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Fan Fiction and Fandom: A Case of Pakistani TV Drama "Mere Pas Tum Ho"

Abstract: *This research paper focuses on the phenomenon of fan fiction in the context of the popular Pakistani TV Drama, "Mere Pas Tum Ho." Using Henry Jenkins' concept of participatory culture as a theoretical framework, this study aims to explore the themes existent in fan fiction based on the drama. The study employs a thematic analysis approach to examine a selection of fan fiction pieces based on said drama shared on fan fiction websites. Results indicate fan fiction based on "Mere Pas Tum Ho" is a reflection of the fans' engagement with and interpretation of the original work. Fan fiction pieces provide an alternative perspective on the characters of the drama. Fans use them as a platform to express their own ideas and opinions. The study shows fan fiction is a form of participatory culture, as fans actively engage with original work and use it as a springboard for their own creative output.*

Key Words: Fan Fiction, Pakistani Drama, Pakistani Television, Participatory Culture, Thematic Analysis

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Introduction

Fan fiction is a type of imaginative writing that uses established works of fiction or the media as its basis. Fans who create fan fiction take characters, settings, or plots from the original work of television dramas or movies. After gratification of the scenes, the fans craft new stories using those elements as portrayed in the dramas (Heljakka & Harviainen, 2019).

Over the years, fan fiction has gained popularity, with enthusiasts engaging in various activities such as writing fan fiction, producing fan art, and participating in online forums (Kelley & Composition, 2016).

Fan fiction has been around for centuries with its roots traced back to the 17th century when enthusiasts of Miguel de Cervantes' "Don Quixote" wrote their own adaptations of the tale. In the 20th century, fan fiction

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continued to gain popularity, especially within the genres of science fiction and fantasy, as fans began to create their own narratives based on established works. The internet's emergence in the 1990s led to a surge in fan fiction, as fans could effortlessly share their creations with a broader audience online (Bennett, 2014; Warrier, 2018).

Recent research studies have concentrated on the correlation between fan fiction, original works of fiction and English fan fiction and its impact on the general public (Kriz, 2023). According to a study, fan fiction can be considered a form of literary criticism, fan fiction and its influence on language because fans use it to examine and assess the themes, characters, and plot of the source material. Likewise, another study maintained that fan fiction can be deemed as a type of participatory culture since fans actively engage with the original work and create their own stories based on it (Zhang & Mao, 2013).

Nevertheless, fan fiction has also faced criticism with some arguing that it constitutes copyright infringement and that fans are benefitting from the original work without permission. Moreover, some studies have expressed reservations about fan fiction while maintaining that it can misrepresent the characters, plot, scenes and themes of their work (Fathallah, 2017; Schwabach, 2016).

Fan Fiction in Pakistan

Fan fiction has emerged as a recent phenomenon in Pakistan dating back to the early 2000s when internet usage was on the rise in Pakistan as well as across the globe. Such sort of writing involves the creation of stories utilizing characters and settings from popular works of fiction, and movies reinterpret the remixes of fictional events, or TV shows, which are then shared online by amateur writers (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012; Sauro, 2017).

The popularity of fan fiction in Pakistan can be traced back to online forums and communities, such as Orkut and Yahoo Groups, where young writers would gather to share their works and receive feedback from

peers (Kim, Jeong, & Lee, 2010). With the passage of time, these communities transformed into dedicated websites and blogs, such as FanFiction.net, allowing Pakistani writers to share their works with an international audience (Price, 2017). The Harry Potter fan fiction community is one of the earliest examples of Pakistani fan fiction, which began to flourish in the mid-2000s, inspired by the popularity of the Harry Potter books and movies. Other popular fandoms in Pakistan include Twilight, Game of Thrones, and Marvel (Acevedo-Callejas, 2020).

In recent years, the Pakistani fan fiction community has continued to grow and diversify within the circles of writers exploring new fandoms such as K-pop and Pakistani television dramas. Pakistani writers now have dedicated online communities and forums, open source wikis, like Wattpad and Archive of Our Own that enable them to share their works globally (Lee, 2018; Mendes, 2023).

The Objective of the Study

The research objectives of this research article have been set as:

1. To provide a literature review on fan fiction and its cultural relevance
2. To explore the emergence and growth of fan fiction in Pakistan
3. To conduct a thematic analysis of the popular Pakistani Television Drama "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" and its fan fiction.

Literature Review

A research study, "Pakistani fan fiction: A Journey through new age storytelling," provided an insightful analysis of the evolution of fan fiction in Pakistan. The author explores the popularity of fan fiction in Pakistan; its cultural significance, and its influence on the local media industry. The research further highlights the role of social media platforms in the growth of fan fiction in Pakistan, which has provided an outlet for fans to share their stories and interact with other fans (DeCristoforo, 2014). Another study, "Fan Fiction: The Lure of the forbidden fruit," examined the allure of fan fiction and the

reasons why fans engage in this form of creative expression. The research study explored the psychological, social, and cultural factors that drive fans to write and read fan fiction. The study further argued that fan fiction provides fans with a sense of empowerment, creativity, and community, and allows them to explore their own identity and desires. Another research study, "A brief history of media fandom," offers a comprehensive overview of the history of media fandom, from its early beginnings in science fiction fandom to its current state in the digital age. The study explored the various forms of fan expression, including fan fiction, fan art, and fan videos, and their significance in the development of media fandom (Coppa & Internet, 2006; Ito, Okabe, & Tsuji, 2012). Likewise, the study further examined the role of technology in shaping the landscape of media fandom. The book, "Fan Fiction and fan communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays," provided a collection of essays that explore various aspects of fan fiction and fan communities in the digital age. The book covers a wide range of topics, including the cultural significance of fan fiction, the role of gender and sexuality in fan communities, and the legal and ethical issues surrounding fan fiction (Roberts, Dowell, & Nie, 2019; Rowe, Henderson, Wang, & Cultures, 2021). The essay offered a diverse and nuanced perspective on the complex and evolving world of fan fiction. Jenkins' (2006) book, "Convergence Culture: Where Old and new media collide," offered a compelling analysis of the changes in media culture brought about by the rise of digital media. The study explored the ways in which fans have become active participants in the production and distribution of media content, and how this has transformed the media landscape. The study further argued that the convergence of old and new media has created new opportunities for fan expression and creativity (Jenkins, 2014). A research article, "Fan Fiction in Pakistan," offered an overview of the fan fiction scene in Pakistan, including its history, genres, and themes. The study also explored the challenges faced by Pakistani fan fiction writers,

including issues of censorship and lack of recognition. Khalid argued that fan fiction generally offered a powerful medium for Pakistani youth to express their creativity and engage with social and political issues. Another study, "Pakistani Fandom on the Rise," provided an overview of the growing fandom culture in Pakistan, including its impact on the entertainment industry and the wider society. The study explored the role of social media in the growth of fandom and the ways in which fans are using it to express their creativity and engage with their favourite media franchises (Gilal et al., 2021). The study argued that fandom provides a powerful platform for youth empowerment and social change. The study, "'*Meray Paas Tum Ho*': Pakistan's biggest TV Drama," provided an overview of the popular Pakistani TV drama and its impact on Pakistani fandom culture. The report highlighted the role of social media in the overall success of the drama and the ways in which fans engaged themselves in the drama through fan fiction, memes, and other forms of creative expression. The report offered a glimpse into the vibrant and dynamic world of Pakistani fandom culture.

Another study examined the rise of fan fiction in Pakistan and its cultural significance, focusing on the role of social media in its growth. The study explored the motivations behind fan fiction, highlighting the sense of empowerment, creativity, and the community it provides for fans. A study offered a historical overview of media fandom, discussing the different forms of fan expression and the impact of technology on fan culture (Irshad, Ahmad, & Review, 2019). A study presented diverse perspectives on fan fiction and fan communities in the digital age. It further examined the impact of digital media on media culture, highlighting the opportunities for fan expression and creativity. The study provided an overview of fan fiction in Pakistan, discussing its genres, themes, and challenges (Campbell et al., 2016). Khan (2015) explored the growing fandom culture in Pakistan and its potential for youth empowerment and social change. The study highlighted the impact of social media on

Pakistani fandom culture, focusing on the success of a popular TV drama and its engagement with fan fiction and other forms of creative expression (Muhammad, Khan, Shah, & Ali, 2021).

Research Questions

1. What are the key themes explored in the popular Pakistani Television Drama "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*," and how those themes are related to larger societal issues?
2. How does fan fiction based on "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" explore similar and different themes as the original series, and what are the implications of these differences?

Theoretical Framework

Reference-based on the content of the article, one possible theoretical framework that could be applied is Henry Jenkins' concept of participatory culture. The study argued that the rise of digital media has enabled a new form of cultural production, one in which fans actively engage with and contribute to the creation of media content (Harrison, Barthel, & Society, 2009). This participatory culture is characterized by a blurring of the boundaries between producers and consumers, with fans becoming more involved in the production and circulation of media content (Van Poecke & Michael, 2016) In the context of fan fiction of "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*," this framework could be applied to understand the ways in which fans are actively engaging with the original content and creating their own stories based on it. Fan fiction can be seen as a form of participatory culture, as fans are taking an active role in shaping and contributing to the cultural conversation surrounding the series. Additionally, the emergence of online communities and platforms for sharing fan fiction has facilitated the growth of participatory culture, enabling fans from diverse backgrounds to come together and collaborate on their own creative works. Overall, applying Jenkins' concept of participatory culture could provide a useful

framework for understanding the cultural and social significance of fan fiction of "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" in Pakistan and beyond (Evans et al., 2017).

Methodology

The selection of fan fiction stories was chosen based on factors such as popularity, diversity of explored themes, and representation of different perspectives and interpretations of the original television series. The episodes from the original series were selected based on their relevance to the themes explored in the fan fiction stories. Popular fan fiction websites were used to read the extensions of *Mere Pas Tum Ho* Fan Fiction on the basis of their popularity and deduced the themes. A purposive sampling technique was used to get the required sample. The researchers thoroughly watched all 23 episodes of *Mere Pas Tum Ho* and three famous fan fiction stories of "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" from Wattpad (Canada), reviewit. pk and indiaforums.com for deducing the relevant themes for thematic analysis

Pakistani Drama *"Mere Pas Tum Ho"*

"*Mere Paas Tum Ho*" is believed to be a highly popular Pakistani television drama that premiered in 2019 with Pakistani playwriter Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar as the writer and Nadeem Baig, a famous Pakistani television actor in recent past, as the director of the play. The plot of the drama revolves around Danish, portrayed by Pakistani actor Humayun Saeed, and his wife Mehwish, played by Pakistani actress Ayeza Khan, and delves into the themes of love, betrayal, and societal expectations.

The drama's popularity can be attributed to its compelling storyline, the exceptional performances of the cast, and the relatable themes it explores, particularly those surrounding gender roles and societal norms. The portrayal of these issues resonated with the viewers and sparked widespread discussion and debate.

The drama also enjoyed a strong social media presence, with fans actively sharing

clips and discussing the plot online. Furthermore, the catchy title song, sung by Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, became a hit with the audiences, contributing to the show's overall success.

The popularity of "*Mere Paas Tum Ho*" was such that it set numerous records during its run, emerging as the most-watched drama in the history of Pakistani television. The final episode of the show had an estimated viewership of 25 million, cementing its place as a cultural phenomenon in Pakistan (Aljazeera Report, 2021).

Thematic Analysis of Original "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*"

"*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" is a popular Pakistani drama series that explores various themes, including:

Love and Devotion: The drama portrays the theme of love and devotion through the character of Danish, who remains committed to Mehwish despite her betrayal. For example, when Mehwish asks Danish, 'Forgive me'; he responds with the dialogue "*Mere Paas Tum Ho*" (I Own You), showing his unwavering love and devotion towards her.

Betrayal and Consequences: The drama explores the consequences of betrayal through the character of Mehwish, who cheats on Danish with her boss Shahwar and faces the repercussions of her actions. This is evident when Danish confronts Mehwish about her affair and decides to divorce her, leading to the devolution of their marriage.

Greed and Materialism: The drama highlights the negative impact of greed and materialism on relationships, as Mehwish's desire for a better life and her pursuit of wealth and status, lead her to betray her husband and consequently destroy her family life in the context of Pakistani culture. This is seen when Mehwish leaves Danish and their son Roomi for Shahwar, a wealthy and influential businessman.

Masculinity and Patriarchy: The drama also portrays the theme of masculinity and patriarchy through the character of Shahwar, who uses his power and wealth to control Mehwish and manipulate her into having an affair with him. This is evident when Shahwar pressurizes Mehwish into leaving Danish and convinces her that he can provide her with a better life.

Forgiveness and Redemption: The drama explores the theme of forgiveness and redemption through Danish's willingness to forgive Mehwish and work towards repairing their relationship. This is seen when Danish agrees to give Mehwish a second chance and decides to co-parent Roomi with her.

Self-worth and Self-Respect: The drama highlights the importance of self-worth and self-respect, especially for women, through Mehwish's journey towards realizing her mistakes and taking responsibility for her actions. This is evident when Mehwish decides to leave Shahwar and work towards rebuilding her relationship with Danish and Roomi.

Societal Pressures: The drama also depicts the theme of societal pressures, particularly related to gender roles and expectations. Mehwish's dissatisfaction with her life and her desire for more is rooted in societal pressure to conform to certain norms and expectations. This is evident when Mehwish's friends and family pressurize her to leave Danish for Shahwar, believing that he can provide her with a better life.

Overall, "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" offers a complex exploration of human relationships and emotions, delving into themes such as love, betrayal, forgiveness, and societal pressure purely from the Pakistani perspective of the native culture of the country embedded in the Islamic way of life under the hegemonic approach of the patriarchal structure of society. The characters and their struggles serve as a reflection of larger societal issues, highlighting the importance of self-awareness, individuality, and the ability to break free from societal expectations.

Thematic Analysis of the Fan Fiction "Mere Pas Tum Ho"

Fan fiction is a creative writing genre that involves creating new storylines and characters based on existing works of fiction,

such as the popular Pakistani drama series "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*". By exploring a range of themes and issues that may not have been explored in the original series, fan fiction provides a new perspective on the story and characters.

One common theme found in "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" fan fiction is the exploration of the consequences of betrayal. For example, a fan fiction story may examine the aftermath of Mehwish's infidelity, exploring its impact on Danish's mental health, relationship with his son, and his ability to trust again. This theme highlights the emotional toll of betrayal and the process of healing and recovery.

Another theme found in "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" fan fiction is the exploration of alternative endings. Fan fiction authors may take the story in a different direction than the original series, offering a new interpretation of the characters and plot. For instance, a fan fiction story may explore the possibility of Danish moving on from Mehwish, finding love with a new character, or pursuing a different career path.

Societal expectations and gender roles are the third theme often explored in "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" fan fiction. Authors may examine how societal expectations impact the characters' lives and relationships, and how they navigate these pressures. This theme highlights the importance of individuality and breaking free from gender stereotypes.

Lastly, "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" fan fiction may explore the theme of self-discovery and personal growth. Fan fiction authors may delve into the characters' inner worlds, exploring their motivations, desires, and fears. This theme highlights the importance of self-reflection and the journey towards self-acceptance and personal fulfilment.

In conclusion, "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" fan fiction can explore a variety of themes, including the consequences of betrayal, alternative endings, societal expectations and gender roles, and self-discovery. These themes provide a fresh perspective on the original series and offer an opportunity for the creative exploration of complex human experiences and emotions.

Interplay of Thematic Analysis of Fan Fiction and Original "Mere Pas Tum Ho"

Similarities

There are several similarities in the thematic analysis of the original play "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" and fan fiction based on the series. Both explore the consequences of betrayal, examine societal expectations and gender roles, and highlight the importance of self-discovery and personal growth.

In the original series, the consequences of Mehwish's betrayal are shown through the devolution of her marriage and the loss of Danish's trust and love. Similarly, fan fiction may also explore the emotional toll of betrayal on the characters and their journey towards healing and recovery.

Societal expectations and gender roles are also explored in both the original series and fan fiction. The original series portrays the societal pressure on Mehwish to conform to certain norms and expectations, which ultimately leads her to betray Danish. Similarly, fan fiction authors may also examine how societal expectations impact the characters and their relationships.

Finally, both the original series and fan fiction highlight the importance of self-discovery and personal growth. In the original series, Mehwish goes through a journey of self-reflection and realization of her mistakes. Similarly, fan fiction may also explore the inner worlds of the characters and their journey towards self-acceptance and personal fulfilment.

Overall, while fan fiction offers new perspectives on the original series, the thematic similarities suggest that both the original series and fan fiction explore similar human experiences and emotions.

Differences

One major difference in thematic analysis between the original play "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" and fan fiction is the exploration of alternative endings in fan fiction. Fan fiction authors may take the story in a different direction than the original series, offering a fresh interpretation

of the characters and plot. For instance, in a fan fiction story, Danish may choose to move on from Mehwish and find love with a new character, or the story may explore what would happen if Mehwish had chosen to stay with Danish and work towards rebuilding their relationship. This is not explored in the original series, which has a set plot and ending.

Another difference in the thematic analysis is the level of depth in character exploration. Fan fiction often allows for more detailed and nuanced character development, as authors have more freedom to explore the inner worlds of the characters. For instance, a fan fiction story may delve deeper into Mehwish's motivations and inner turmoil, offering a more complex portrayal of her character. In contrast, the original series may have limitations in the depth of character exploration due to its format and length.

Finally, fan fiction may explore themes that were not fully developed in the original series. For instance, a fan fiction story may examine the impact of Mehwish's betrayal on her relationship with her family members, such as her parents or siblings. This theme may not have been explored in-depth in the original series, which primarily focuses on the relationship between Mehwish and Danish.

Discussion

This article provides a literature review of fan fiction, its origins, cultural relevance, and the interplay between fan fiction and source material. It also discusses the emergence of fan fiction in Pakistan, particularly the popularity of the Harry Potter fandom and the recent phenomenon of fan fiction based on the highly popular Pakistani drama series "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*".

The article provides a thematic analysis of both the original series and fan fiction based on "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*", highlighting common themes such as love, betrayal, forgiveness, societal expectations and gender roles, and self-discovery. It also notes some differences in the thematic analysis, such as fan fiction's

exploration of alternative endings and more detailed character development.

Overall, this article offers a comprehensive overview of the fan fiction genre, its cultural relevance, and its growing popularity in Pakistan, with a focus on the highly popular drama series "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*". It provides an insightful analysis of the themes explored in both the original series and fan fiction and how they reflect larger societal issues while the original television drama "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" and fan fiction based on the series share some thematic similarities, there are also notable differences. Fan fiction often explores alternative endings and allows for more in-depth character development, while also examining themes that may not have been fully explored in the original series. When it comes to fan fiction, there are several legal and ethical considerations to be aware of. One of the primary concerns is copyright infringement, as fan fiction often uses established works of fiction or media as its basis. Copyright law grants the author of an original work the exclusive right to control how their work is used, copied, and distributed. Therefore, fan fiction writers must be careful not to use copyrighted material without permission from the original author or copyright holder. In the case of "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*," the drama is the intellectual property of the writer and production company, and any fan fiction based on the series may constitute copyright infringement. However, in some cases, fan fiction may be considered a transformative work, which means that it adds new creative elements to the original work and may be protected under fair use laws. Another ethical consideration in fan fiction is the portrayal of characters and themes from the original work. Fan fiction writers must be mindful of how they represent the characters and themes, as their work may be interpreted as misrepresenting the original work or its creators. Additionally, fan fiction writers must respect the intellectual property of the original author and avoid using their work for commercial gain. While fan fiction can offer a creative outlet for writers and provide new perspectives on established works, there are

legal and ethical considerations that must be taken into account. Fan fiction writers should be mindful of copyright infringement and how they represent the original work and its creators. By respecting these considerations, fan fiction can continue to be a valuable form of creative expression within the fandom community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article provides an overview of fan fiction and its emergence in Pakistan, with a focus on the popular Pakistani drama series "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*". The article explores the themes and issues explored in the original series and how they are reflected in fan fiction based on the show. The similarities and differences between the two forms of storytelling are highlighted, with a particular focus on the exploration of alternative endings and character development in fan fiction.

Overall, the article provides valuable insight into the world of fan fiction and its cultural relevance, particularly in Pakistan. The analysis of the themes explored in both the original series and fan fiction shows how stories can provide a reflection of larger societal issues and human experiences. The article could be expanded by including more detailed examples of fan fiction based on "*Mere Pas Tum Ho*" and how it differs from the original series. Additionally, a discussion of the ethical and legal considerations surrounding fan fiction could be included to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the genre.

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