

Changing Gender Role Portrayal in Media: Survey-Based Study

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CHANGING GENDER ROLE PORTRAYAL IN MEDIA: SURVEY-BASED STUDY

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Abstract

Gender role development is very important among children during the phase of their personality development. This results in the formation of gender identity, which later on determines the type of gender role exhibited by the child in later life. Home is the main platform from where the key features of personality for a child is shaped up. Similarly, variable gender roles are also being taught by the family members. The growing media and its impact also play significant role in this regard. The current research made an account of how the gender role portrayal is changing in media and its respective impact on gender role shift in the society. This objective was achieved by conducting a survey on the content portrayed in a Pakistani movie “*Ek Thi Marium*” (2016). Findings suggest that the media today is displaying a changed gender role instead of gender stereotypical portrayal. It could help future researches to identify the modern trends and to study the effect of these variations among individuals of different age groups.

Keywords: Gender role, gender identity, media, development, children

INTRODUCTION

Gender Role

Gender is the major aspect of human beings. It includes the presumptions held about the characteristics, aptitude and likely behaviors of both men and women as determined by the social and cultural roles that are considered appropriate for both (World Health Organization [WHO], 2017). These roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures are termed as gender roles. Gender role and expectations are learned. They can change over time and varies from culture to culture and society to society as well.

Gender role is a set of behavioral norms and values that are particularly related to males and females. The division of labor is also concerned with gender role of men and women. Gender role adopted during childhood usually continues in adulthood. The gender role of a person is composed of certain elements that can be expressed by dressing, profession, behavior, personal relationships and many other aspects. Gender role is usually the representation of gender identity but it is not necessarily so (Noppe, 2019).

Gender role is developed through a gradual stepwise procedure, which is termed as “Gender role development” constituting the most important and major aspect of human life. Family is the major platform for socialization of children which also involves gender socialization. As, for example, toughness is concerned with males while females are taught of having calm and compromising attitude. Gender role development is also followed by imitating peer groups as well the content portrayal in media. Gender development leads to the formation of a sound gender identity (Jackson, 2014).

Media and Gender Roles

Media is very influential in its impact on the human. Representation of different gender is portrayed differently by media. It influences the gender identity and respective gender roles by defining how the male and female look, dress up, act, play games, and feel differently (Gaunlett, 2008). Media impart this influence through media messages that are conveyed in two ways:

- Message content of television shows, magazines, news articles, music, drama serials, and movies.
- Message delivered by the advertisements.

Media create a false consciousness, under which it strongly influences people's affects, behaviors, and cognitions. Through actors, actresses, models, and performers, the male is conveyed as masculine dominant and active while female is conveyed as feminine ineffective and passive (DeFrancisco, 2014).

Problem Statement

The problem statement for current research is “changing gender role portrayal in media”

Research Questions

The research questions for the present research project are as follows:

1. Is the gender role portrayal (display) in media is changing?
2. How is this change considered?
3. What is the most influential part of the movie clip (i.e., attached in the survey)?

4. What is the nature of agreement with gender role diffusion (i.e., no specified roles for either men or women) portrayed by the movie clip?
5. What are the movies or dramas other than the one surveyed (i.e., “Ek Thi Mariyam”) that shows the changing gender roles?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

The theoretical background of our research lies in the social role theory by Eagly (1987). The theory argues that a society is characterized by the division of labor between both the genders. This labor is widely influenced by gender stereotypes. It is also stated by the theory that in western societies, men have greater participation in paid positions of higher power and status and the nurturing role was however assigned to women. This has created gender related stereotype. Also, it had been found that the distribution of gendered roles had fostered differentiated skills in men and women. The significant prevalence of gender related stereotypes in the group also play a prominent role in shaping behavior as per the expectations imposed by those stereotypes and the stereotypical behavior experienced from others in society. Therefore, in situations that don't control behavior in gendered stereotypical manner the members of society (i.e., both men and women) act in a varied manner based on the differentially acquired gender roles and skills.

Social role theory is also relevant in this context. It presents a broad scope in reference to the social roles each of us carry; which implies to interaction in all contexts either it be assertive-power associated behaviors or supportive-socioemotional behaviors. The theory proposes that in general women act in a more emotionally or communal oriented manner and less instrumentally; that is service oriented manner.

However, men are generally inclined to act otherwise providing the same context. These differences were found to persist greatest in the situations where gender is highly salient, whereas, in formal-institutional settings those gender differences will be weaker or even absent.

Research Background

Literature also indicated the researches that studied the gender roles differentiation. Eisend (2019) conducted a meta-analysis on the gender role stereotypes and the moderating role of advertisements. It was concluded that negative role of advertisement with respect to gender roles; that is, in strengthening the gender stereotypes should be carefully monitored and avoided. Another study was carried out by Windels (2016) by conducting interviews with 42 practitioners working in the advertising agency. The participants were asked about the role of gender stereotypes in advertising. It was concluded that stereotypes are closely associated with advertisements and stereotypes are most inappropriate when a negative perception is reinforced by them.

Research by Trolan (2013) studied the impact of media on gender inequality within sports. Findings suggested that despite of the advancement of women sports and female athletes, their media portrayal is subjected to objectification and less strong as compared to male athletes and the obsession about body of female athlete instead of their skills still exists and will persist until the portrayal of female athletes is re-examined by media. Study by Hardin and Greer (2009) also concluded that media play a significant role in typing of certain sports as masculine and feminine and women participation in sports does do little to change the traditional gender-typing that is existing in the society. In Pakistan however, none study had yet examined the media

role in this regard and the literature exhibited a gap in relation to the comparison of the gender role portrayal in media across the age generations. This research will thus provide a comparative account for past and contemporary perspective on gender portrayal in media.

METHODOLOGY

Method of Sampling

The present study used the purposive sampling technique; that is, selected based on the objective or purpose of the study.

Sample

The sample comprised of 40 university students aging from 16-30 years old, such that mean age is 25.3. The main characteristics of the sample is as follows:

Table 1

Main Characteristics of Sample (N=40) for the Survey

Variable		Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Men	9	22.5%
	Women	30	75%
	Don't want to mention	1	2.5%
Age	16-19 years old	10	25%
	20-23 years old	5	12.5%
	24-27 years old	17	42.5%
	28 years old and above	8	20%

Table 1 demonstrates that the sample comprised mostly of the girls and most of the participants of study lies in age range of 24 to 27 years old.

Method of Data Collection

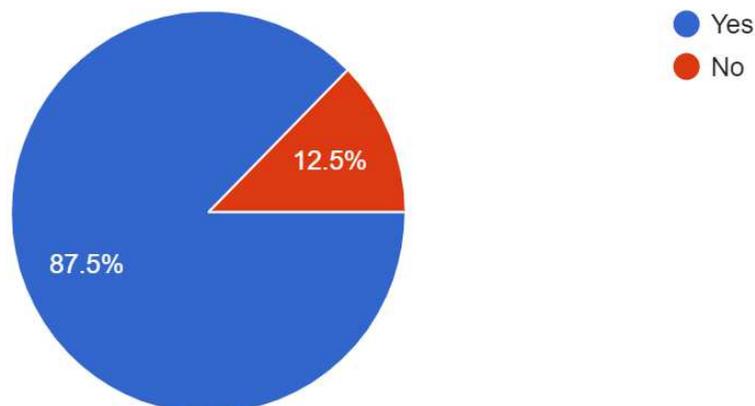
The data is collected by using the Google form survey. This was the most appropriate way for the current study as the movie clip from “Ek Thi Marium” could be easily attached with the Google form and a large sample could be approached in short period of time.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the survey was analyzed by making the analysis of the responses obtained of each research question and generating the common themes found. The demographic characteristics of the sample was also mentioned by determining the frequencies of number of participants, their gender and age respectively.

FINDINGS

The survey conducted under current research project obtained the set of variable findings on the research questions which are mentioned earlier. The findings on question 1 “Is the gender role portrayal (display) in media is changing?” suggest that majority of the participants were on the view agree with changing gender role portrayal



in media; such that 87.5% of the participants respond “yes” to this question. Following figure indicate the responses to this question:

Figure 1. Responses on research question 1

The findings on question 2 “How is this change considered?” suggest that majority of the participants considered the change in gender role portrayal as both positive and negative in nature; such that 65% of the participants respond “both positive and negative” to this question. Following figure indicate the responses to this question:

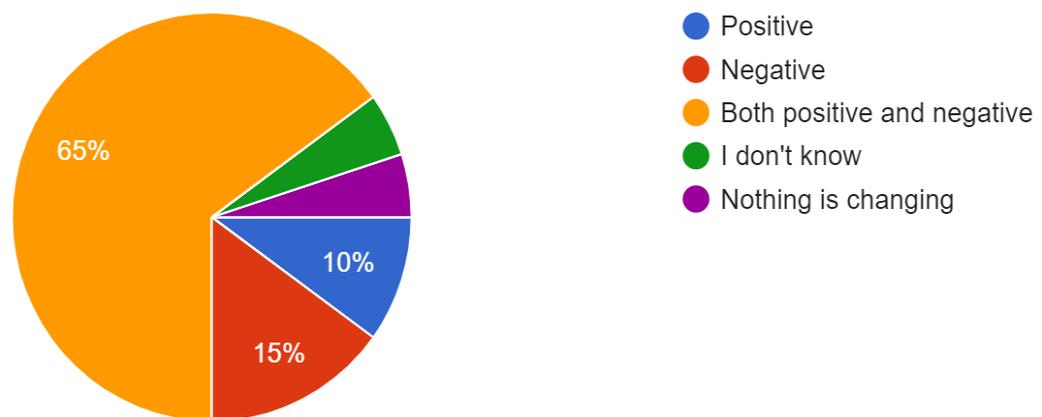


Figure 2. Responses on research question 2

The responses on question 3 “What is the most influential part of the movie clip (i.e., attached in the survey)?” demonstrates following major responses:

1. Father being proud of daughters
2. Education above dowry
3. There should be no gender discrimination
4. Every girl can do anything
5. Parents’ support and trust in capability of Mariam

6. Focus of Marium on her dreams
7. Encouragement by parents
8. The character of Marium

These responses indicated that the part of the movie clip which was found to be most influential by the participants of study is “father being proud of her daughters”. The responses on question 4 “What is the nature of agreement with gender role diffusion (i.e., no specified roles for either men or women)?” are as follows:

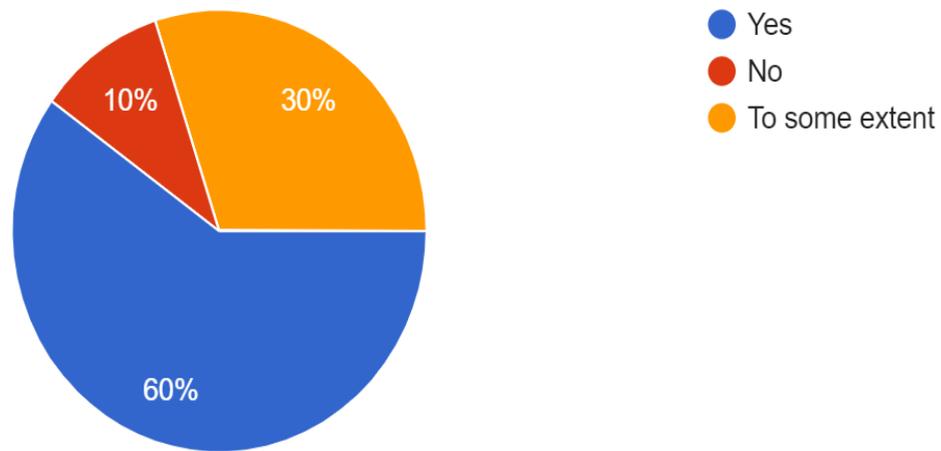


Figure 3. Responses on question 4

Figure 3 indicated that majority of the participants agree with the display of gender role diffusion in the movie clip; such that 60% of the participants respond “yes” to this question.

The information obtained on question 5 “What are the movies or dramas other than the one surveyed (i.e., “Ek Thi Marium”) that shows the changing gender roles?” shows that other movies and dramas also indicate changing gender roles as portrayed by media. The movie and dramas mentioned by the participants include; Motorcycle

(Vespa) girl, Bhaagi, Meri Beti, Bhaag Amna Bhaag, Bhool, Khaani, Bol Meri Machli
Kitna Pani, Cheekh, Dangal, and Superwoman.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings obtained thus suggested that the media today is displaying the changed gender roles instead of gender stereotypical portrayal. The research will help in developing better understanding about how the gender role portrayal is shifting in our media. This will help identify the major areas that need to be focused to build a positive and non-discriminated gender identity.

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Figures

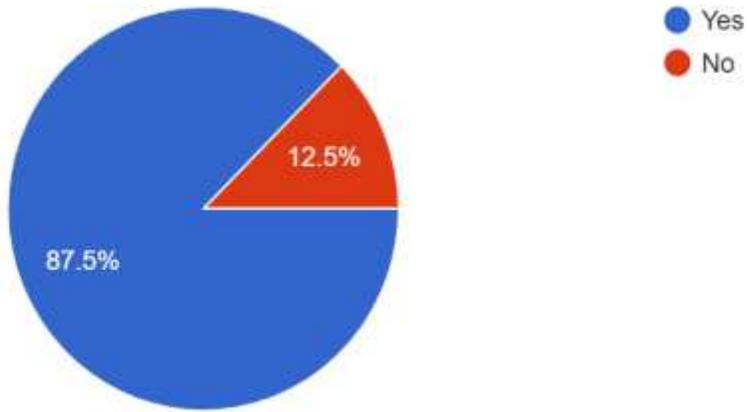


Figure 1

Responses on research question 1

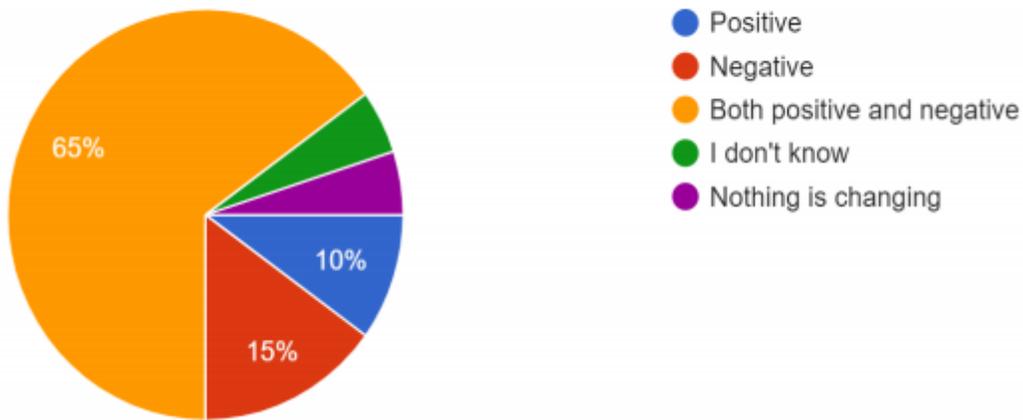


Figure 2

Responses on research question 2

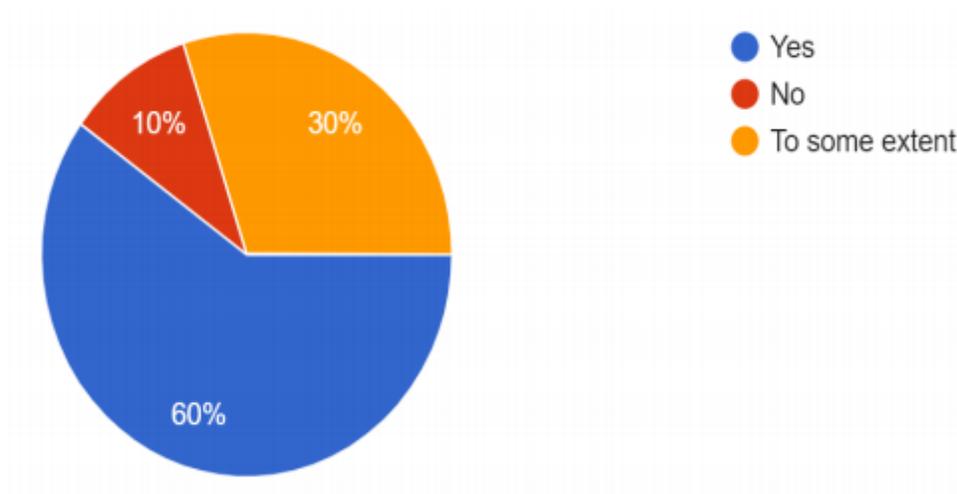


Figure 3

Responses on question 4