

Faiza Rehman[†]Liaqat Iqbal[†]Yusra Mukhtar[†]

Representation of Gender in Documentary *Saving Face*: A Semiotic Analysis

Abstract: *The purpose of the current study is to analyze how gender is represented in the documentary Saving Face through the use of different signs. The study of the portrayal of gender in Pakistani documentary has been conducted through the analysis of signs. For this purpose, 8 visuals from Saving Face were analyzed using elements of the stills such as camera angle, character's body language, physical appearance, gestures, dressing, background objects or props and colors. Employing the theoretical framework of Peirce's theory of signs on documentary, various types of signs such as iconic, indexical and symbolic signs representing gender and sketching out distinct aspects of gender roles in Pakistan, were unearthed. Two major findings were deduced: (1) laid in the domestic and public sphere, Pakistan men are more celebrated and respected than women; and (2) the existing gender roles have observed a breach of unconventionality from the stereotypical roles.*

Key Words: Gender Representation, Documentary, Saving Face, Patriarchy, Domestic Violence

Introduction

The issue surfaced by this study is concerned with the 'gender representation' or the discourse of gender orientation in our society. In our daily life, from watching television in homes to movies in cinemas and from strolling around the streets to waiting in the bus stops, we are always brought face to face with images that portray gender. These images are like an ocean in which we swim like a fish, then we observe the images either consciously or subconsciously and they finally change our views and perceptions about gender (Berger, 2008). Men and women are assigned different roles according to their culture. People are affected by the massive exposure to media and the way gender signs are represented. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate how gender is represented in Pakistan by semiotically analyzing the stills from a Pakistani documentary to contribute to feminism in general and the status of both men and women in Pakistan in particular.

The dynamic movements in the 20th century which struggled for the equal privileges and liberation of women brought forth them from the domesticated bounds to the social spheres. These movements raised a voice for the equal rights of women in society. Thus, with these feministic waves, women's plight within the male dominant societies started to backlash. As a result, previously dependent, marginalized and oppressed women got awareness and begin to demand their rights on equal footing with men by fighting to procure the right of ownership in the property and share in professional jobs of business, administration and management. Thus, women started to become socio-economically independent. Moreover, she got the right to cast vote and became politically independent.

Feminism got momentum across the globe and many females came into prominence who represented the mythology of modern and empowered women. Today, women have turned out to be dynamic and influential members of society. They are the genuine engineers of society since it is a mother who sustains and raises the kids. Woman's rights on the planet have been the cry of the day; numerous men and ladies work for female rights in the entire world. Different famous figures brought the issue of gender equality under limelight through their contribution i.e., Maya Angelou, who stood up for gender and racial discrimination through her inspiring literature and public talks and Angelina Jolie, who is working hard to give privileges to the unprivileged women and girls to get education by speaking for them on public forums. Similarly, Michelle Obama and Emma Watson are the other representatives of feminism who have also worked in the same frame. On the other hand,

[†]MPhil Scholar, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

[†]Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

Email: liaqatqbal@gmail.com

[†]MPhil Scholar, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

Abdellatif & Ottoway (2007) summarizes that the Muslim female activists have demonstrated dismissal and even rejected the idea of Western women's liberation, which they decipher not as a battle for the acknowledgment of the rights and privileges of women, but as a development to free them from every social limitation and commitments to family and society, prompting unnecessary independence and even obscurity. However, in Pakistan, the notable feminists like Benazir Bhutto, Tehmina Durrani, Malala Yousafzai, etc., have worked for women empowerment and their charitable works are proof of their efforts for bringing awareness and safeguarding the rights of Pakistani women.

Women in Pakistan are given their due legal and religious rights but societal norms have restricted most of them to domesticated roles of nurturing and taking care of household activities. They are jeopardized from functioning as significant members of society outside household. The main reasons behind that are the patriarchal culture where women are considered subservient to men, the low literacy rate of females and their conservative attitude towards their own rights. Men in Pakistan enjoy their total authority from dressing to taking decisions of their subordinates, including women. Pakistani society is male-dominated in the way that woman's status is interceded by *zar* (riches), and *zamin* (land), and men control the riches and lands. Ali and Gavino (2008) argue that this proverb is regarded as a tool to blame women for being the root of all evil. Moreover, it also shows how women are objectified and considered as a commodity.

They are the norm makers of the society and have laid the foundations of culture on strict and conservative rules, which have empowered them only and marginalized females. Women are accustomed to complying with these patriarchal norms. This unequal distribution of rights and power results in oppression and violence on women of different forms which include forced marriage, marriage to Quran (*haqqoq bakhshi*), *watta satta*, selling of bride (*swara*), blood money (*walwar*), honor killing, dowry issues and acid attack (Bhattacharya, 2014). However, many educated women and men are breaking the gender stereotypes and are performing different gender roles based on their abilities and expertise instead of pre-defined cultural roles. Thus, for societal order, the conflicting opinions on the grounds of what is perceived to be immoral should be eradicated. Medium of language could either be verbal, non-verbal or visual. It carries the signs which convey significant meanings. Although print media has its significance in changing the viewpoint of people and in bringing awareness about the social issue, as compared to the electronic media, it won't be likely considered as 'realistic'.

Electronic media plays an important role in bringing awareness to the common masses about social issues through different movies, dramas, cartoon movies, television talk shows and also through documentaries. Oppression of women by the patriarchy is one of the alarming issues of our society. Women become victims of the dominant men of our society. This oppression based on gender roles is directly stemmed from the unequal distribution of rights and power. Females over the years have fought and have continued to fight for equality between gender and gender roles. Towards the mid of twentieth century women were seen behind the cameras, struggling hard to bring justice to the oppressed women. Drastic changes have been observed with time as women themselves have been representing the true realities.

Very little or preliminary research work exists on documentaries based on feminism, especially in Pakistan. For this purpose, the present study analyzes the documentary film "Saving Face" (2012) as a case study, released by Pakistani filmmaker and social activist, Shermeen Obaid Chinoy in collaboration with HBO films. *Saving Face* was inspired by the life of acid attack victim, Fakhra Younas, who later died after its release. This documentary represents the aftermath of one of the worst forms of crimes, acid throwing or acid attack on women, prevailing in our society especially in rural areas of Punjab and other provinces and reveals an insight into the bravery of corrosive assault survivors; Zakia and Rukhsana. It also features the strength of the individuals who helped them, Dr. Jawad, Marvi Memon and Sarkar Abbas. Although its duration is of 40 minutes, it represents harmed lives of all those ladies who have confronted brutality and shamefulness at the hands of social and political, patriarchal societies. This documentary is a rich source of the status of both genders, which will be laid bare to reveal the representation of different aspects of gender and gender roles.

Research Questions

The following questions are answered to accomplish the goals and achieve the objectives of this study:

1. What different signs are used for different genders?
2. How these signs communicate different aspects of gender?

Significance

The major significance of this study lies in the vast and broad topic of gender. It is a multidisciplinary concept and each field has operationalized the research work on it by incorporating different methods and approaches. Previous studies about gender and documentaries have discussed the power imbalance of gender, facts and fiction, reality and media portrayal. However, this study focuses on how through the use of images, gender is represented. Moreover, it asks the audience to see how through the use of different signs in a particular way, the social realities in a documentary are being reflected and constructed.

Literature Review

With the dawn of the 20th century, women were seen in different societal coliseums paving ways for their liberation from the clutches of their medieval roles. They were seen raising their voice for voting, education, employment, etc. Before that 'sex' and 'gender' were used interchangeably. Although both are different concepts and have different meanings, according to Lindsey (1997) concept of 'sex' can be explained as the sex-differences (hormonal and chromosomal) which are biologically manifested to determine a human being as male or female. While 'gender' is a broad term and it varies across cultures. Eagly (1987) defines gender as a concept that refers to the meanings, given to humans based on their biological construction, by the societies and the individuals living there. It emphasizes the cultural and behavioral differences between males and females.

Taking gender roles, it refers to the behavior and attitude of the genders that they are expected to have in a social sphere where they live. Lindsey (1997) proposed that norms and values of society act as rules for determining social roles. She suggests that norms decide how 'roles' are to be performed according to the situations. Moreover, she explained 'gender roles' as the expected social roles being performed by each sex. As gender is an important aspect of culture, different theories emerged for explaining the reasons behind varying social roles relating to gender. Those theories differ from each other based on their gender treatment.

Biological theory suggests that the gender roles are determined by sex, they are innate, depending on the difference in the type of hormones, brain size or chromosomes (Christen, 1995; Dobson, 1995). Christen (1995) primarily has focused on the distinct brain sizes of males and females. The different sexual states of men and women are responsible for triggering different social roles in them. However, the theory was criticized for its fixity of roles for males and females and for not considering society as playing role in shaping the attitudes and actions for them (Kessler & McKenna, 1978).

While Structural-functioning theory refers to the fact that for sustaining the structure of society, each sex must perform its gender role to divide the labor to maintain the effective functioning of societal structure (Eagly, 1987; Parsons 1960). Parsons and Bells (1955) worked on this theory by putting their efforts on the internalization of social norms of the nuclear family because they noticed people started to live separately in houses instead of living as large clans. They proposed that the role of an adult female is still deeply rooted in the family affairs as mother, wife and organizer; while the role of an adult male is outside the domain of house, this way they contribute to the stability of the family structure. The theory got criticized for its simplified view of society and family; not taking into account, the variety of other important factors and for its conservative view of gender (Eagly, 1987; Lindsey, 1997 & Millet, 1969).

However, Social-learning theory explains the difference between gender roles by focusing on the notion of correct performance by both genders for social acceptance and gaining rewards for that. This theory points out that gender roles are developed in childhood (Howard & Hallander, 1997). This process of learning the concept of gender-based roles in childhood have been explained in a way that children first learns to differentiate between the roles of male and female, then they infer from their experience and this finally leads them to perform according to their sex because they got positive rewards for that (Mischel, 1996). According to Mischel (1996), the independent role and behavior gain more reward for a male while submissive and friendly behavior gains more reward for a female. The main criticism on this theory was that it did not focus on socializing the children, instead allowed them to copy and imitate the behavior suiting their gender identities, as well as it took no consideration of their mental abilities (Bascow, 1992; Lindsey, 1997).

Based on the traditional masculine and feminine traits, men and women are expected to represent themselves in society. As per Meigel & Johansson (2002), a woman in our society is always described as a victim, while the man is a protector or savior who watches or saves the woman. Thus it shows how women are considered inferior to men in our society by assigning weaker traits to women only.

Coming to the Pakistani context, an investigation of the implementation of rights in the existing Pakistani society proposes that the rights are horribly abused on many records. There are individuals who purposely or accidentally digress in such a manner from the instructions and teaching of Islam (Khan, 2004: 42). Ibrahim (2005) discusses in his study that although Pakistan is an Islamic state but in women's rights, it infers its understanding from traditions and social standards. The societal structure and cultural norms do not give them the freedom to enjoy their lawful and religious rights ensured by the law and given by Islam.

This discrimination based on gender does not end here. They are denied not of their legal and religious rights but also, they are exposed to a different mode of punishments which are selected by their concerned men. As confirmed by Ali (2001), it is an everyday reality for a maximum of Pakistani women to be exposed to brutality, or the risk of savagery, at home, in the fields, or, on the other hand in the road. However, a qualitative study on gender roles and their influence on the lives of women shows that however women are suppressed and abused by men but education acts as an agent of progress and change. It was additionally highlighted that the newer generation was more positive to breaking typical gender roles than the older generation (Ali, 2011).

Methodology

For the study, the documentary film *Saving Face* was selected. Its selection was based on several reasons; it pictured domestic violence, with a focus on the acid throwing against women. Secondly, it pays attention to the changing gender roles in Pakistan where educated men and women are breaking the typical gender stereotypes and due to its critical acclaim which brought homeland its first Oscar.

The data is primarily in the form of still images that is relevant to Peirce's theory of signs that is used as a theoretical framework. Since the study is based on the representation of gender signs and the way they communicate, only those still images are taken which belong to the main characters of the documentary. Seven main characters are there in the documentary; *Zakia, Pervaiz, Rukhsana, Jawad, Taj, Sarkar Abbas and Marvi Memon*. Based on these gender signs, 8 images are selected from different scenes.

Peirce related to the various aspects of visual signs and their representation to deconstruct the layered meanings behind the shown stills in the documentary, respectively. For this purpose, Peirce's Theory of Signs is used for the semiotic analysis of signs. He gave a triadic model of signs in contrast to Saussure who gave a dyadic one. Peirce proposes the definition of a sign as any object or phenomenon, may be considered as a sign, from the minute it goes into a procedure of Semiosis, regardless of how mind boggling that might be. Unlike Saussure, Peirce does not characterize the sign as the minutest unit of meaning. Peirce triadic model includes three parts of a sign including representamen or sign, interpretant and an object. The procedure of semiosis includes a triadic connection between a sign or representamen, an object and an interpretant.

A representamen or sign is the form which sign takes, it speaks for something else, for instance, a written text or an utterance or. It is similar to Saussure's signifier. An object is a thing to which the sign refers to. The sign only expresses some quality or feature of an object with which the interpreter is already familiar. It does not completely associate with the object. For example, the interpretant is the concept or sense of sign. Peirce further classified a sign into three types i.e. symbol, icon and index.

Analysis and Discussion

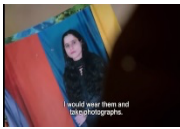







The documentary itself serves as a sign as it represents the events from real life, documenting the lives and events of people in the form of direct or indirect interviews. Every documentary has an educational and instructional purpose, which becomes evident from the message it tries to convey. According to Peirce's triadic model of signs, as already discussed in methodology, each sign has three components: representamen, an object and an interpretant. A representamen is a sign which takes the form of a sign. Here the documentary is representamen (R) as it takes the form of a sign. While object (O) is the thing to which the sign refers. The documentary refers to the journey of healing and struggles for justice of the acid attack survivors. The interpretant (I) is the relationship of representamen and object, here the interpretant is the gender inequality in Pakistan, leading to oppression and marginalization of women by men.

All the main characters of the documentary are treated as 'gender signs'. These signs are a clear representation of both genders, which is why they have been selected. Each of the gender sign has been explained descriptively by finding a different type of other signs; icons, symbols and indexes, which have aided in revealing the aspects of gender signs and how they communicate with each other. Then 'Semiosis process' has been explained one by one to reveal the hidden meaning of each still. Moreover, all the gender signs are

treated as ‘symbols’, for symbols present meanings which are culturally defined by the members of a culture. Eight still images have been taken from the documentary which are icons by Peirce’s definition of signs. A brief description of the scene has been given before analysis of each datum. The main characters are analyzed by focusing on the following elements: camera angle, character’s body language, physical appearance, gestures, dressing, background objects or props and colors. All these elements have aided in revealing the meanings represented and communicated by the gender signs.

The data have been compiled in a table that consists of the main characters of the documentary and their roles. Several still images, descriptions of the scenes from which still images have been selected are also arranged in distinct columns. Moreover, the still images are coded for the sake of convenience and simplicity of the study.

Table 1. List of Characters and Still Images

Character	Role		Number of still images	Description	Code	Still image
1. Zakia	Wife of Pervaiz (victim of acid attack)		Capture 1	Before acid attack	1-A	
			Capture 2	Face loss	1-B	
			Capture 3	Face saved	1-C	
2. Pervaiz	Husband of Zakia (oppressor)		Capture 4	Interview	2-A	
3. Rukhsana	Wife of Yasir (victim of an acid attack)		Capture 5	Face loss	3-A	
4. Jawad	Doctor/Plastic surgeon		Capture 6	Saving face of the victim	4-A	
5. Taj	Father-in-law of Zakia		Capture 7	Comments	5-A	
6. Marvi Memon	Member of Parliament		Capture 8	Struggle for passing the bill	7-A	

Zakia (Victim of an Acid Attack)



Figure 1: 1-A, before acid attack

The documentary begins with a close-shot of photographs being held in hands. The hands seem to be that of a woman due to the type of sleeves that cover the wrists. A scar is seen prominently on her right hand, suggesting she has been wounded. The scene reveals the main character, Zakia, sitting on a chair, who is looking down steadily towards her photographs. The scene is bright and the setting is that of an open-air.

In 1-A Zakia's back is shown from behind in a close shot but only her shoulder is visible. The camera focus is on the photographs which Zakia is holding. Thus, it becomes evident that attention is given to the importance of photographs. The top photograph shows Zakia, standing firmly for a photoshoot and posing confidently to the camera. Zakia's feminine beauty and power both are highlighted through her radiant face. Her hairs are open, parted in the middle and gracefully curled towards the end. Partying hair down the middle suggests her confidence that she can look beautiful in any hairstyle she carries. She's wearing make-up; red lipstick and a base, highlighting femininity trait that usually every woman wants to look pretty. The black color of her outfit signifies 'evil' which will strike her as a hard fate shortly. Moreover, the hands in which the photos are held, signify that she needs to be watched or saved.

This photograph was captured before she was attacked with acid, when she was beautiful, had a fine face and a complete look. It suggests that a person's face strongly affects one's personality. A beautiful face promises a confident personality. Before the attack, she was a happy and lively person who wanted to enjoy her life by following her passion for photography. She felt confident enough in her skin to face society. The multi-colored background reflects her happy mood.

Semiotic process for 1-A

The photograph (Object) of Zakia iconizes her life before the acid attack (Representamen) when she used to be the embodiment of beauty and confidence. It can be interpreted in a way that she represents the women or females in general who are expected to be pretty, confident and passionate but are required to be watched or saved as they are physically appealing and weak in strength. In our society, women are considered as the honor of men, who protect their honor to keep themselves dignified and respected in society. They give up on their passions and compromise on their feelings for the effective functioning of male-dominated society, in which they live (Interpretant).



Figure 2: 1-B, face loss

Zakia has met her doctor and has gone through a physical examination. Now in the present scene, she's back home and has taken hold of her responsibilities again.

A medium shot of Zakia is taken where she can be seen doing home chores. She's sitting probably on a small stool in front of an LPG stove. This suggests she belong to a lower middle class. She has not a proper kitchen in her house. Focusing on the subject's dressing, it can be seen that Zakia has draped a white shawl and wearing the traditional dress, kameez shalwar. She has tightly covered her face in her shawl. The white color of her shawl is reflecting her unhappiness and misfortune. Her happiness has faded away as compared to the first photo. She doesn't feel safe to show her face now. Her confidence has been shattered into pieces and she is no more comfortable in her skin. In reality, Zakia is hiding her never-ending pain and psychological stress about her physical appearance.

A very small portion of her face is visible from the side which seems scarred badly, signifying the permanent damage being done to her personality and character. Her honor is lost with a disfigured face. Our society blames the woman for her sorry fate. 'Face of a woman' in our society connotes honor of their men. A disfigured face of a woman is welcomed nowhere. Zakia lives a nightmare with these scars on her face. In the process of losing her charm and beauty, she lost her identity too. Moreover, there's no sign of an eye in her eye socket, on the visible side of her face. This makes it evident that she's blind. Although her vision has been snatched away, she has not lost her courage and spirit to fight back.

She's holding a matchbox in one hand and a match in the other, trying to light a match. This shows that her fears have turned into her strength, she no more fears oil, fire or gas cylinder. It is also a symbol of hope for the downhearted Zakia to fight for the restoration of her identity and rights, to raise her voice against the injustice done to her and to hold her husband accountable for his crime of destroying her life by throwing acid on her face. In the frame, many other kitchen utensils can be seen including a tava pan, hot pot, pressure cooker, bowl, water cooler, dishes and a metallic container for storing food items, suggesting she knows cooking and food production. Zakia embodies a typical female of our society for whom her responsibility of managing household activities and taking care of her family is more important than her physical impairment and emotional state.

Semiotic Process for 1-B

Still image 1-B shows Zakia in a completely new shape, with a ruined and mutilated face, who is hiding her face and is busy fulfilling her duties (Object). The face of Zakia here is the index of violence. Her face represents the horrible aftermath of an acid attack (Representamen), where half of it has been melted away along with one eye, nostril and lips, leaving her in a sorry state of permanent blindness at one eye, never-ending depression and psychological imbalance. According to the gender theory, women are considered physically weak and fragile while men are given higher attributes of strength. This suggests that women in Pakistan are victimized at the hands of men and become an easy source of oppression. Focusing on our culture, where men consider women as their honor and subordinate, they take complete hold and authority to decide on their lives, it is completely ironic how men satisfy their ego, in cases where women go against them, by attacking them with acid. They punish them and in return purify their honor by burning their faces (Interpretant).



Figure 3: 1-C, Face Saved

Zakia has undergone her facial recovery surgery. Meanwhile, she also struggles hard to hold her perpetrator accountable for his barbarous crime and she succeeds in bringing justice to meet their destinies.

A medium shot introduces Zakia to us in a new setting. The shot implies that Zakia's gestures and emotions are focused. She's oriented to the left of the photo, emphasizing the fact that she's new to the audience. She has not been introduced this way before in the outside setting. Her unveiled face is prominent in the photo. It is evident from her face that it has been saved finally from the scars and marks of oppression. She has got a new face after surgery, which is smooth, plain and pretty as ever. Her smooth face represents her continuous struggles that she made to bring back her honor and identity.

She's covered in a red shawl, loosely draped around her shoulders and head. The red color of her shawl is signifying her happiness that finally she has regained her honor and identity. It also connotes her pure state of mind that she is no more concerned about her disfigured face or people's reaction about it. Another interpretation of the red shawl can be that it is the symbol of revolution. She has revolted against the existing norms of society and became a norm-maker by bringing justice to her perpetrator and peace to her life. She's wearing red lipstick, showing she's back to life and wants to feel pretty again.

The setting is of a busy market, which could be realized through the clothes hanged towards the extreme left side of the photo. In the background, two boys are visible and two ladies but they are blurred. This suggests that complete attention is given to Zakia who has the agency and power while the rest of the subjects are insignificant. She seems confident, facing society with an open face, as compared to 1-B. She has no fear of being oppressed as she moves freely in the market with even more dignity and esteem than before. She is now an independent, self-sufficient and strong lady, who does not rely on any man to buy her home commodities or other essentials from the market.

Semiotic Process for 1-C

In the final image of Zakia, 1-C another phase of her life is shown with a totally transformed face and persona (Object) passing through the market. Here the object refers (Representamen) to a strong, passionate and vehement acid attack survivor, who not only transformed her face but her life as well. She is the typical female hero of our society, who exhibits power, courage and beauty. She adds the domesticated femininity with her boldness and regains her lost identity. Zakia in the documentary is a symbol of the revolution who does not bow to the patriarchal injustice towards her (Interpretant).

Pervaiz (the oppressor)



Figure 4: 2-A, Interview

Pervaiz is the main protagonist or perpetrator who has attacked the main character Zakia with acid. In the present scene, he has been interviewed.

In the selected still image 2-A multiple characters are shown through a medium camera shot. Three men are visible in different attires; two are moved towards the side and are police constables, as recognized from their uniforms. While Pervaiz is sitting a little farther from them towards the center, thus provokes the audience to focus on him.

Pervaiz is behind the bars suggesting he's under police arrest for committing the serious crime of acid throwing, that's why he has been punished and held accountable for his barbaric act. 'Bars' cover the maximum part of the photo and has been shot from the front, suggesting the audience to focus more on it. These bars suggest confinement and prison. Moreover, it signifies the deprivation of freedom and restriction of Pervaiz being a prisoner. His independence and mobility are hindered. Although punished, he is still sitting very proudly and arrogantly on a seat, with a cigarette in his mouth. This indicates his masculinity in the sense that he does not care for his actions; if his actions satisfy his ego, he's not bound to restrain his desires and actions. He's bent towards a lit match, which he has held firmly in his left hand, trying to light the cigarette, showing that although he is aware of the self-destruction due to smoking; he can't control his thirst for drugs. Cigarettes can also be interpreted as a sign of a 'stress reliever'. Pervaiz releases his stress of being submissive to the police authorities by smoking cigarettes, as he's assertive by nature. Lit match connotes men's domination and control over fire.

Pervaiz is wearing a traditional dress of light blue color and a white cap. The blue color is associated with relaxation. He's trying to relax his mind and nerves. However, the white color highlights peace. This shows that he wants to prove himself innocent and a peace lover. Moreover, the uniform of police constables highlights the effective functioning of institutions in Pakistan, especially the Police department. The black color uniform indicates the power and authority of policemen.

Semiotic Analysis for 2-A

According to Pierce's theory of signs, the main character Pervaiz (icon) is the gender sign, who is shown lighting a cigarette while being in police custody (Object). Pervaiz iconizes ignorance and barbarism (Representamen). He threw acid on his wife's face just for the reason that she wanted a divorce from him. Pervaiz is the portrayal of a drug-addicted and violent husband of our society who does not care for the family structure. (Interpretation) The character of Pervaiz can be interpreted from the relationship of his image and sign form. He is an entire ocean in a single drop, represents the typical men in general who have attributed the masculine traits of dominance, aggressiveness and assertiveness. Such types of men consider weak, dependent and inferior in status. Moreover, they never feel guilty for destroying the lives of women.

Rukhsana (Victim of an Acid Attack)



Figure 5: 3-A, face loss

Rukhsana became a victim of an acid attack at the hands of her mother-in-law, sister-in-law and husband. She reconciled with her in-laws and husband because of her poverty.

Rukhsana, who is an acid victim, is shown in figure 3-A through a medium shot. In such shots, the primary focus and attention are laid on the subject in mutual relation to the other signs (van Leeuwen, 2001). Rukhsana is shown sitting propped up on a charpoy in a much discomforted manner, her legs being folded. It suggests she's restless and finds no comfort in laying properly, to take some rest. She's not interested in doing something else. It is also evident from the image that she has rested her back on a pile of old and stained cotton quilts. This signifies that the acid attack has badly shaken her willpower and strength. She has physically become weak and needs constant support. Moreover, it also shows her socio-economic status as being lower.

The camera shot shows Rukhsana from the left side. Her face is wrinkled and scarred. This disfigured face carries her pain and sufferings through which she underwent when half of her face melted with acid. Her identity has been shattered. The face with which she was born, no more exists. Her lips are tightly pursed,

suggesting a significant meaning that she does not want to raise her voice against her perpetrator and has accommodated with the situation. There's a window towards the left side, stretching towards the center. It is slightly opened, allowing sunlight to enter the room and fall on her face. This suggests that even though she's distressed; she has not lost hope and is still hoping for the day to get back to normal. Moreover, she's wearing a blue dress which signifies her need to keep herself relaxed. However, the darkness of the room symbolizes her inner fear, with which she lives with her in-laws of being attacked again with acid.

Semiotic Process for 3-A

Still image 3-A introduces Rukhsana, an acid victim (Object) in a restless state on a charpoy, showing her victimized and scarred face (Representamen). Rukhsana's face indexicalizes the harsh and bitter reality of acid throwing and physical abuse of women in Pakistan. She not only lost her feminine attribute of beauty and face but also her identity. She presents the women's status as a dehumanized and emotionless object who being the property of the patriarchal society is ill-treated, tortured and victimized in a horrible way by acid throwing. It is ironic how our society snatches away their identity first and then expects them to succumb back to their conventional roles of motherhood and wives without questioning the injustice being done to them.

Jawad (Plastic Surgeon)



Figure 6: 4-A, Saving Face

Doctor Jawad is a Pakistani-based, plastic surgeon in UK. He arrives in Pakistan from London to serve his people. He meets many female acid attack victims, feels devastated and eventually decides to save their disfigured faces. Zakia is one of them.

In the still image 4-A, the low-angle shot has been taken to show multiple characters. Zakia can be seen from the side, in a resting position, with only her face being visible. From the layout of these characters, it can be seen that three doctors or assistants, as recognized from their dressing are standing together towards the right while Dr. Jawad is moved to the right side of the frame. This brings out the element of uniqueness, by suggesting that the attention here is laid on him. A low-angle camera shot makes the subject look bigger and grand in nature. It signifies the domination and control of Jawad over the situation or event. His command is unquestioned. In such shots, the audience views the subject with humbleness and modesty. Here it is basically his own nature's reflection, with which the audience views him.

Different medical signs like scrubs, surgical gloves, masks and caps are there in 4-A. This makes clear that the setting is of an operation theatre, as these are worn before performing the surgery. The sole purpose of wearing these items for surgery is, to protect the patient from external pollution and foreign bodies, entering the exposed cut of the cavity under the surgery process. Here it signifies the care and supervision of Dr. Jawad for his patient Zakia, as he is concerned about her health and proper treatment. The blue and green color of caps and scrubs respectively represent the healing and growth of the patient due to the untiring efforts of doctors.

Dr. Jawad is shown leaned over Zakia, performing her facial reconstruction plastic surgery. Half of her face has melted away with acid. His facial expressions show he's worried and distraught, which is represented by his half-opened mouth and focused eyes. Furthermore, the glasses which he has worn, suggests his knowledge and clear vision. It connotes that he has not blindly adopted and accepted the culturally decided gender roles.

Semiotic Process for 4-A

In the still image 4-A, Dr. Jawad (Object) is performing surgery on the acid victim, Zakia's face which iconizes his determination and will to restore someone's face. It also represents his humble and nature being a refined man (Representamen). It can be interpreted in this manner that he was bothered and concerned about the acid victims in Pakistan. Such victims are usually left in a miserable state with collapsed organs and sensory systems without any plastic surgery. He is not only physically treating Zakia but also giving back joyous and contented life to her. Here it can be noted that he, being a man is dominant and the epitome of power. But he is channelizing his power and dominancy for the betterment of women, not for oppressing or dishonoring them as Pervaiz did. He represents the mythology of a hero and a modern educated person who saves every person in distress.

Taj (father-in-law of Zakia)



Figure 7: 5-A, Comments

Taj comments on Zakia's case outside the court. He is the father of Pervaiz and the father-in-law of Zakia. A close-up shot introduces Taj in the documentary where the focus is on his face. A close-up shot indicates intimacy with the person shown in the image (van Leeuwen, 2001). The entire attention is laid on the emotions, displayed through the face. He has a stony face with a broad forehead, constricted eyebrows, fixed eyes and a half-opened mouth.

His stern face is the perfect embodiment of typical masculinity as it enfolds his authoritative and dominating nature just for being born a man. Such types of men perform typical gender roles, exercising supremacy on women or their subordinates, not only through actions but also through strongly annoyed facial expressions and angry gestures. His constricted eyebrows show his serious nature. His mustache is a sign of valiance. Usually, in our society, a man without a mustache is considered a man lacking manliness. Taj's body language suggests as if he is really offended by the statement of the person to whom he is pointing. Pointing a finger at someone is a negative sign, even if the action is not demeaning and humiliating. It suggests that he consider himself higher in dignity and status than others. Such type gender roles are constructed culturally where men dominate the women and thus promoting the unequal distribution of rights and power. This promotes violence against women.

Furthermore, Taj has worn a cap and draped a white shawl on his right shoulder. It is usually worn by leaders or the elders of the area who address the common folks. In Pakistani culture, a shawl (worn by men) denotes the dignity and honor of men. The dress code of Taj is traditional, wearing off-white kameez shalwar. The buttons of his shirt are open, showing his aggressive and violent nature. These elements of masculinity along with other signs hint at his power, mastery and command.

Semiotic Process for 5-A

Still image 5-A, shows Taj (Object) commenting on Zakia in an exasperated and infuriating way, while pointing a finger towards the addresser. This represents (Representamen) his aggressive and assertive nature. He declares his daughter-in-law (Zakia) immoral and disgraceful without paying any heed to reality and comments on her case, that the women who bring dishonor to the family must be punished grievously. This suggests that men consider their right and authority for determining the fate of women. He clearly justifies the inhumane

act of Pervaiz by stigmatizing Zakia, which signifies the non-surrendering and resisting nature of men towards their acts and judgments. (Interpretant).

Marvi Memon (Member of Parliament)



Figure 8: 6-A, Struggle for Passing the bill

Marvi Memon meets the acid victims. She gets to know that their perpetrators are not punished and they have not got justice. She takes the matter to parliament and passes the first bill for the prevention of acid attack crime and punishment for its violators.

In still image 6-A, Marvi Memon is shown to us through a medium camera shot. She's sitting in a rocking chair, while her arms being flexed on the desk or table. Her fingers are locked together, holding a pencil too. The rocking chair represents her authority and position, which has given her the privilege to look around in society and improve the status of the unprivileged, by solving their problems, raising a voice for them and giving them justice. While the pencil she has held tightly between her locked fingers, represents her strong will, determination and confidence.

She has an intense look on her face. This is evident from her fixed eyes and half-opened mouth, which shows she is distraught. It gives an insight into her concern and uneasiness for the other women, who have been oppressed, suppressed and marginalized by the men and still not given justice. Marvi has draped a scarf, covering her head. She has also graced a traditional shawl with that. This shows that although she is an independent and strong woman, she keeps herself modest, humble and elegant.

Moreover, she is shown speaking in the microphone, which connotes that she is going to bring positive change in society and will implement her targets. Marvi being a Member of Parliament, spoke for the acid victims and passed a bill unanimously from the parliament about acid crime control and punishment in Pakistan. She is the perfect portrayal of an empowered woman who is working for the rights of women.

Semiotic Process for 6-A

Still image 6-A, shows a different and modern image of woman as compared to the previous stills of the female gender. It introduces Member of Parliament, Marvi Memon (Object) who epitomizes the independence, action and intellect of women (Representamen). Her confidence and valiance suggest that with higher educational status and political power, gender stereotypes can be broken. Though she is a woman, she dares to speak up against unfair and unethical actions despite submitting herself to the brutality. Education thus not only eradicates the typical gender stereotyping but also enhances the awareness of the rights (Interpretant).

Conclusion

Awareness regarding gender abuse and brutalities is the ultimate goal of feminists and researchers to resist the violence based on gender division and asymmetrical power relations. Media provides a platform for communication programs to build awareness and challenge such discriminatory practices and attitudes based on gender and gender behaviors. The research primarily focused on the depiction of social abuse against women in general and the attitude of both men and women towards it. It also explored how both genders are engaged in different social activities according to their expected roles.

After keenly analyzing the data, there were 2 primary findings. First, in the domestic and public sphere, the representation of women is far less celebrated and respected than men. The indexical signs comprise of

elements, physical appearance and gestures, identified from the stills of female characters which by and large create an interpretant that our society substantiate and validate such type of inhumane act of throwing acid on women, perpetrated by men. Scarred faces of victims have certified the unidentified and dishonored lives of women in a patriarchal society. The stern and unsympathetic gestures of men while stressed and agitated body language of women have suggested the twofold and contrastive way of gender representation.

Likewise, the symbolic signs comprise elements, camera shots, props, dressing and their colors explored in the analysis suggest that roles of women range from nurturer, caretakers, life-givers, servers to being victims. Props like a gas stove, kitchen utensils, edibles, quilts, clothes, makeup, etc. have shown the physical bounds of the environment on women. They are restricted to abide by the domesticated roles of cooking, serving families, pleasing men and in case of failure they are subjected ruthlessly to violence by men. Their long shawls, veiled faces and covered faces have shaped a very negative interpretation of how vulnerable and unshielded they feel in a biased male dominant society. Their representation is constructed as fearful and helpless who needs protection and support. Moreover, the colors like red, black and white, used extensively for females have reflected the male mindset of society that considers woman as a danger or threat for revolting against norms as she is the root of all evil and this makes her susceptible to violence to purify the gender system. The interpretation of ascendancy and hegemony of masculinity is created through props, dressing and their colors. Men are portrayed as strong, fearless and ruthless in domestic spheres, instilling fear in their subordinates as explored through props like lighter, cigarette and prison bars.

References

- Abdellatif, O., & Ottaway, M. (2007). *Women in Islamist movements: Toward an Islamist model of women's*. Washington D.C: Carnegie Middle East Center.
- Ali, P. A., & Gavino, M. I. (2008, April). Violence against women in Pakistan: a framework for analysis. *Journal of Pakistan Medical Association*, 58(4), 198-203. doi: 10.3402/gha.v4i0.7448
- Ali, R. (2001). *The Dark Side of 'honour': Women Victims in Pakistan*. Lahore: ShirkatGah. Retrieved from <http://hbv-awareness.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/REPORT-BY-SHIRKAT-GAH-The-Dark-Side-of-Honour-Women-Victims-in-Pakistan.pdf>
- Ali, T. S., Krantz, G., Gul, R., Asad, N., Johansson, E., & Mogren, I. (2011). Gender roles and their influence on life prospects for women in urban Karachi, Pakistan: a qualitative study. *Global Health Action*, 4(1), 7448. doi:10.3402/gha.v4i0.7448
- Bascow, S. A. (1992). *Gender: Stereotypes and roles*. (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. In S. Bem (Ed.), *Psychology of Sex Roles*. (2nd ed.). [pp. 125-158]. Littleton, MA: Copley.
- Berger, A. A. (2008). *Seeing is believing: An introduction to visual communication* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Bhattacharya, S. (2014). Status of women in Pakistan. *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 51(1). http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/7v51_No1_14.pdf.
- Carter, C. & Steiner, L. (2004). Introduction to critical readings: media and gender. In C. Carter & L. Steiner (Eds.), *Critical Readings: Media and Gender*. [pp. 1-10]. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Christen, I. (1995). Brain structure explains male/female differences. In J. S. Petrikin, (Ed.), *Male/Female roles: Opposing viewpoints*. [pp. 48-56]. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press.
- Dobson, J. (1995). Biology determines gender roles. In J.S. Petrikin, (Ed.), *Male/Female roles: Opposing viewpoints*. [pp. 32-39]. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press.
- Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social role interpretation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fog, A. (2004). The supposed and the real role of mass media in modern democracy. *Working Paper*. Retrieved from: <http://www.agner.org/cultsel/mediacrisis.pdf>
- Grieson, J. (1946, January). Postwars pattern. *Hollywood Quarterly*, 1(2), 159-165. doi:10.2307/1209557
- Howard, J., & Hollander, J. A. (1997). *Gendered situations, gendered selves: A gender lens in the social psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ibrahim, F. (2005). *Honour killings under the rule of law in Pakistan*. Montreal: McGill University. http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbinjump-full&object_id=83953&local_base=GENO1-MCGO2
- Kessler, S. J., & McKenna, W. (1978). *Gender: An ethno methodological approach*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Khan, T. U. (2004). *Women's rights in Islam*. Peshawar: National Research and Development Foundation.
- Kohlberg, L. (1966). A cognitive-developmental analysis of children's sex role concepts and attitudes. In E. Maccoby (Ed.), *The development of sex differences*. [pp. 82-172]. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Lacey, N. (1998). *Image and representation: Key concepts in media studies*. New York: Palgrave.
- Lindsey, L. (1997). *Gender roles: A sociological perspective* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Meigel, F., & Johansson, T. (2002). *Kultursociologi*. (2nd ed.). Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Millett, K. (1969). *Sexual politics*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Parsons, T. (1960). *Structure and process in modern societies*. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press.
- Parsons, T., & Bales, R. F. (1955). *Family: Socialization and interaction process*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- van Leeuwen, T., & Carey, J. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of visual analysis*. London: SAGE Publications.