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## Female's Objectification in Media: A Qualitative Analysis of Pakistani Dramas

**Abstract:** *The present study aims to explore how females are objectified in the Urdu dramas of Pakistan. Moreover, it is investigated what issues related to females are mostly presented in Pakistani dramas. Previous literature mainly focused on the portrayal of females in television advertisements. However, the present study explores the phenomenon from a qualitative perspective. The population of the current study includes Urdu dramas shown During prime hours on Pakistani networks. Six popular dramas were chosen for the qualitative study. The primary goal of the research was to investigate how Pakistani Urdu dramas objectify women. In this regard, a thematic analysis of female characters in Pakistani Urdu dramas is conducted. This study found that females are objectified through their outfits, roles, expressions, physical appearances, camera angling, dialogues, and bold scenes. Moreover, the study observed the following issues highlighted by Pakistani dramas such as domestic conflicts, social media scandals, female marriage problems, remarriage issues, and domestic violence.*

**Key Words:** Female Objectification, Sexual Objectification, Social Issues, Media, Creature, The Portrayal of Women, Thematic Analysis

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### Introduction

Nowadays electronic media's prime focus is providing entertainment to its viewers. Particularly, in Pakistan Urdu dramas are very popular for several decades. Since 1964, when Pakistan had only one channel named "PTV",

it had presented phenomenal Urdu plays which got popularity not only in the country but outside the country as well. After 2000, there was a boom in the Pakistani electronic media industry and there were dozens of new channels started that provided information,

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education, and entertainment to its viewers. Drama is a significant player in Pakistan's media landscape. People's brains are suddenly affected by the Pakistani theatrical industry. The most well-known Pakistani channels presented excellent dramas highlighting various social issues and problems. Mostly, dramas show Pakistani domestic culture, female issues, and other social problems but sometimes, they highlight extramarital affairs and romance through a modernized lens of objectification of women. The effect is evident in the way that characters' lifestyles, attire, diets, languages, traditional rituals, and religious beliefs are expressed in today's dramas. Modern life's new trends, attitudes, habits, and values are now being introduced by the media, and this has had a significant impact on society. According to [Lane](#) (2007), culture is a complex system that consists of information, practices, beliefs, and laws, as well as other skills and habits that a person has developed as a part of the community.

In general, watching television is seen to produce social forces that have an undeniable impact. Notwithstanding television's biased approach to news, talk shows, and other current affairs programming, the general people, particularly ladies, and children, like it simply for the fun it offers. Entertainment programming makes up a significant portion of everyday television broadcasts and draws viewers' fascination, interest, and undivided attention. We may argue that whatever impacts television is able to make are a result of the numerous drama serials and series, movies, musical productions, etc. that are shown on television every day. [Zubari](#) (1992).

In the early history of Pakistani drama, there were primarily two topics to discuss: the plot and the performance. But, since 2000, with the rise plays have changed dramatically as a result of the rise of capitalism and the commercialization of privatized channels... General Pervaiz Musharraf expanded media in Pakistan in 2002, opening the country's media to new ideas and modernism [Gul](#), (2017). In the past, women dominated commercials and movies by demonstrating their cultural influences, but

now they are focusing on the glamour industry. Advertising conveys not only current events but also a bright view of the world, which is not always joyful and welcoming ([Zawisza](#), 2019). Gender stereotypes about how ideal men and women should behave in society, as well as unrealistic expectations from one gender, are formed as a result of gender roles. Previous research found that women are stereotyped in domestic chores and surroundings. [Zawisza](#) (2018) highlighted decorative roles, and [Grau](#) (2003) underlined women's subservient mentality, which is also communicated through nonverbal signs (Lin, 1979).

The present research will assist in determining the nature of Pakistani dramas, as well as the consequences of modernity as they are portrayed in female characters in Pakistani plays. This research is useful in guiding those who are becoming inspired by modernity and female objectification and adhering to Western society's culture in the proper direction. Realizing the value of ethics and religion, which the younger generation lacks, will also be beneficial.

[Wilde](#) (2020) narrated that the objectification of women supports patriarchy, which regards women as objects whose bodies are intended to please and attract males in particular. When young girls have seen marketing items, it is considered that they are more concerned with their attractive and appealing body attributes than with selling the product. [Chevallereau](#) (2012) argued that advertisements which entice women to seek psychological disorders rely on self-surveillance and self-objectification. Several studies have revealed that women are more likely than men to suffer from psychological disorders such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and severe depression.

## Literature Review

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[Abrar-ul-Haq](#) (2016) commented that according to feminist literature, a job opportunity for women is a ticket to empowerment. Although education and work have been regarded as significant markers of

empowerment, women in Pakistan lack access to these possibilities, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, Yasmine (2014) noticed that women's literacy rates are lower than men's, and women's literacy rates are lower in rural areas than in metropolitan areas. Male enrollment in Pakistan is great; yet, women are less educated than men. Razana, (2017). Due to a lack of social standards and education in rural areas, women in Pakistan are unable to start their own businesses. Ahmed (2010) discovered that the media has been ineffective in attracting attention to this vital issue when they evaluated the coverage of street harassment in two of Bangladesh's top newspapers.

Likewise, [Shabir](#) (2013) on the Pakistani TV station there was discussion about the cultural impact of Urdu drama on women. Researchers looked at how closely our culture and customs were mirrored by the promotion of Urdu play in Pakistani society, and they were interested in learning more about the drama on Pakistani Channels. Their study demonstrates that women were influenced by the dramas on Pakistani channels. And they imitate the fashions portrayed by the actors in these dramas. Both networks have demonstrated the best venues for cross-cultural dialogue. Similarly, to this, [Brown](#) and Singhal (1993) concentrated on the moral dilemma raised by using entertainment television to promote pro-social behaviour. As TV audiences increase, entertaining television is gradually displacing educational television. Television was first introduced in India to teach people, however as time passed, television entertainment surpassed instructional objectives. Television shifted its emphasis from pro-social programming to capturing the interest of the public. As a result, the TV audience was exposed to a variety of information, including an antisocial presentation.

The anti-social repercussions of these television series are currently being studied by researchers. The investigation uncovers four distinct study strains that appear to be linked to the detrimental effects of antisocial television. First, consider the negative

implications of television violence, followed by the effects of health-related fake content advertising. Finally, television's erroneous portrayal of interpersonal and societal connections places a disparaging emphasis on pictures of women and children. [Tariq](#) (2005) also discovered that Pakistani culture is widely featured in Pakistani television programs. According to Juni, Kareem, and Alam's (2014) survey research study, the majority of respondents choose to watch Urdu Dramas on Pakistani electronic media during the evening hours for entertainment, even though the modern clothing style reflected in the plays has an impact on the users' local culture.

The ethical conundrum associated with using entertainment television to promote social development was the topic of Brown & Singhal's (1993) study. As the number of people watching television rises, entertaining television is quickly replacing instructional television. In India, television was first only used to inform the public, but as time went on, entertaining programming replaced instructional content. Television shifted away from emphasizing pro-social programs in favour of gaining viewers' attention. This gave rise to a variety of television programming, including antisocial programs. So, researchers began concentrating on these television series' antisocial effects. Four different research strains have been identified by the study as possibly contributing to the antisocial consequences of television. First, there are the negative effects of watching violent television, then there are the negative effects of watching inaccurate health-related advertisements, then there are the negative representations of children and women on television, and finally on television, there are unrealistic portrayals of interpersonal and societal connections.

Wilde (2020) PEMRA is an acronym that stands for Pakistani Electronic Media Regulatory Authority. Other countries' media sources, in addition to Pakistani television stations, were made available to Pakistanis via cable networks and satellite television. PEMRA was established in 2002 to facilitate media. PERMA currently controls 87 private and public television networks in Pakistan.

According to PEMRA, advertisements on Pakistani television should not contain profanity, obscenity, or other offensive elements that affect morals. Advertisements that disparage the Islamic faith are also prohibited. Other organizations formed by journalists, in addition to PEMRA, are in charge of administering and delivering media services in Pakistan. PEMRA has the right to condition ethics, which means that the license may be cancelled if the transmission is unethical.

### **The theoretical framework of the study**

[Fredrickson](#) (1997) This study employs the theoretical framework of objectification theory. Many women, according to this attitude, are considered as things to be enjoyed and admired by others for their own purposes. When a woman is primarily viewed as a physical object of male sexual desire, her body or bodily components are singled out and removed from her as a person. Bartky (1990). To varied degrees, women internalize this external perspective and tend to self-objectify by considering themselves as an object to be evaluated and rated solely on their beauty. Self-objectification is manifested by a stronger emphasis on appearance-based features rather than competence-based traits, as well as the frequency with which women analyze their appearance (McKinley, 1996).

According to the theory of Objectification, cultural norms generate social contexts in which women and girls are constantly evaluated on the physical, outside portion of themselves Fredrickson (1997). Objectification theory is a conceptual framework for comprehending the emotional repercussions of being a female body. Girls and women, Objectification theory holds that, are typically acculturated and internalised as their primary perception of their physical selves from the standpoint of an observer. On the bases of the previous literature review, the following research questions are formulated.

1. How females are objectified in Pakistani dramas?

2. What issues related to females are highlighted in Pakistani Dramas?
3. What are the themes used by Pakistani Urdu channels through Drams to portray the social issues and female objectification in Pakistani society?

### **Methodology and Sample of the Study**

This study is based on the qualitative method of research and Pakistani dramas Aakhri station, Fitrat, Daraar, Agar, Sar-e Rah, and Dobara have been analyzed qualitatively by using the technique of thematic analysis and focusing on the changes that have been seen in Pakistani Dramas like the changes in lifestyle, behaviours, appearances, social, political, ethical, religious beliefs of the characters

To examine how women are portrayed in Pakistani TV dramas and on popular television channels. All are popular TV network media outlets with a large audience. Dramas broadcast on Pakistani channels are the most popular among viewers (Khan, 2015). Any media content analysis requires sampling ([Head](#), 1954). This study's demographic is the Urdu Drama shown on Pakistan's private television channels during the prime hour. ARY Digital, Hum TV is one of numerous private television stations. Geo Entertainment Television has been chosen for this purpose.

Categorization, textual interpretations, and non-numerical analysis are all part of qualitative data analysis. It varies from quantitative data analysis in that the data is collected in text and systematically reviewed to reach knowledgeable conclusions. Data categorization also necessitates a basic awareness of the topics and previous research in the field (Mason, 2002).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, and major themes were generated using content analysis or objectification theory for the drama "Akhri station" and "Dobara" "Fitrat" "Sar e Rah" Agar "Daraar "Our major themes were found to social issues, objectification, with regards of the aspects of society." This study gives importance to ethical considerations while analyzing data. It is easy to portray women as weak and

vulnerable but women can be strong and tough. Our main focus is in this drama to find out, about female objectification in Pakistani drama presented women also Pakistani Dramas are able to educate the women through different issues with the help of realistic stories and circumstances. Another finding is that Urdu dramas help to improve the status of women in society.

Thematic category analysis is used for data analysis. It is a technique that has become a popular tool for assessing qualitative data. We begin by describing the background and context of TA and then list critical concerns to consider when performing TA. We explore the flexibility that TA may afford and underline the importance of conducting intentional and meticulous research. This adaptability can be extended to theoretical assumptions, research objectives, data collecting, and analysis. We provide a full-functioning illustration of the processes and procedures involved in completing a TA. [Victoria Clarke, T.A. \(2006\)](#)

For this study, the researchers used a thematic analysis method. The approach of data-driven thematic analysis guarantees that the observations are factual and highly applicable to the data. [Alhojailan, \(2012\)](#). The codes contained in the data were uncovered. Through meticulous observation and analysis of sexual exploitation, words, and phrases, as well as the researchers made an effort to put the findings inside earlier set coding frameworks

Miles (1994) Data can be organized and sorted into themes using thematic analysis. For example, consider how individuals' opinions are influenced by their concerns. Thematic analysis displays and categorizes processed data based on similarities and distinctions. Braun (2006), To accomplish the aforementioned objectives, the process should include coding, categorization, and scoring models, i.e., different levels of themes could be provided, as well as a relationship between variables and factors to create a logical chain of evidence Creswell (2009) Thematic analysis will produce and display data more effectively and accurately by gathering data with diverse tools (e.g., observation, questionnaires, and

study interviews) with participants in different situations. Collection of data. Hayes (1997).

### Analytical Technique

The process of drama analysis begins with open coding. Deductive themes were used throughout the first stage of coding. These topics are drawn from earlier literature. However, several inductive motifs arose from the data over time. However, it was noticed at the conclusion of the analysis that both inductive and deductive motifs had some value. This study included three coding methods: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Strauss, R. (1998). (We utilized the NVIVO 10 for this). Because the drama was watched scene by scene, the data was divided into distinct codes. During axial coding, categories developed from the data. At this point, the researcher used selective coding to consolidate the various categories. The data is used to generate the fundamental categories. The basic categories are derived from the data. These basic categories addressed the portrayal of contentious and non-conflicting societal concerns, specific media locations, and themes. The researcher was able to answer the Using open, axial, and selective coding approaches, to answer the study's research questions.

### Findings

Dramas for research purposes were found and recorded using the internet. The researchers examined many drama sequences in which women were portrayed in various societal concerns and objectified in various ways in order to have a better comprehension of the data and establish coherent themes. These themes address the research questions, which seek to determine how Pakistani media portrays a woman who has been victimized in many societal issues, in what manner, with what attitude, and in what context females are objectified in a different manner in a Pakistani Urdu theatre.

## **Objectification of Female Characters in Pakistani Drama.**

### **Western dresses**

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The study's main goal was to look at how Pakistani Urdu dramas objectify women. Objectifying phenomena were observed in the mirror of clothing, gait, look, touching, and facial expressions. Female models' outfits were Western, sleeveless, and short, which didn't cover their physical and through their slim, Female models' slender and crisp visages, Looks, movements, postures, and even gait style were all presented in a sensuous and in dehumanizing manner. The majority of TV actresses narrated dialogues in intoxicating, sleepy, and romantic entrancing voices.

The "Fitrat" drama was broadcast on Pakistani Channel from November 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Fitrat" drama is based on the middle-class family girl Fariya who dreams of a life of comfort and luxuries. In a quest to fulfil her dreams, she begins to look for shortcuts and gets involved with a boy from an elite class (Shahbaz). Fitrat is much more cosmopolitan drama and defines the usual expectations. Fariya wore western style clothes her beautiful and stylish dress sense her beauty and her performances distinguished her from others. It was her hobby to use to lure men under the spell of her beauty. The aspect of this drama Fariya young widow mother, despite having three young children, has an affair with her married cousin and secretly marries her. Our Pakistani drama shows how women use their beauty and sexual attraction to make fools of men to meet their needs. Media is showing women as very independent and bold in family time which has a negative effect on women living at home.

### **Sexually Objectification in Different Profession.**

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Sar-e Rah another Pakistani drama, shares the stories of women / Girls who have been smothered Merely owing to their age, and who have daughters unable because they want to help their fathers their honour is a risk Belonging to a lower-middle-class family background Rania always wanted to be a

doctor, but her circumstances didn't allow her to be so. The driving profession she chose to fulfill the responsibility of supporting his household. Due to this, she faced a lot of criticism in her own house, family, and society. She also had to face a lot of harassment from other men in society but I will critically analyze the character who played the role of Maryam in Episode no 5 faced difficulties in her professional life. She was a corporate slave she listens to one boss to another whole the day. She saw weird acts and tolerate their misogynist jokes. Maryam achieves success because of her handwork and talent. She is a gorgeous talented intelligent also creative and modern girl. Her senior's colleagues in his office always tease her and her success is blamed by her male colleagues for being a successful woman using a woman card. Despite her education found herself harassed by many men in society. She also found herself harassed by educated men in her corporate sector because even the educated people there consider it as an object of use. In this society, the sick mentality of men does not tolerate women, and then to break her character, they play it. A woman has to be humiliated in many places by men because of her beauty, her bold dress, her style, and also her intelligence and confidence. The man suffers from feelings of inferiority by not being able to bear her success. In the last Maryam controlled this whole situation in a very good way due to her intelligence because she couldn't ruin her career because of a mentally ill person. She handled this situation with bravery and Intelligence. While many women get scared and can't face the situation due to which they suffer a lot.

### **Character and Role**

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"Daraar" another drama, was released on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2022. "Daraar" is a narrative about affection fantasies, and obsession, which asks questions and seeks answers about more fundamental explanations for intricate yet odd relationships. In this drama, Sajjal is shown to be a greedy jealous girl who steals the happiness of others. Whose goal is to get shortcuts in life by deceiving others for the

sake of wealth and fame and good status she makes illegal relations with her brother-in-law. In this drama, the character of Sajjal being a woman is shown so badly that it is the woman who destroys the woman's house. Sajjal negative or unproductive character is shown in prime time which affects society. Negative characters incite females to rebel in society.

### Physical Appearance

Additionally, the "Agar drama serial" is the story of three sisters. Annie is a school principal she is beautiful, intelligent, mature, and responsible and has not married due to her responsibilities being elder among her siblings. Annie's younger sister, Hooriya is also gorgeous and modern but aspires to get a luxury lifestyle with her husband. Annie's youngest sister, Chandni, aspires to become as successful as her eldest sister. Chandni is a girl with a normal appearance and simple nature. She is hardworking and wanted to achieve something in life but her mother always taunted her because of her average looks and made her feel inferior. In our Pakistani Urdu dramas, the short-figured girl always has to listen to a lot of talk from society and family. In the play, Chandni doesn't make her average looks and fault but concentrates on her career. And by getting a higher education and getting a good career, she becomes a girl with strong nerves. It is observed that our media always presents good looks and fair complexion as a symbol of beauty.

### Bold Scene

Another theme observed from the data was bold scenes. Sometimes bold scenes are also shown in Urdu dramas. In the drama serial *Firat* character of *Friya* is shown to be a very confident and independent girl. In the drama, *Fariya* was shown in a bedroom scene with her husband also walking around the house wearing a night dress. Likewise, in Drama "*Darar*" *Sajjal* is shown hanging out with her brother-in-law, talking on the phone having meaningful conversations late at night, and having a relationship with him. Hugging or

holding hands scenes are common things shown in dramas.

### Social issues in Pakistani Urdu Drama

By analyzing data, the following issues were observed that were highlighted by Pakistani dramas.

#### Sexual Objectification

It is observed that few dramas show sexual objectification. For instance, in the drama, "*Aakhri Station*" it was shown that the character of *Yasmeen* and her husband belongs to a very poor family. An alcoholic husband *Waqar* impales his young and beautiful wife *Yasmeen* for forced prostitution. In this drama, Researchers found that in mainstream Pakistani dramas, female victims of sexual harassment were mostly faced in daily life. The character of *Waqar* is *Yasmeen's* husband, he used to play gambling and also drug addiction, that's why he sold all the luggage in the house when he had nothing left to sell, and then a friend advised him to use his wife to earn money. And he thought it was a lucrative business. And then he began to prepare his wife for forced prostitution. Because he received money like that, the conditions of his house also improved. In this way, he could have money to continue to gamble his gambling habit.

#### Domestic Violence

Another issue was domestic violence that was shown in certain dramas. Females faced violence from husbands, brothers, or other male or female characters. In "*Aakhri Station*" episode no 3 the character of "*Gul Meena*" after the death of her husband had to face a lot of difficulties. A widow is considered an outcast in this society. In Pakistani Urdu dramas, typical Mother-in-law Behaviors constantly beat and torture her daughter-in-law because when her husband dies due to a heart attack or another reason, her mother-in-law blames her, she is wretched and my kid has been devoured. With such nasty remarks and crusades, she becomes psychologically unwell, doubts her integrity, and is accused of

being a horrible lady. Yet she always remains silent and tolerates his taunts. Society forbids her from being modern or stylish.

### **Genderqueer**

Sar-e Rah drama 2023 Pakistani serial on aired Pakistani channel. Sar -e- rah drama episode 1 air on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2023 every Saturday at 9.00 PM. This Drama highlights the issue of transgender persons who are being humiliated for their identity. "Sar-e-rah" Saram Shabbir's character was the protagonist of this episode no 4. His role in this drama is that of a transgender which he has done well. His stepmother and step-brother humiliate him all his life, taunt him, and do not accept him. He is insulted and called bad names all his life. But his father always supports him, understands him, and teaches him to move forward in life with this natural flaw of his. He makes him a strong person to face the world around him. He explains that it doesn't matter whether you are a woman or a man, you are human and free, that's all. But our society does not accept such people and disgraces them in society. But his father's love and motivation trust enables him to become a CS officer and makes a place for himself in society.

### **Social Media Scandal**

Sar-e Rah drams 2023 Pakistani serial on Pakistani channel. Sar -e- rah drama episode 1 air on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2023 every Saturday 9.00 In this episode no 3 Rameen (Saboor Ali) is a social media star, a vlogger. She has been contacted by a leading Pakistani designer but she doesn't want to work for him. She knows that she cannot be a part of showbiz because of her brother, father, and Uncle. Her family isn't happy about her vlogging and then all shit breaks loose. The social media scandal is common these days. Rameen performs a dance at her best friend's wedding but her video goes viral and people comment on her badly and spread the video in a negative manner. She tells the truth about the video that she danced at a friend's wedding. But Rameen's brother is still angry and wants to switch off her social media accounts, so she deletes everything. The biggest problem of today's modern age is that

people's photos and videos go viral on social media. And people give it the wrong way. Social media is also a source of income for many people but people ruin people live because of their sick mentality. Nowadays Pakistani dramas highlight the issues related to social media from positive and negative perspectives.

### **Female Marriages Problem**

Another important theme of Pakistani dramas is female's marriage issues. For instance, "Agar" is a 2022 Pakistani Urdu drama Directed by "Ilyas Kashmiri" writer "Madiha Shahid" and produced in October 2022. The main character of this drama is "Annie" who is the eldest among all the siblings while making her career and raising her younger siblings, her marriage age passes. In the cycle of good relationships, her mother rejects every relationship and when she gets older, older married people start coming for her. Many times, her relationship ends due to dowry. Due to the age of the girl, it becomes very difficult to find a good relationship. As women age, they face difficulties in relationships. The problems related to female marriages are a very common theme in Pakistani dramas. The writer presents it from different perspectives and relates it to our social economic background.

### **Remarriage**

"Dobara" is a Pakistani television series that premiered on a Pakistani channel on October 20, 2021. It stars (Hadiqa Kiani) as "Mehrunisa," who is given the opportunity to improve her life after her domineering husband "Hidayatullah" dies. Mehrunisa feels like a free spirit on the occasion of her husband's death in his early seventies, recalling the harsh recollections of her past. At the funeral, sees Mehrunisa's unusual behaviour, as she is not emotionally touched by her husband's death.

Mahru was an independent widow she is young and Gorgeous After the death of her husband, she makes the decisions in her life wisely. She is free and independent in making her own and is shown that a young widow is



not allowed by society and her family to roam freely, wear bright colours, and enjoy her life to the fullest. Remarriage is considered a social problem in the society.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

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According to [Ashfaq](#) and Shafiq (2018), Pakistani plays reinforce patriarchal mindsets by portraying women as submissive, obedient, conforming, and involved in home labour as virtuous women. It is concluded that Pakistani Urdu dramas are liked all over the world. Our first research question finds that women in Pakistani Urdu dramas have been objectified negatively or positively in many places. In light of this study, it is summarized that Pakistani dramas sometimes objectified women as bold who are independent in their

decisions. Positive ways who are civilized, submissive, and dependent on their family.

On the other hand, some dramas always highlight specific and serious social issues and create awareness for their viewers. And these social issues are faced by women very bravely and they are shown to have strong nerves. Apart from this, awareness is also promoted in society through these dramas. In response to the second research question, the issues such as Sexual harassment, inferiority complex, domestic violence, emotional abuse, widow's life, transgender acceptance, social media scandal, social media bully, professional harassment, character assassination, etc are highlighted in Urdu dramas from Pakistan. The study's findings imply that Pakistani Urdu dramas highlight specific socioeconomic obstacles concerning ladies.

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