

Semiotics of Gender Roles and Honour Killing in Pakistani Paintings

Mehvish Riaz¹

ABSTRACT

Article History:**Received:**

April 30, 2021

Accepted:

January 3, 2022

Published:

January 18, 2023

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The study examines how gender is represented through visual signs in the paintings on honour killing, how social structures gain meaning on getting painted, how power dynamics work in the so-called traditional or patriarchal societies, and if and how these semiotic constructions represent, underrepresent, or misrepresent Pakistani context. The grammar of the visual design of 40 paintings on honour killing, painted by male and female Pakistani painters belonging to different areas of Pakistan, have been qualitatively studied in the light of the theoretical understanding of ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The visual grammar of the paintings suggests that the women have been represented as helpless, outcaste, oppressed, and marginalized, while men have, indirectly through visual signs, been depicted as oppressors and perpetrators. On the ideational level, society has also been highlighted as extremely oppressive and debilitating. Interpersonal metafunction reveals social negligence towards honour killing and female victimhood, while the textual orientation of the paintings not only suggests social control over the female body and choices as the core issue, but also highlights the strict condemnation of female oppression and honour killing by the painters.

Keywords

Honour Killing, Gender-based victimhood, Pakistani paintings, Visual grammar, Politics of representation

Introduction

Honour killing is a term used for the killing of a man or woman in response to a socially perceived offensive or dis-honourable act, such as eloping, gaining independence by choosing a profession, choosing a spouse against family's consent, "remarriage...", the perception that a woman was cheating on her husband", etc. (Dyer, 2015, p. 133; Yaqoob, 2017, p. 2; Riaz, 2019). Generally, women are the major victims. Shah (2017) claims that in the real-life scenario in Pakistan with reference to honour killing, there are deviations from the way realities are portrayed in discourse.

For example, men and women are rarely killed together. In most cases, men are just fined, not killed. It also frequently happens that men and women are "casually accused of being black" (Shah, 2017, p. 49) but the accusation doesn't follow any punishment or violence. "Accusations are common and widespread" (Shah, 2017, p. 49) and in rural Sindh,

¹ Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Modern Languages, UET, Lahore. Her research interests include sociolinguistics, gender and communication studies. mehvishriaz@uet.edu.pk



a bickering or minor domestic quarrel between two women can end up in both denouncing the other of being guilty of transgression. Some women also escape death if relatives intervene. “Miraculous escapes are not uncommon”; and though killing in the name of honour is justified by the perpetrators, yet “a killing when it occurs, does cause local trauma, pain and protest” (Shah, 2017, p. 49). In various cases, killing of a man or a woman is accompanied by a subsequent suicide of a close family member.

Using various modes of representation, in an era of image saturation (Bradbury & Christian, 2017), powerful, dominant, and hegemonic groups have the privilege of portraying the weak, marginalized, and oppressed. The dominant groups portray the subdued groups from their own point of view and in their own favourite colours, thus engineering facts which in turn formulate perceptions due to getting internalized by the subdued groups; and this process carries on forming identities and informing to practices (Riaz, 2019; Riaz & Rafi, 2019). “Visual representations regulate reform, construct, and subvert ideologies that affect lives, cultural images, credibility, and international relations, etc.” (Danish & Riaz, 2022, p. 137). Sato (2011) claims, “language use, hence, has a potential to help establish and maintain social and power relations, values, and identities” (p. 199), through what Hutcheon (1989) and Hall (1997) consider as politics of representation which involves alteration of representation. Altered representations may regulate stereotypes and gender ideologies which eventually affect lives, policies, decisions, credibility, trade, and economic opportunities.

Therefore, in the present study, it has been investigated how paintings have been semiotically entangled in the process of representation and identity construction of the victims and perpetrators. It has been argued if and how women are visually portrayed as marginalized, oppressed, and powerless, and if the patterns of ‘otherness’ of women and dominance of men represented in the paintings offer a hegemonic visuality.

Following is the research question:

1. How have semiotic resources been employed on ideational, interpersonal, and textual levels in the paintings to represent gender roles, honour norms, victimhood, and honour killing with reference to Pakistani culture?

To make the invisible visible, the grammar of images in the context of honour killing in Pakistan needs to be understood. The study, therefore, fills gaps in the existing academic literature on semiotics of honour killing because there is paucity of research in this area. The framework employed in this study can be employed for further research on images related to the Pakistani context. It helps localize social semiotic approaches by interpreting visual signs pertinent to Pakistani culture which is non-western.

The study develops counter-narrative against honour killing, metanarrative of patriarchy, and stereotypical representations prevailing in discourse, emphasizes the need to de-stigmatize Pakistani culture for what is practiced in certain contexts or sections and not the entire culture, and focus instead on solving the problem through a well-planned reconstruction of gender. Therefore, the study may also help the policymakers develop appropriate intervention and prevention policies regarding honour killing, female victimhood, as well as male rights.

In Pakistani context, Pahor et al., (2016) studied gender inequality as a cause of honour killing in Pakistan and stated, “society considers woman inferior to man and that’s why people

do not hesitate to kill woman rather man in the name of honor killing” (p. 3). Moreover, Pahor et al., (2016) collected data from 100 households of urban areas in the district, as well as by interviewing 10 women from 15 villages each and considered male child preference, financial dependence of women, forced marriages, and high rate of illiteracy as causes of gender inequality which further prompt honour killing.

In Turkish context, Dogan (2018) visited 65 prisons in Turkey, interviewed prisoners who had committed honour killing, and collected 89 cases of honour killing out of which 10 cases were committed by women. However, five out of the 10 women participated in the interviews to explore their motives behind getting involved in honour crimes. Dogan (2018) claimed that “patriarchy alone cannot fully explain women’s involvement in honor killings cases” because, in these cases honour violence had little to do with controlling female sexual behavior; instead “the killing occurred in response to fear of exclusion, aggression, threat, and sexual abuse in forms of rape or harassment by the male victim” (Dogan, 2018, pp. 9-10). Therefore, instead of associating every act of honour killing to patriarchy, it is important to understand honour killing according to the context and the choices available to the perpetrators to commit or avoid honour killing.

To study the stereotypical representation of Pakistani men in electronic media, Mirza (2015) did a content analysis of 60 Pakistani commercials and noted that “representations are clearly damaging for gender equality” (p. 1728). To understand Pashtun gender ideologies and the sexist role of proverbs in society, Sanauddin (2015) did a corpus analysis of 500 proverbs collected through published work, personal observation and 40 interviews of folks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Sanauddin (2015) found, “women are the target of 70% of the total proverb topics, while only a quarter (25%) of the proverbs are concerned with men as their subject matter or target” (p. 129). Though not all men or women are portrayed negatively, yet men are represented in positive terms in the proverbs, while women have been predominantly represented in negative connotations. Chambers et al. (2018) also found that Muslim men have been portrayed as aggressive and dominant with a sick attitude towards their women who are downtrodden and submissive. The sexual identities of immigrant Asian, Muslim and Pakistani men have been associated with rape, abuse and exploitation; while those of the women in those communities as repressed and sexually unavailable.

Bharadwaj and Mehta (2017) sought the feedback of ten women working in the corporate sector through interviews about two Indian advertisements and found that though the women had been represented in modern roles which apparently looked promising, yet their representation was a temporary sojourn into male roles, but eventually traditional feminine roles had been reinforced through markers of femininity expected in a patriarchal structure embedded in the Indian society.

Bakhtiari and Saadat (2015) studied the representation of men and women in relation to each other in 69 photographs selected from four volumes of the book entitled *Interchange* which was widely used for teaching English in Iranian institutes. The professional representations of men and women are narrative and stereotypical in terms of the activities they are expected to perform, such as women are expected to be nurses, cooks, or teachers. As consumers, women have been placed in the left sides of the frames, thus depicting them as Given or as someone who is already understood as an active consumer. Women as protesters have been represented as participating in acts of masculinity, while generally

shyness and domesticity have been attributed to them through their facial expressions and placement. The images reflect “male-biased ideology” (Ahour & Zafrani, 2016, p. 30), while putting women in their stereotypical social roles.

Ang and Yeo (2018) carried out a semiotic study of the depiction of disabled people in the Malaysian newspapers, according to the framework of social participants suggested by van Luewen (2008) and found that disabled people have been othered and excluded symbolically. Riaz (2022 b) studied the semiotics of kitchen in rural and urban areas with reference to sustainable development, structural violence and unequal distribution of resources, particularly technological ones, in Pakistan. The present study, however, is a socio-semiotic analysis of gender roles in Pakistani paintings on honour killing.

Methods

The article is based on author’s doctoral dissertation for which forty paintings by male and female painters belonging to different parts of Pakistan were selected from different exhibitions, virtual or real, organized on honour killing from 2007 to 2017 (Riaz & Rafi, 2019; Riaz, 2022 a). For instance, exhibitions such as ‘In the Name of Honor’ (2011), ‘No Honor in Killing: Making Visible Buried Truth’ (2009) and ‘In the Name of Honour Killing’ (2014), in which various painters participated, have been organized solely on the theme of honour killing and offer data for analysis. Paintings are abstract or portraits and themes of selection include the signs and symbols related to gender and honour killing. To analyze the paintings, the socio-semiotic approach of the grammar of visual design suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) has been adopted. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) apply Halliday’s (1985) concepts of ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions to the study of images.

Ideational or representational metafunction is about the visual structuring of the participants or actors in the image, “participants roles”, and “specific circumstances that are divided into three kinds being Locative Circumstances (setting), Circumstances of Means, and Circumstance of Accompaniment” (Ahour & Zaferani, 2016, p. 82). Locative circumstance relates participants in the foreground to those in the background, circumstance of means is about the tools employed in the action, and circumstance of accompaniment is a participant forming no vectors with other participants. Ideational metafunction not only deals with the possessive attributes of the represented participants or actors but also the relations formed by these represented participants in the image through transactional, non-transactional, analytical, action, reactional, symbolic, conversion or narrative processes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 46-113; Riaz, 2020; Riaz, 2021 a).

Transactional relations are realized through vectors which are explicit or implicit lines that are formed through glances, limbs, tools, arrows or gestures such as outstretched arms. What is realized in language through action verbs is realized through vectors in images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 46). Vectorial relations (relations formed by the formation of vectors) signify the relations between nouns and verbs in the language. “Context makes clear what kind of action the vector represents” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 60). In transactional processes, two or more participants may “conjoin” or weld together to form one participant and direct action towards the recipient through vectors (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 51). Non-transactional processes, however, are involved in images that take a single actor and the process has no goal because the action is not directed to or aimed at anyone.

When participants are conjoined by a vector, “and they are shown as doing something to or for each other”, they are also called narrative processes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59). The setting, landscape, or background can be considered as an analytical process. While transactional or narrative processes represent actions as events directed to or from the participants in the image, these are contrasted with conceptual processes which “represent participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning” and “possessive attributes” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59).

Analytical processes take place in portraits and abstract images where participants form distinct entities. Analytical processes relate participants in part-whole relationship. Two kinds of participants are involved: Carrier (the whole) and any number of Possessive Attributes (the parts). Portraits and abstract images involve analytical processes because their possessive attributes such as colours, shapes and sizes, outfits, and expressions are studied. Symbolic processes involve what a participant means or is, and are realized through salience achieved by foregrounding, exaggerated size, or pointing and they look out of place in the representation and carry some symbolic value related to a particular context (Ahour & Zaferani, 2016, p. 83). Locative relations are realized through gradients of focus, overlapping, and degrees of colour saturation, “which create the contrast between foreground and background”; while “instrumental relations are realized by the gesture of holding where the object held is a tool” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 46).

Besides studying the processes involved in the composition of images, ideational metafunction deals with the way embedded structures and processes, manifested through the setting in an image, signify cultural practices because the symbolic value of actors, vectors, recipients, reactors, goal, curved forms, triangles, rectangles, lines, colour schemes, background, and possessive attributes of the Carriers as actors is determined (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 46-113; Riaz, 2020; Riaz, 2021 a).

Interpersonal metafunction, deals with the way images interact with the viewers and what kind of meaning is associated with which shot, angle, size of the frame, and point of view. Content is realized through offer or demand image. Demand images, through participants’ gaze or gestures, demand the viewer to take action and do something about the action being portrayed. On the other hand, offer images address the viewer indirectly without a gaze, while the viewer is more like a passive onlooker. Images that do not contain humans or quasi-human creatures, looking directly at the viewer, are offer images.

Distance in interpersonal metafunction is realized through the length of the shot, while attitude or point of view is realized through the angle. Interpersonal metafunction, overall, highlights how audience has been involved through frontal horizontal, high, low, top-down or bottom-up angle of the shot, how social distance is maintained through “close personal”, “far personal”, “close social” and “far social” distance, and how interactive and represented participants have been given power over each other through a vertical or horizontal angle, which collectively leads to relationship of “involvement” or “detachment” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 124-136) between them. High and low angles give power to the interactive and represented participants, respectively.

Interpersonal metafunction also deals with the level of modality, which “refers to the truth value or credibility of linguistically realized statements about the world”, created through “contextualization”, “color saturation”, “illumination”, “differentiation”,

“brightness”, “depth”, “modulation”, “contrast” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 156-162). Modality, which is the degree of truth or falsehood related to an image, results from the extent to which certain form and degree of pictorial expressions (representational detail, colour, tonal shades and depth, etc.) are used. Reduction or heightened sharpness of colour, for instance, may decrease modality.

Textual or compositional metafunction deals with composition of the image and suggests the social connotations of making a participant salient in the “image through the placement of elements in relation to one another, on the top, bottom, left, centre, or right margin of the image” (Riaz & Rafi, 2019, p. 129). Participants can be made salient through colour contrast, sharper focus, larger size, or placement at the centre. Composition links the representational and interactive meanings of the image through three interrelated systems: “informational value” i.e., placement of the object in relation to other objects, “salience” i.e., making prominent through sharpness, size, foreground, background, and “framing” i.e. lines of frame or dividing lines that connect or disconnect elements in an image to signify whether they belong or do not belong to one another (Martínez Lirola, 2016, p. 251; Riaz, 2019, p. 8).

Findings and Discussion

The following tables and discussion show the visual signs, patterns, and processes related to the representation of men, women, society, social norms, and honour killing along with their connotations, identified in detail in the previous chapter through analysis based on ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions in forty paintings.

The findings related to ideational metafunction reveal the following visual grammar of the paintings:

Table 1 *Visual Grammar of Gender and Honour Killing, based on Ideational Metafunction*

Ideational Metafunction	Background, Setting, Relational Processes, Colours and Kinds of images
n	
Setting	Both indoor and outdoor setting presenting deserts, rooms, valleys, rocks, gardens, plains, or rivers
Background	Plain, saturated, heavily stained, or dull background <i>Taat</i> , fabric, skulls, or whirlwind as background
Relational Processes	locative, narrative, transactional, reactional, analytical, symbolic attributive Vectors emanate mostly from eyes of the women or weapons used by men. Vectors are also drawn from the crisscross lines drawn all over women.
Kind of images	Paintings are dynamic or static and dramatic or conceptual depending upon the activity taking place. Most of the paintings are dramatic and dynamic due to narrative and transactional processes based on vectors or action taking place between women and society or men.

Table 1 shows that the background and setting, often employed as actors, connote

chaos, gloom, rigidity, and troubles. When sky or trees have been used in the background, they represent the protective role of men which they are exploiting in this context (Riaz, 2021 b). Plain backgrounds have been used to foreground the action taking place between men and women, while saturated backgrounds have been employed to represent oppressive social forces. The processes such as locative, narrative, transactional, reactional, analytical, and symbolic suggestive represent gender relations as unequal. Through vector and bidirectoinality, reactions of men and women, and their possessive attributes, the processes show that men as actors have been represented as snubbing and controlling women, while women as passive reactors have been placed at the losing end.

The following table shows the visual signs related to the appearance and body language of women:

Table 2 *Visual Grammar Related to Women, Based on Ideational Metafunction*

Ideational Metafunction	Appearance and Body Language of Women
Dressing as a Possessive Attribute	Red, black, blue, pink, white dresses including gowns, veils, frocks, <i>shalwar and qameez</i> or only <i>qameez</i> Veiled women Shrouded and mummified bodies Barefoot <i>Teeka</i>
Possessive Attributes Related to Disposition	Beheaded bodies of women Dead bodies Distorted, black, smudged, or featureless faces Red hair, wide open eyes hidden behind the planks, blood-soaked hair Puppet Lonely, chained or skeleton-like women Woman on gallows Half apple depicted as a woman Hands tied up A woman shaped as a question mark Broken bangles Women trapped in squares 20 faces of one-eyed women Trash Sad faces, frail bodies, large eyes, and pinching gazes Loose hair, wrinkled hands, skulls Woman with her hand placed on a large white crescent Book, bird, queen card Women often have something placed over their heads

Action in the form of	Stooped heads, shoulders or eyes Gloomy or shocked expressions
Body	A group of helpless women standing in mud
Language	Women holding other women Expressions of disillusionment, sadness, loss, despair, shock, regret, and wait, etc. Closed eyes, crossed arms, averted gaze, direct gaze, blurred faces

The visual signs given in Table 2 show that the appearance and body language of the women, who have been painted as actors, recipients, and carriers in the paintings, connote helplessness, loss of identity, insignificance, marginalization, gloom, powerlessness, isolation, pain, submissiveness, trauma, loss, stigma, and defamation, etc. (Riaz & Rafi, 2019). Through ideational semiotic choices such as *teeka* or black faces, women have been portrayed as bearing the burden of patriarchal honour norms and bringing dishonour or causing defamation to themselves or their families. A few signs such as bird, queen card, red colour, strong posture, open lock, and eye gaze connote freedom as a dream, strength, hope, and courage but women have often been shown ignoring these signs (Riaz, 2021 b).

Table 3 *Visual Grammar Related to Men, Based on Ideational Metafunction*

Ideational Metafunction	Appearance and Body Language of Men
	Moustaches, eyes, guns, fire, sword, axes and axe-like structures, Sindhi cap, turbans, pistol, black hand, green tree and plants, flowing river, rocks, animal, <i>jirga</i> , guns, rods, beards
	Stem of a tree
	A shadow of woman’s cape appearing as a face of a man smiling devilishly and derisively
	Men sitting around a green tree
	Flower shaped as a man’s face
	Stern or sad faces

The ideational signs and symbols related to men, given in Table 3 connote control, violence, power, honour, anger, derision, sadness, stability, authority, and a sense of protection. They have been depicted as misusing their power in the name of honour and protection (Riaz, 2021 b; Riaz, 2022 a). Portraits of men have been painted in Figure 16, 19, 30, and 33 only; otherwise, men have been depicted through signs, such as guns, turbans, and beards, which have been depicted as forming locative, instrumental, analytical, and reactional transactional relations with women.

On contrasting the visual signs related to the representation of men to that of women, findings reveal that women have been represented as “actors”, expressing helplessness, “carriers” of honour norms, or passive “reactors” (Kress & van Leeuwen, pp. 50-90) to oppression, while men are always actors and reactors in the sense that they react to the dishonour. The possessive attributes (See Table 2) of women and signs and symbols related to men (See Table 3), as well as the action taking place between them, represents women as

helpless, love-deprived, and vulnerable, while men as aggressive, controlling, and powerful (Riaz, 2019; Riaz & Rafi, 2019; Riaz, 2021 a; Riaz, 2022 a). The social phenomenon that men come out clean even after killing someone, eloping with a woman, or divorcing, raping, or forming an intimate relationship with a woman, but for all the same reasons, women are punished physically or emotionally by the society, while women cannot do anything about it due to being socially unaccepted, has been depicted.

Love for freedom but encountering hurdles is a common theme in case of women, while men are depicted as exploiting protection, which they are socially expected to offer, by killing and restraining the women. Shah (2017) also confirms, “in *Karo-Kari* [honour killing] phenomenon in Upper Sindh” in Pakistan and other honour-based contexts, “power is clearly a factor”, “as women and girls are primary targets because they are weak, dependent, and in the custody of men” (p. 77). Shah (2017), extends by pinpointing that most women considered as “black” i.e., transgressor, were “scapegoats, objects through which disputes were played out, and none could fight back” because women killed for honour “are mostly easy victims-very young girls, childless women, widows, separated views, ill or old women, wives of insane brothers, or rich mothers with impatient sons wanting to take over their property” (p. 77).

Men’s love has been depicted as conditioned with honour. In this way, what Abbas (2010) calls “good/bad woman dichotomy”, which implies that good women conform to social norms, but bad women deviate (p. 32) has also been reinforced. Defamed women are punished (3, 13, 15, 31, 39), isolated (1, 9, 20), decapitated (28), chopped off (19, 22), or gunned down (1, 17, 29,) while women participating in the process of maintaining and regulating honour norms through subjugation are loved (2, 18); however, in either case, women have been depicted as helplessly bearing the burden of patriarchy. Women have been represented as waiting to be killed or punished, losing their lives, or experiencing the intimidating and suffocating scenario of murder, while men have been depicted as murderers.

The following signs regarding the representation of society, honour norms, and honour killing have been found:

Table 4 *Visual Grammar Related to Society, Honour Norms and Honour Killing, Based on Ideational Metafunction*

Ideational Metafunction	Signs Related to Society, Honour Norms, or Honour Killing
------------------------------------	---

Round and straight lines, triangles, squares, rectangles
 Blocked up broken door, thick walls, hole, bricks, planks, web, needle
 Crescent, moon, stars, night, crown, hearts, clouds, stream of water, sky
 Creaks in the wall
 Lock and bolt, iron bars
 Trampoline, white clothes, red velvety covering with honour logo
 Branches of a tree trapping a girl
 Stitched surfaces, blood stains, plain paint tray
 Black star, black crescent
 Desert
 Ghost-like figure
 Red trees, dusk, dark horizon, red sky, dark deserted space
 Entangled branches, withered flowers, bullet resembling an index finger
 Words like *zameen, jaaidaat, daulat, badi k iwaz, samaaj, bachon k rishtay, zaat paat* (*Land, property, wealth, as a result of evil, society, proposals for children, caste*)
 Large blocks of stone, shackles, whirlwind
 Fresh and bright floral background
 Open window

Society in Table 4 has itself been depicted as an actor and interactive participant in the paintings. Round structures, representing society, depict repetition, barriers, and limitations. In 90% of the paintings, red spots have been used to connote killing of women for honour. Semiotic resources related to ideational metafunction also reveal that the locative circumstance, through the choices of foreground, background, colour schemes and symbols related to society such as rocks, walls, demarcation lines, pointed finger, or grey or black backgrounds (Figure 1, 2, 3, ... 40) represent society as judgmental negative and restraining. Using squares and rectangles, social norms have been represented as man-made, but the use of circular shapes shows that norms are perceived as natural. Visual signs related to rural areas such as planks, axes, dogs, *wadera* (feudal) system, and words such as *zan zar zameen* (women-wealth-land) (See Figure 1, 16, 17, 20, 22, 30, 38) reflect the association of this issue with rural areas and feudal system based on power differences.

Table 5 *Visual Grammar of Gender and Honour Killing, Based on Interpersonal Metafunction*

Interpersonal Metafunction	Shot	Angle	Distance	Perspective	Modality
	Varied shots, often extreme close in	Angle is both low and high, and oblique and frontal.	Distance is often close personal or far social. The painters	All the images are subjective but many of the paintings	Modality, according to naturalistic, sensory, and abstract

the case of women, and close, medium, or long shots in the case of men, have been employed to convey power relations between men and women.	Sometimes women have been given power over the viewers to draw attention to their plight, while other times, they have been marginalize d as insignificant and powerless.	want more social involvement in order to improve the condition of women.	are both subjective and objective because all of them not only have a built-in point of view but may times, painters have violated norms of depiction to present the situation objectively.	coding orientations, is high but in a few cases, it is medium.
---	---	--	---	--

So far as interpersonal metafunction as presented in Table 5 is concerned, society and interactive participants have been represented as negligent. Angle, shot, distance, and placement of the represented participants also show that society and interactive participants are negligent towards the plight of women. The visual grammar depicts social insensitivity, objectivity, and passivity, and consequent isolation of women as common themes. Most of the paintings are offer images, but some (6, 9, 34, 35, 36, 37, and 38) are demand as well, and either offer the society to contemplate on women’s plight or demand them to set women free. Various portraits of women, due to their size and low angle (See Figures 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 18, 21, 25, 34, 36, and 37) have power over the interactive participants. It represents the graveness of honour killing and female suffering.

The use of frontal horizontal angle (6, 7, 26) as a visual choice of interpersonal metafunction shows that women have power over interactive participants, which further connotes that women are either protesting and questioning or stunned; contrarily, use of oblique angle shows that viewers have power over women, which means, women are being marginalized as insignificant others (12, 15, 24, 35 etc.). Abbas (2010), in this regard, notes that “role of community and the family is pivotal in reducing, and perhaps even preventing, domestic violence” because societies that assert their “right or obligation to intervene” help reduce domestic forms of violence (p. 30). In all the paintings, themes related to the interpersonal metafunction reveal that painters condemn honour killing as a serious social issue and show involvement through the choice of shot, angle, and distance which are often frontal horizontal and close or far social.

Grey, black, white, brown, yellow, and red colours, as ideational and interpersonal

signs of visual grammar, have been repeatedly used which in the context of honour killing can be seen to represent chaos, gloom, loss, instability, hatred, and murder, respectively. Black, white, and red also represent defamation, chastity, and strength. Grey often associated in the paintings with society also represents the society as conservative, neutral about the issue, and indifferent towards the plight of women. Modality of the cultural connotations of the colour schemes is mostly high. Due to naturalistic, abstract, and sensory coding orientations, truth value depending upon various modality markers is high because firstly, the colour choices in the paintings are pertinent to the cultural themes related to honour killing, such as defamation, killing or loss (Fig.1, 2, 15, 18, 20, 22). Secondly, painters have used various colour choices, levels of saturation, brushstrokes, and textures, etc. to convey a generalized essence of the problem, as well as the individuals. Besides, essential features and themes have been conveyed through abstract coding orientation (Fig. 1, 2, 13, 15, 18, 23, 28, 29, 33, 34, 35, 37). Thirdly, due to sensory coding orientation, the visual appeal has also been maintained through intensity of various levels of modality markers such as colour contrast or brightness (Fig. 1, 2, 14, 39, 40). The modality markers in every painting not only represent cultural themes but also have sensory appeal, therefore, modality is high. In addition, the modality of most of the paintings, especially abstract, is high because they reduce the individual to general through abstract coding orientation.

Just like ideational and interpersonal semiotic resources, visual choices related to textual metafunction given in Table 6 also show patterns of imbalanced gender relations, the miserable plight of women, male dominance, and social control.

Table 6 *Visual Grammar of Gender and Honour Killing, Based on Textual Metafunction*

Textual Metafunction	Ideal	Real	Salient	New	Given
	Freedom has often been painted as Ideal. Strength and courage have also been painted as Ideal for women to assert themselves. Many paintings do not depict any Ideal; however,	Miserable plight of the women has always been painted as the Real or core issue.	Women have always been made salient by their placement, or activity. Social norms and male toxicity have also been made salient through their placement, size or	Paintings depict women as the Given, while what is being done to them as the New. What is being done to them is mostly highlighted through symbols related to	As most of the paintings are horizontally aligned, so social norms and male toxicity in contrast with the helplessness of women have alternately been portrayed as

they reveal honour norms as social ideals.	colour contrasts.	men and honour norms.	the Given and New.
---	----------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------

Table 6 shows that women have been made salient to convey the social hierarchies that oppress them, while celebrated patriarchal ideals have also been highlighted. Many paintings (See Figures 2, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 21, and 22) are horizontally aligned; therefore, both exploitation of women and male or social dominance over them have been highlighted as the core issues. Composition and placement of ideational signs for male and female represented participants is textually such (Figures 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 20, 22, 25, 26, and 29) that it conveys male superiority and female inferiority or subjugation because visual signs for men have been placed in the upper part of the frame. Besides, male dominance, due to such patterns of vertical placement has been presented as social ideal as well, while women placed in the lower part of the frame are depicted as the real victims.

Overall, paintings manifest what Macdonald (2016) also finds as “a universally oppressed, homogeneous and static representation of women” (p. 1) because women, fundamentally bearing the burden of patriarchal norms of honour and pang of male aggression and control, have been ideationally portrayed as passive, helpless, oppressed traumatized, and marginalized others. Interpersonal metafunction reveals social negligence towards honour killing, while textual metafunction shows miserable plight of women as the core issue. Such visual representation of women are similar to prevailing patriarchal portrayals of gender that focus on the suffering and victimhood of women and “predominance of male primary characters” (Matthes, et al., 2016, p. 315), and reinforce power differentials which have also been revealed by the results of studies carried out by Akram, (2017), Murshid and Critelli, (2017), Gryzyb (2017) Riaz (2019), Riaz and Rafi (2019), Riaz (2022 a), or Pahor (2016), etc. Riaz (2021 a) also noted that representations of Pakistani men and women in the digital discourse on rape were also stereotypical, framed, and ideological.

The visual representation of women in the paintings is highly authentic because women suffer from honour killing, and honour norms limit their freedom (Riaz, 2022 a). However, representations of Pakistani women, while being authentic in terms of female victimhood, are partial, relational, ideological, static, and incomplete simultaneously because women as perpetrators (Dogan, 2018), oppressive agents and facilitators have been neglected in the representations. Just because she is a woman doesn't mean that helplessness is her

defining trait. She, in the context of honour killing, can be a perpetrator too. Constructive portrayals of women are also required to give them multiple options to deal with oppression and victimhood narrative (Riaz, 2021 b).

Similarly, visual representations of men are also authentic in terms of being hegemonic and oppressive, however, incomplete, politicized, and stereotypical due to the exclusion of marginalized male victims. Men as rescuers, protectors, victims of honour killing, or sufferers of honour values should be represented. Men are also killed in the name of honour (Riaz, 2021 b) and this aspect could also be highlighted but except for a couple of paintings, there is no significant and direct semiotic representation of male victims of honour violence in Pakistan. The role of legal system and issues concerning legal and paralegal support (Cheema & Riaz, 2021) can also be represented in the future.

Conclusion

Women have been represented as suffering from identity crisis, defamation, and loss of face, life, or identity; while their killings perpetrated by men have been depicted as a natural consequence of defamation. Men have been represented as dominant oppressors and killers. Honour norms, as can superficially be seen in the paintings as well, not only allow men to exercise power but also exploit and misuse power. Society and social norms, as depicted through semiotic resources have been thoroughly portrayed as extremely negative, insensitive, negligent, powerful, unreliable, exploitative, judgmental, and limiting forces. Visibility of male oppression and female perpetration, as well as constructive representations of men and women are needed.

References

- Abbas, T. (2010). Honour-related violence towards South Asian Muslim women in the UK: a crisis of masculinity and cultural relativism in the context of Islamophobia and the 'war on terror'. In M. M. Idriss & T. Abbas, (Eds.). *Honour, Violence, Women and Islam*, (pp. 29-41). New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Ahour, T. & Zaferani, P. (2016). A critical visual analysis of gender representation of ELT materials from a multimodal perspective. *The journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(18), 78-98.
- Akram, N. (2017). Women's empowerment in Pakistan: Its dimensions and determinants. *Social Indicators Research; An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement*, Springer, 140(2), 755-775. doi: 10.1007/s11205-017-1793-z
- Ang, P. S., & Yeo, S. L. (2018). Exclusionary visual depiction of disabled persons in Malaysian news photographs. *Discourse & Communication*, 12(5), 457-477. doi:10.1177/1750481318766922
- Bakhtiari, S. & Saadat, M. (2015). Gender representation in *Interchange (Third Edition)* series: a social semiotics analysis. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18(2), 1-39.
- Bharadwaj, A., & Mehta, R. (2017). Annihilating or perpetuating the gender stereotype? An analysis of Indian television advertisements. *Decision*, 44(3), 179-191.
- Bradbury, C. A., & Christian, M. M. (Eds.). (2017). *Gender, otherness, and culture in medieval and early modern art*. United Kingdom, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chambers, C., Phillips, R., Ali, N., Hopkins, P., & Pande, R. (2018). 'Sexual misery' or 'happy British Muslims'? Contemporary depictions of Muslim sexuality. *Ethnicities*,

- 19(1), 66-94. doi: 10.1177/1468796818757263
- Cheema, A. R., & Riaz, M. (2021). Community-based paralegals to build just societies: insights from a legal empowerment project in Pakistan. *Community Development Journal*, 57(4), 695–712.
- Danish, M. H., & Riaz, M. (2022). Semiotic facet of reconciliation: Politics of the representation of Indo-Pak relations in Google Ad. *Annals of Social Sciences and Perspective*, 3(1), 137-151.
- Doğan, R. (2018). Do women really kill for honor? Conceptualizing women's involvement in honor killings. *Deviant Behavior*, 39(5), 1247-1266. doi:10.1080/01639625.2017.1420454
- Dyer, E. (2015). *Honour killings in the UK*. London: The Henry Jackson Society.
- Gryzyb, M. A. (2016). An explanation of honour-related killings of women in Europe through Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and masculine domination. *Current Sociology*, 64(7), 1036-1053.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Hutcheon, L. (1989). *The politics of postmodernism* (2nd ed.). London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. UK: Taylor & Francis e-library.
- MacDonald, K. (2016). Calls for educating girls in the third world: Futurity, girls and the 'Third World Woman'. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23(1), 1-17. doi: 10.1080/0966369X.2014.991699
- Matthes, J., Prieler, M., & Adam, K. (2016). Gender-role portrayals in television advertising across the Globe. *Sex Roles*, 75, 314-327. doi: 10.1007/s11199-016-0617-y
- Mirza, Z. K. (2015). Male gender stereotypes in Pakistani advertisements. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1716-1732. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2016.s21.17161732>
- Murshid, N. S., & Critelli, F. M. (2017). Empowerment and intimate partner violence in Pakistan: Results from a nationally representative survey. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32. doi: 10.1177/0886260517690873
- Pahor, W. A., Gurmani, A. H., Khan, P. D. (2016). Gender inequality causes and impacts on honor killing: A case study of District Shikarpur, Sindh, Pakistan. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 7(229). doi:10.4172/2151-6200.1000229
- Riaz, M. (2022 a). Visual representation of gender roles, ideologies, and victimhood in Pakistani paintings on honor killing. *Journal of Media Studies*, 37(1), 27-60.
- Riaz, M. (2022 b). Patriarchal relativity, structural violence, and inequalities: semiotics of the rural and urban kitchen in Pakistan. *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, 59(1), 245-254.
- Riaz, M. (2021 a). Semiotics of rape in Pakistan: What's missing in the digital illustrations?. *Discourse & Communication*, 15(4), 433-457. doi:10.1177/17504813211002036
- Riaz, M. (2021 b). Cultural dynamics of gender-based victimhood in Pakistani paintings on honour killing: Constructive portrayals or stereotypical representations?. *The Dialogue*, 16(4), 72-87.
- Riaz, M. (2020). Ideational metafunction and proximization theory: Semiotics of the fear of Covid-19. *Global Media Journal*, 13(1), 103-113.
- Riaz, M. (2019). Image grammatology and gender representation in digital illustrations on honor killing. *University of Wah Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(2), 1-31.

- Riaz, M., & Rafi, M. S. (2019). Gender-based socio-semiotic analysis of honour killing in Pakistani Paintings. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*, 26(1), 125-148.
- Sanauddin, N. (2015). Proverbs and patriarchy: analysis of linguistic sexism and gender relations among the Pashtuns of Pakistan. Retrieved on July 28, 2018 from: <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/6243/>
- Sato, T. (2011). Representation of desire and femininity: The advertisement in late-modern consumer culture of Japan. In D. Majstorović & I. Lassen, (Eds.). *Living with patriarchy. Discursive constructions of gendered subjects across cultures* (Vol. 45) (pp. 145-168). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Shah, N. (2017). *Honour unmasked: Gender, violence, law and power in Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Sun, Z. (2017). Exploiting femininity in a patriarchal postfeminist way: A visual content analysis of Macau's tourism ads. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 2624–2646.
- Yaqoob, S. (2017). Honour killing in Pakistan. *Development Studies View*, 8, Retrieved on September 8, 2017 from: <http://www.pide.org.pk/pdf/DevStudies/view/DSView8.pdf>