

## Perception and Effects of Dramas on University Students

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### Abstract

*Drama as an important mean of the media can impact the lives of people and consequently influence the whole society. This study conducted to understand the perception of students and the effects of Hum TV dramas on university students of Lahore. For this, mixed method research design was applied. Focus groups and self-constructed questionnaire were used for data collection from conveniently selected male and female students of public and private universities. Qualitative results revealed that subject selection and features of dramas determined the students' attitude towards watching trends. Similarly, the perceived impact of dramas on culture, lifestyles, fashion sense and even on spouse selection criteria were reported by both male and female students. Quantitative results did not show any significant gender difference in the subject preference of dramas, features and impacts of dramas. Moreover, subject selection and features of dramas for watching differed with students' year of study.*

**Keywords:** Dramas, Gender, University, Students

### Introduction

The role of media as one of the big influencers (Dattoo, 2010) for youth has been widely reported (Dattoo, 2010) and in this regard drama is considered as an important medium of entertainment presented by Pakistani media. Large number of dramas are being produced and presented on diverse subjects due to the availability of a large number of channels. As per Gilani Research Foundation Pakistan's survey (2010), 87% of TV viewers watch dramas, of which 68% viewers prefer to watch Pakistani dramas. Whereas, a gender comparison showed that more females are fond of watching television dramas than the males. Initially dramas were made for the purpose of entertainment but it emerged as one of the most influential instruments to expose and inspire the attitude and emotions of people in the society (Shahbaz et al., 2015). Moreover, people get emotionally attached to various dramas other than watching it just for enjoyment. Even in developing countries, this medium is considered important for spreading and creating awareness on various social issues (Zia, 2014). Karim &

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Shehzad (2016) stated that dramas depict the image of society and highlight the contemporary issues. Likewise, it introduced new fashion trends in society. Rana & Iqbal (2008), stated that all age groups, sexes, political and social institutions have undergone dramatic changes due to the advent of satellite TV channels in Pakistan, however people are getting more conscious about the impact and want electronic media to strengthen their own cultural values and traditional modes of living.

While discussing the role of media, Khan et al. (2013) highlighted that the role of media industry in the economy can not be denied because from last 15 years it generated revenue for the economy and provided direct as well as indirect employment to the people of the country. For the people of all age groups of Pakistan, internet and television are the most common source of entertainment. They further highlighted that mass media have both positive and negative impacts on the society. It has the power to change the views and opinions of the Pakistani public and which is also dominated by the Indian and Western culture.

The impact of media has been reported negatively and positively in the literature so far, for instance, Ashraf & Islam's study (2014) emphasized that media exert an intense impact on different aspects of people's life including the psychology. Because it affects the opinions, perceptions and priorities of the people. Even it influences attitudes, values and beliefs about the world and shapes one's behavior about concepts and situations, and highlights the personality traits and attributes. Moreover, Saba (1996) added that, mass media have influenced the lifestyle and watching habits of people, as they follow the lifestyle of different actors and prefer to watch/discuss dramas on dining table rather than discussing other social issues. Shabir et al. (2013) found that women in Bahawalpur reported to adopt the fashion styles of actresses shown by TV channels in dramas. This study also found that dramas of both GEO and HUM TV are improving the level of women's education and dramas of both channels are reported as best mediums for cultural exchange in the society.

Likewise, Huesmann & Taylor (2006) highlighted the negative impact of media; both fictional television and film violence increase the short-term and a long-term aggression and violence in young viewers in a form of suicides and acts of aggression. Furthermore, Huesmann (2007) discussed that the viewers will behave more violently due to the violence shown by the media as exposure to the media violence, increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior in children and adults. Juni et al. (2014) highlighted that foreign TV channels also negatively influence the Pakistani youth because foreign content are manipulating the youth's mind by promoting anti-Islamic ideology, customs and cultural values. Moreover, Indian dramas also encourage western dressing culture among the girls. A study of Shahbaz (2004) further added that the sociocultural intellect

of youth representing middle income group of society is found to be influenced by this foreign culture shown in the media which has not only increased the generation gap but also disturbed the social and moral values in society.

Various researchers like Jusoff & Sahimi (2009), found that watching TV habits hinders the development of young generations in different areas. They further added that increased exposure to television among adolescents/young children could lead them to behavior problems. Because the television mostly broadcast violent, sexual and alcohol content. Karim & Shehzad (2016) stated that availability of cable and various channels due to technological advancement changed the minds of the young generation. They strive to follow the dressing, communication styles and interpersonal relationship as shown in the Television.

Preferences for watching different types of dramas have also been explored by the researchers, for example, a study found that Pakistani youth prefer to watch romantic dramas (Fulkerts & Lacy 2004). Krishnan & Boopathy (2015) reported that the choices of watching TV programs in urban and rural area found to be different due to the age and sex of children. Researchers explored that female with less education and age had a tendency to watch Indian dramas more than females with higher education and age in Peshawar (Shah et al., 2016). Zia (2007) found that the majority of the females preferred to watch dramas just for entertainment and not for getting information. Likewise, Naseer et al. (2014) stated that Pakistani youngsters and adolescents frequently watch international content shown in the dramas which influence fashion, lifestyles, language and cultures, because it shows cigarettes, alcohol and love affairs, which somehow can negatively affect the youth.

In Pakistan, there are various drama channels after the growth of the media industry in the last few decades, but the dramas of HUM TV are reported best by the Asian Viewers Television Awards, 2015 and won the award of Best Urdu channel (Best Urdu Channel, 2015). This channel was launched in 2005 and got the 11<sup>th</sup> position among best 20 top highest viewed channels in 2013 (Gallup Pakistan, 2013). Shabir et al. (2013) stated that Geo TV dramas are not depicting Pakistani culture, whereas Hum TV dramas are representing cultural and traditional norms of Pakistan. Therefore, after reviewing researches and, considering the importance of HUM TV dramas and its popularity, the researcher has selected HUM TV channel for the present study to know the perception of university students about HUM TV dramas and to examine the impact of dramas on university students of Lahore.

## **Review of Literature**

Media is considered as the "mirror" of the modern society, because it shapes our lives. It helps the audience to get information about things and to make opinions about

different issues. It keeps the people informed about what is happening around them (Shakeel, 2010). The basic function of the media is providing information, education and entertainment (Baran et al., 2004). Dwivedi & Pandey (2013) emphasized that in the current decade of knowledge and awareness, media has a large role. From watching television and listening radio to reading books, magazines and newspapers, everywhere people connect to the media in order to collect knowledge and information especially young people mostly use television for dramas, educational programs, news and movies. Similarly, in shaping views about gender, media is considered the most influential tool. In our daily routine, media inculcate its messages into the viewer's mind through many ways. Therefore, the media's role in representing gender and gender issues is considered critical. Wood (1994) stated that the current society is having a gendered media: which influence the public views on gender.

Similarly, Kumari and Joshi (2015) highlighted that the media have a large influence on adolescents, therefore instead of portraying stereotypical gender roles and strengthening the deeply rooted patriarchal views about gender norms, it can be an effective mean of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the society (Kumar & Joshi, 2015).

When it comes to television, it is considered the best way of entertainment in Pakistan (Madni et al. 2014). Additionally, Television has a power to affect deeply the opinions of its viewers about certain issues (McQuail, 2005) along with serving as (Ahmar, 2012) a powerful medium to educate, inform and create awareness because it effects on thinking patterns of the viewers. According to Safdar et al. (2015) music, drama, action, sports and comedy are the popular amusements provided by TV to Pakistani people. However, dramas are the most preferred format of media and the frequency of watching dramas have changed, and more dramas are viewed frequently on a daily basis (Khalid, 2010).

Hough & Hough (2012) reported that drama affects the brain to a large extent and make the brain think in a different way. As a drama creates positive feelings which strengthens the temporal lobe, which is associated with slow cognitive decline and a healthier brain is thus maintained for a longer time period. Drama provides a calm and disciplined atmosphere which promotes efficient learning skills, school success and good memory retention. This is how, drama cultivates a healthy brain.

Juni et al. (2014) found while examining the impact of PTV dramas that some aspects of dramas such as story, actors, music, songs and topics of violence and romance got the more viewers attention. Additionally, respondents of this study acknowledged the effect of dramas on their indigenous culture and dealings with friends and family along with their dressing patterns in rural setting. Likewise, Madni et al.

(2014) revealed that female students of Sargodha University prefer to watch female actresses in traditional dresses i.e. Shalwar-Qameez, Dopata, Veil and Scarf in both Hum TV and Urdu-1 dramas, rather than watching them in western clothes e.g. miniskirts. Whereas, Shabbir et al. (2013) highlighted the negative influence of foreign dramas on cultural values and living styles of women. Similarly, Shabbir et al. (2013) studied that women of Bahawalpur adopted the styles of characters shown by Urdu dramas. They also found that Urdu dramas are improving the views and thinking patterns of the women of Bahawalpur by promoting Pakistani culture.

This study uses the assumptions of social learning theory to examine the impact of HUMTV dramas on university students along with exploring gender differences in their preferences of watching dramas. This theory asserts that audience adopt and learn from powerful, attractive models which they can relate to and rewarding for themselves. They store their learning in their memory and utilize them in certain situations. Albert Bandura stated that social learning is the learning from the environment by observing the attitudes of others.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To investigate the perception of university students towards Hum TV dramas.
- To explore the preference of certain subjects liked by university students in dramas
- To explore the features of dramas preferred by university students.
- To analyze the influence of Hum TV dramas on the lives of University students.

### **Hypotheses**

Demographic variables such as age, gender, parental income, year of study , and university status (public or private) are used to understand the relation and differences between students on the bases of variable emerged from the findings of qualitative study; features, subject of the dramas and impact of dramas.

### **Research Design**

A mixed method research design was used to study the impact of Hum TV dramas on University students in Lahore as well as investigate the gender differences in watching preferences towards the subjects and features of the drama.

First of all, for qualitative part of the study, public and private universities of Lahore were selected by using purposive sampling technique. The researcher selected 1 public and 1 private university to conduct the focus groups. Permission and consent of the authority and the participants were taken. Confidentiality was assured after sharing the purpose of the study with participants. Then the researcher conducted focus groups separately with the boys and girls of same study disciplines. All the focus groups were

recorded with the consent of the participants. After transcription and analysis, codes and themes were generated. From the themes of the focus groups, a self-structured questionnaire was formulated for the quantitative survey. Then 400 questionnaires were filled by conveniently selected 200 male and 200 female students of public and private universities. This data was statistically analyzed.

## Statistical Analysis

Focus groups were analyzed by using thematic analysis. Themes and sub themes were extracted from codes. For the analysis of quantitative data, Independent sample t-test, One Way ANOVA and Correlation were used by applying SPSS.

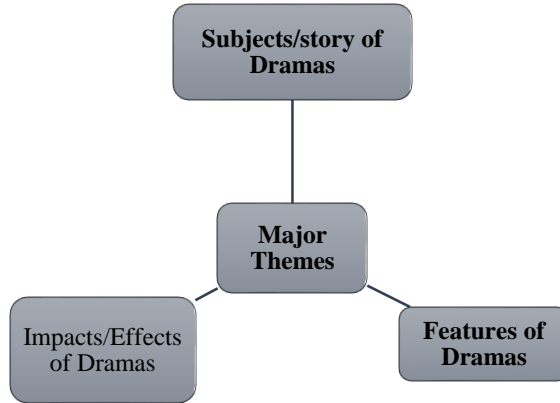
**Table 1**

<b>Demographics(n=400)</b>		
Variable	F	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	199	49.8
Male	201	50.2
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 20	153	38.2
21-30	243	60.8
More than 30	4	1.0
<b>Monthly income of Father</b>		
Less than 50,000	176	44.0
50,000-100,000	153	38.2
Above 100,000	71	17.8
<b>Monthly income of Mother</b>		
Less than 50,000	107	26.8
50,000-100,000	44	11.0
Above 100,000	22	5.5
Missing (not working)	227	56.8
<b>Year of Study</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> year	113	28.2
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	108	27.0
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	78	19.5
4 <sup>th</sup> year	101	25.2
<b>Discipline of Program</b>		
Social sciences and Humanities	109	27.2
Natural sciences	100	25.0
Applied sciences	191	47.8
<b>University Status</b>		
Public	200	50.0
Private	200	50.0

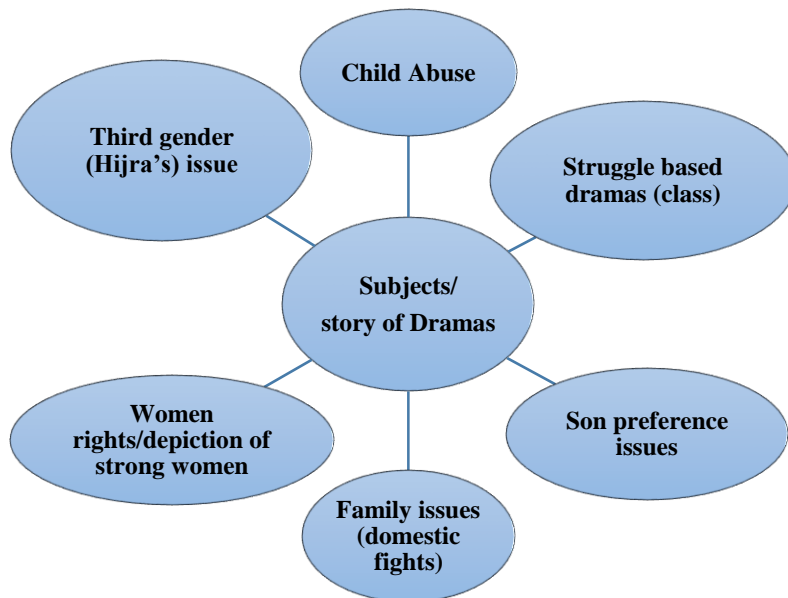
## Results

### *Qualitative Results*

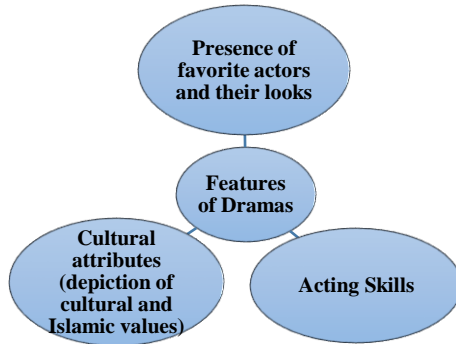
**Figure 1** Pictorial representation of major themes of all focus groups from Lahore



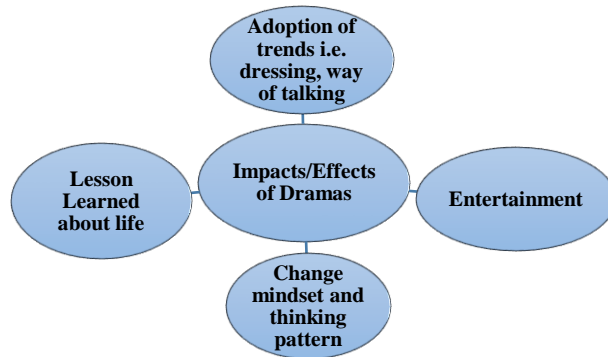
**Figure 2** First theme extracted from focus groups of female students



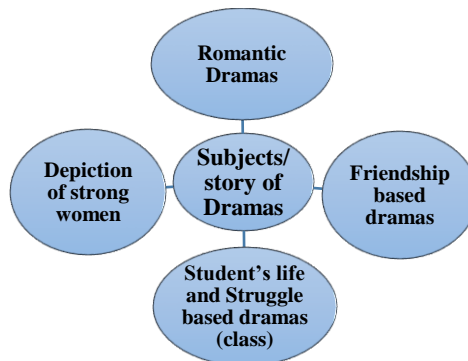
**Figure 2.1** Second theme extracted from focus groups of female students



**Figure 2.2** Third theme extracted from focus groups of female students

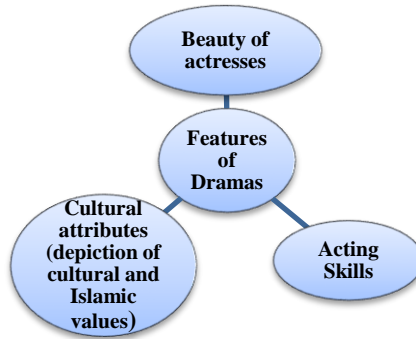


**Figure 3** Themes extracted from focus groups of male students

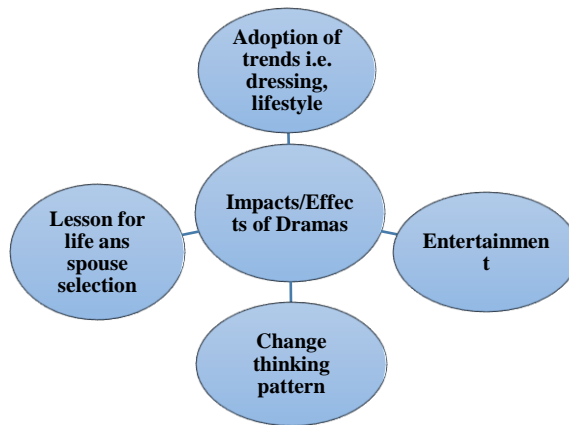




**Figure 3.1** First theme extracted from focus groups of male students



**Figure 3.2** Third theme extracted form focus groups of male students



### ***Quantitative Results***

**Table 2**

*Independent sample t-test for measuring the difference b/w the subjects, features and impacts of drama on university students by their gender (male/female), university status (public/private) and family type (nuclear/extended) (N=400).*

Factor		Mean	SD	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
<i>Female</i>	<i>Subject</i>	19.9	4.25	-2.62(398)	.009	0.263
	<i>Feature</i>	14.4	3.29	-.989(398)	.323	0.096
	<i>Impact</i>	20.8	4.16	-.647(398)	.518	0.0729
<i>Male</i>	<i>Subject</i>	18.8	4.10	-2.62(398)	.009	0.263
	<i>Feature</i>	14.1	2.92	-.989(398)	.323	0.096
	<i>Impact</i>	20.5	4.07	-.647(398)	.518	0.0729
<i>Public</i>	<i>Subject</i>	19.2	4.46	-1.09(398)	.274	0.0952
	<i>Feature</i>	14.3	3.08	.209(398)	.835	0.0321
	<i>Impact</i>	20.8	4.33	.827(398)	.409	0.07297
<i>Private</i>	<i>Subject</i>	19.6	3.93	-1.09(398)	.274	0.0952
	<i>Feature</i>	14.2	3.15	.209(398)	.835	0.0321
	<i>Impact</i>	20.5	3.88	.827(398)	.409	0.07297

*p*<0.05

**Table 3**

*Analysis of Variances measuring the difference in subjects of drama preferred by university students by their year of study*

Subjects of drama	<i>SS</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between Groups	221.856	3	73.952	4.287	.005
Within Groups	6830.384	396	17.248		
Total	7052.240	399			

\*F value is significant at *p*<.05

**Table 4**

*ANOVA measuring the difference in features of drama preferred by university students by their year of study*

Features of drama	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between Groups	176.333	3	58.778	6.310	.000
Within Groups	3688.965	396	9.316		
Total	3865.297	399			

\*F value is significant at *p*<.05

**Table 5**

*ANOVA measuring the Impacts of drama on university students by their year of study.*

Impacts of drama	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between Groups	71.156	3	23.719	1.408	.240
Within Groups	6670.084	396	16.844		
Total	6741.240	399			

\*F value is significant at *p*<.05

**Table 6**

*Relationship between age, monthly income of father, mother, features, subject and impact of dramas*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age	-	-.034	-.044	.052	.054	.088
Monthly income of Father		-	.303**	-.070	-.082	-.186**
Monthly income of Mother			-	-.042	-.034	-.178*
Features				-	.480**	.456**
Subject					-	.472**
Impact						-

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

## Discussion

The qualitative study found that female university students prefer to watch dramas based on the subjects of social and domestic issues, success/achievement based drama and on women’s rights. However, male university students prefer to watch dramas based on the subjects of love stories/ romantic dramas, friendships based dramas, struggle oriented dramas and dramas which depict a strong woman character e.g. As one of the male respondent said,

*“Most of the dramas based on love stories and their hardships are remembered because it catches viewer’s attention, friendship based (group work) dramas are mostly liked by boys... which urge us to do more for our friends ..... showing strong women attracts me to watch dramas instead of portrying them dependent and facing violence”.*

One of the female respondent said,

*“Drama based on the subject of child abuse and rape.... struggle of a middle class girl was shown for achieving scholarship and to study in an expensive university, dramas like father disowns the daughters due to preference for son and daughters faced hardships”.*

The quantitative results of the study verified the finding of qualitative results and found significant gender differences between the subject preference of dramas. This seems somehow similar to the finding of Karim & Shehzad (2016) where they found that urban males prefer to watch romantic dramas and get more inspired than the females after watching romantic scenes in dramas. This finding seems oppoite of the finding of Spier’s study (n.d.) that young males mostly view programs which depict strong male personalities and reject the plays that feature self-confident females whereas this aspect seems consistent with the finding that young females from low income groups prefer to

watch youth's achievement oriented programs. The study of Wühr et al. (2017) also verified the gender differences in the subject selection between women and men.

Furthermore the results found that the features for which female and male university students prefer to watch dramas are; presence of favorite actors, the acting skills of the specific actor, beauty of actresses and drama which depict cultural and Islamic values. Kareem et al. (2014) supported the results and stated that the various features of dramas attract both males and females e.g. one of the female respondents stated,

*"I watch a drama if my favorite actor/actress work in it,*

Another female said,

*"the story was very common love story but the actors acted so well and it seems like original story and some moments left me with tears*

Another one said,

*"...that drama was my favorite because it was based on the effects and consequences of practicing non-Islamic conducts".*

One of the male respondents stated,

*"If actors do good acting then I watch any drama till the end, I just sit down anywhere to watch drama if the actress is beautiful*

Another said,

*".... story does not bother me but dramas no doubt affect on viewer's thinking so it should show Islamic practices".*

Whereas the quantitative results of the study did not find any significant gender differences in the features of dramas among university students, which is consistent with the findings of Baratwaj & Aravindh (2016).

Regarding impacts/effects of the dramas, results found that female students reported to have the impacts of drama over their dressing, way of talking, on their lives by getting solution of their problems and even they set a spouse selection criteria guided by the dramas. Some women watch dramas just for the entertainment and some women stated that dramas have impacts and it changes the mindset and thinking pattern of the people. The results are supported by the research conducted by Zia (2007) that females take television characters as their role models and copy their appearance and style which verifies the social learning theory. Similarly the results supported by Collie (2014), that the television is widely understood domestic medium that lives, particularly in the memory of women and they follow the things shown by it. The result of the current study, i.e. "women adopt solution of the problems" is supported by the study of Rahman et al. (2017). Similarly, according to Jensen & Oster (2007) access to cable television has improved the status of women because they show resistance to spousal abuse, and

lower the preference for sons. They further added that cable is associated with an increased women's status through decision-making power within the household. One of the female respondents of the current study stated that,

*"We follow fashion trends shown in drama, also drama is seen just for the sake of entertainment, It definitely changes our thinking pattern because we start knowing other aspects of an issue after watching it deeply and it sometimes changes the mindset of people about any specific topic or situation and dramas gave me lesson that by struggle and hard work we can achieve the desired success".*

Other female respondent stated that,

*"We obviously adopt our dressing, copy lifestyle shown in dramas i.e. house interior, modernism,*

Another student said,

*....dramas give motivation to do struggle and achieve the desired goal in life*

Another one said,

*"these drams set the spouse criteria by portryaing actors as perfect due to their beauty, height, complexion etc".*

Jin & Jeong (2010) stated that the married life was significantly affected by exposure to dramas among females because they adopt the lifestyle shown into the dramas. Likewise, Ali et al. (2014) & Zafar et al. (2017) found the impact of dramas on culture, language and dressing of young females in Pakistan. Shephard et al. (2016) also reported that mass media influence the fashion sense and consciousness of both male and females. Whereas Mustafa et al. (2015) stated that Islamic culture and traditional lifestyle of a Pakistani young generation is highly influenced by the global media content shown in the dramas. Similarly, male students stated that the dramas influence their dressing styles, lifestyles and guide about the spouse selection criteria in their minds. Some boys reported that they prefer to watch drama just for amusement and some said that dramas give lessons about life and change their thinking patterns, e.g. as one of the respondents stated that,

*"Females get involved in drama so much that even they discuss it with their others,*

Another student said,

*Beauty standard presented in dramas also changes thinking patterns of males about their ideal spouse".*

Karim & Shehzad (2016) supported the results and stated that urban males get more inspired than the females after watching romantic scenes in dramas. Whereas Gregg (2008) and Shephard et al. (2016) found that mass media influence the fashion sense

and consciousness of both males and females and they get engaged in unhealthy behaviors to reach the desired body shapes and sizes shown in the dramas.

The quantitative results of the study did not find any significant gender differences in measuring the impacts of dramas on students, which is found opposite to the findings of Zafar et al. (2017) & Rehan (2017), who found the gender differences in terms of effecting the dressing and fashion styles of the youth. Ullah & Khan (2014) found that Pakistani media is creating an illusion in Pakistani women through advertising because it depicts women in fake beauty by showing them in fair complexion, flawless skin, long and bouncing hair, slim bodies and seductive dresses. Which disable the girls to realize that their real worth exist in their intellectual development not in their physical attractiveness. Whereas the study of the American College of Pediatricians (2016) and Mushtaq et al. (2015) supported the results and did not find any gender differences while studying the effects of media.

Similarly the quantitative results showed that the public and private university status did not influence the preferences of students based on subjects, features and impacts of HUM TV dramas. However, Zia (2007) found that youth of Pakistan from both public and private universities and colleges prefer to watch TV for entertainment. The results of the current study showed that the subjects of the dramas and features of dramas preferred to watch by students differ significantly on the bases of their year of study. For subjects of drama the results indicate that the mean score of the students of 2<sup>nd</sup> year group ( $M=20.11$ ,  $SD=3.70$ ) and 3<sup>rd</sup> year group ( $M=20.03$ ,  $SD=3.29$ ) found higher than the group of 1<sup>st</sup> year students ( $M=18.30$ ,  $SD= 4.95$ ). For features the results indicate that the mean score of the students of 2<sup>nd</sup> year group ( $M=14.98$ ,  $SD=2.56$ ) found higher than 1<sup>st</sup> year group ( $M=13.39$ ,  $SD=3.74$ ) and 4<sup>th</sup> year group ( $M=14.02$ ,  $SD=2.72$ ).

But the impact of drama on students didn't differ significantly with the year of study. Similarly the result found no correlation between the age of the students and students' preference for the subjects and features of the drama as well as the impacts of drama. The results of Gurleen & Sukhmani (2011) & Singh et al. (2015) somehow supported the findings of the current study that with an increase in age and changes in education levels/ years of study, there is no significant change in the pattern and preference of television viewing.

The results reported negative correlation between the impact of dramas and parents' income, whereas, no correlation found between subject selection and features of dramas with parent's income. Moreover, the results of the study indicated that academic discipline (Social sciences, Natural sciences and Applied sciences) did not influence the subject selection and features of dramas preferred by the university students and impacts

of dramas. These findings highlight the need to explore it further by using a qualitative approach.

## **Conclusion**

The current study has concluded that dramas have different factors which influence the attitudes of university students towards watching HUM TV dramas. Among these factors, “features, subjects and impacts” of dramas have emerged as important themes in this study. However, the gender based difference found regarding the preference of subjects of dramas, e.g. boys prefer to watch drama based on the subject, i.e. love stories, romantic dramas and friendship oriented dramas whereas girls prefer to watch the dramas on the subject of child abuse, domestic violence and struggle based dramas. But the majority of the respondents reported that they prefer to watch dramas based on the subjects that depict strong and independent/empowered women. Similarly, while discussing essential features of dramas, the majority of the respondents reported that they prefer to watch drama due to the acting skills of the actors and the presence of cultural and Islamic attributes/values.

This study also concluded that the dramas have an impact on both boys and girls, as it changes their mindset, thinking patterns and even their lifestyles. Moreover, the quantitative results concluded that the variables, i.e. university status (public, private) of students and academic disciplines/programs did not influence the student’s preference for subjects and features of drama. Even these variables had no influence on the impacts of dramas. Whereas negative correlation found between income of both father/ mother and impacts of drama.

## **Limitations**

- Due to financial and time constraints the present study is conducted in Punjab and confined to Lahore region.
- Due to time constraints, the current study is limited to one public, and one private university of Lahore.

## **Recommendations**

- It is recommended to the channel to project modernization in the positive way in the context of Pakistani Culture
- It is recommended to the channel to produce more struggle and achievement based dramas to boost up the motivations of the students.
- The present study can be served as a guideline to produce the dramas according to the choice/ preferences of the youth, which they prefer to watch.
- It is suggested that in the future this study can be conducted in other provinces to get the broader perspective.

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