that the childhood traumas due to patriarchal culture influence the psychological and emotional upbringing that completely alter the personality of an individual, and in such cases, the rape victims survive more. As the story moves forward, the victim's family supports her pursuit of justice, demonstrating a shift towards a more supportive family.

Victim Silencing and Shaming

The drama serial "Akhir Kab Tak" of HUM TV also demonstrates victim silencing and shaming in the story of a rape victim. The drama shows how societal norms and family pressurize the victim to stay silent to keep her dignity. Because if society gets to know about the rape incident, they'll treat her like an unusual creature, due to which the rape victim will never lead a normal life. Victim silence and shaming move parallel, as to avoid shame, the survivor needs to stay silent, and the drama enforces this concept by showing a mother who constantly forces her daughter (Fajar- rape victim) to stay silent because if people get to know about the incident, they'll mistreat her.

"Ruswae" shows traditional victim silencing and shaming through the storyline. The family of the victim forces her to stay silent for the dignity of her family, because if people get to know about it, there will be no good marriage proposals for her younger sister in the future. The rape victim's family and in-laws constantly build pressure on Sameera (the rape victim) to prefer silence over justice. The drama serial also highlights victim shaming and shows that the pathway to justice is not an easy task because people

and even the family of the rape victim make her believe that the victim is responsible for the incident based on time, dress, and profession.

Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity exists in the male dominated society. It is also a contributing factor that leads to the rape incident and later acts as a hurdle in the way of justice. Sameera (rape victim) in the drama serial “Ruswae” becomes rape victim because some drunk males want to take revenge from females and make them learn a lesson that women are inferior, so they should remain in their limits and also, they have no right to reject male or even say no to them. Later, other male figures use their toxic masculinity to shut her.

“Akhir Kab Tak” also focused on the concept of Toxic Masculinity, where male figures show physical dominance over females. The rapist (Zafar) uses his physical strength to rape Fajar, and later he threatens her to leak her video, if she tells anyone about the rape incident. But as the story moves, the storyline uses a positive approach and shatters the concept of toxic masculinity to suppress women in a male dominated society. It shows the importance of supportive male figures in the society, that support victim, not embarrass and make her feel confident again. Her husband understands her, gives tremendous support throughout her journey.

Legal and Social Challenge

“Ruswae” of ARY Digital Network showcase the negative societal attitude towards rape victims and how survivors must win two battles, one from their trauma and another from society, to get justice. It also reveals the obstacles beyond the legal framework, as DIG is advising Sameera (rape victim) to stay silent and close the case because the police department has not enough strength to act against rapists. “Akhir Kab Tak” of HUM TV underscores the hurdles faced by survivors while navigating a patriarchal legal system, highlighting systematic challenges.

Rape Myths

“Akhir Kab Tak” shatters many rape myths: victims can't lead a happily married life, rapists are strangers, dressing of victim provokes, no family support and specially the myth that most rape incidents happen at night. The drama serial uses a very positive approach to shatter decades old myths by showing supportive husband.

“Ruswae” justified the common rape myths about the victim: bold, independent and working women become the target of rape incidents, especially if the woman is outside at night without any protection of the strong male is an easy target. Later, the mother of

the rape victim (Sameera) tried to protect her younger daughter by covering her and forcing her to stay at home. All these Myths exist in society and justifies them.

RQ1: How does the ARY Digital Network portray the rape incidents and rape victims in the storylines of their dramas?

The drama serial "Ruswae" of ARY Digital Networks portrays the story of a rape victim, Sameera, as a strong woman who has the courage to stand up for herself after experiencing the traumatic event of rape. Despite lacking support from her family and husband, she seeks justice.

The drama serial solidifies the narrative that a rape victim has barely any support. A similar thing happens to Sameera in the drama. She does not have any solid support in the form of his loved ones even. This drama also highlights various aspects of rape culture, including toxic masculinity, as exemplified by her husband, who forces her to remain silent. Due to her traumatic experience and lack of interest in intimacy, he pursues extramarital affairs. The drama further explores victim silencing and shaming, as Sameera's family members, including her father, pressure her to remain silent by emotionally manipulating her. Traditional victim silencing and victim shaming can be seen in the drama serial. Sameera has also faced resistance from her family on speaking up the incident. She has also faced victim shaming and victim blaming from her relatives and people around make herself responsible for everything. Likewise, a rape victim in our society (which is a male dominant and patriarchal society) people mostly seem blaming a victim rather looking at the other aspects.

The drama has also justified some myths regarding a rape victim and its surroundings. For example, a rape victim barely has any support same is the case in the drama serial. One of the major myths regarding the rape victim is that mostly bold and working woman become a victim of such cruelty the possibility enhances if it is a working woman who works at night. In the same way, drama serial has also shown that after Sameera's incident her younger sister was advised to stay at home and if she has to leave the house, she needs to fully cover her body, and a male figure must be with her. These are those myths that are prevailing in our society. Thus, the drama serial is based on the convictions and myths that are associated with the rape victim. Nevertheless, these myths exist in the society, and drama serial justifies them.

The storyline demonstrates how societal norms, and patriarchal values contribute to the victim's suffering. Other factors that initiate the rape incident in the drama include the vulnerable night-time presence of a female outside her home, lack of strong male

support, the victim's strong and courageous nature perceived as a threat to male ego, and drugs and alcohol consumption. Ultimately, the drama serial aims to raise awareness about rape culture and challenge societal norms that perpetuate it.

RQ2: How do the dramas on HUM TV present rape and rape victims?

The drama serial "Akhir kab Tak" of HUM TV dramas portrays rape victims and rape incidents in a very challenging way. HUM TV drama serial "Akhir Kab Tak" portrays rape and rape victims in a nuanced and supportive light. The storyline follows Fajar, a rape victim who suffers hardships but also receives tremendous emotional support from her husband, Saim, and sister, Noor. This highlights the need of emotional support in the life of a rape victim in terms of family support to tackle with this incident. The drama highlights the need for family support, challenges toxic masculinity, victim silencing, and patriarchal influence, and showcases the emotional and psychological trauma faced by rape victims. Fajar's character evolves from a traumatized victim to a strong and confident individual.

The drama serial has touched the aspect of Toxic Masculinity in which a man shows his psychological and physical dominance over a female. Zafar (the rapist) uses his masculinity to silence Fajar (the victim). He threatens her if she opens her mouth, he will leak her videos that delivers the indicator of persuasive patriarchal influence where a woman loses her dignity by becoming the victim of a crime and worse is that her family will also lose respect if people get to know about the incident.

Another aspect that drama serial has involved is victim silencing. It can be seen in the drama serial that Fajar's mother and her friend (Bushra) continuously try to seal the lips of the victim. Fajar's mother wants her to remain silent on what has happened to her. Drama serial has also shown that a rape victim passes through various emotional traumas and psychological ups and downs. Fajar has passed through mental stress, fear and complexity after she encountered one of the worst experiences of her life. She has taken a long time to convalesce from these traumas.

The drama also breaks common myths surrounding rape victims, depicting Fajar's happy married life, the rapist as a known and respected individual, and the importance of legal action and justice. Additionally, the drama portrays male characters in a supportive and sympathetic way. The drama serial has exhibited male as a supportive and sympathetic character. Fajar enjoys one of the biggest supports in the character of her husband. In the same way, the police officer (Nasir) seems also concerned. Furthermore, the serial emphasizes the importance of speaking out against injustice,

seeking help, and promoting a culture of support and empathy for survivors of sexual violence.

Conclusion

This research was an attempt to examine the rape-theme based drama content of Pakistani entertainment channels, specifically HUM TV and ARY Digital Network. According to the findings obtained by analyzing each episode of both drama serials, their primary focus is to display the troublesome emotional journey of a rape victim in patriarchal culture. “Akhir Kab Tak” of HUM TV projects the need of moral support for rape victims in the form of a supportive husband and family that gives confidence to the victim. It projects that rape is a crime and rapists need to receive punishment, while victims need support for justice, not sympathies to stay silent. “Ruswae” of ARY Digital Network projects traditional attitude towards rape victims of our society, no emotional support, alien treatment, victim blaming and shaming. Its episodes are full of stereotypical behavior of society, emotional trauma of rape victim and weak legal system. Drama serials, due to their captivating storylines have the potential to challenge exiting stereotypes, as “Akhir Kab Tak” challenge toxic masculinity and promote the supporting family environment, and “Ruswae” show that a woman is not weak and inferior, she has the potency to challenge the entire system for justice.

Suggestions for Future Research

- i. The research can be expanded in future by inculcating more rape-theme dramas from different entertainment channels.
- ii. This research could be done to know audience perception about Pakistani rape theme dramas by employing survey or focus group methodology.
- iii. This research could be expanded more by using quantitative approachh.

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