

Exploring Title Images of “Fitrat” and “Muqaddar”: A Semiotic Analysis of Title Images of Pakistani Dramas

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Abstract

Visual images are of pivotal significance in any discourse as they convey more in a single glimpse as compared to any written or spoken text; a least explored area in Pakistan thus the present study to focus on the title images of selected TV Dramas as they are the most popular genre of Pakistani showbiz industry. Two dramas entitled as “Muqaddar” and “Fitrat” have been selected as data of the study and model by (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006) has been employed as analytical model. The findings revealed that semiotics of any drama play an important role to introduce and make it popular as they are catchy, attractive and communicative as well as represent the social and cultural ideologies quite relevant to the Pakistani scenario thus attracting a wide audience by making them more popular. Furthermore, the multimodal discourse analysis proved to be a useful tool for interpreting and getting meaning from the visual images.

Keywords: title images, semiotic analysis, Pakistani dramas

1. Introduction

Language use is a broad as well complex phenomenon, covers a wide audience. This complexity and broader scope have been fabricated by its users. Everyone in this universe uses language for communication that presupposes the background knowledge of the audience. Thus, context makes the stretches of language a discourse those can be in spoken or written form. Discourse involves the intention of producer as well as its effect of on the receivers, making communication a complicated entity. Discourses are produced by the language users to convey and propagate certain goals. These targets do not always correspond with the situation, thus are not always triggered directly rather indirect modes are brought into use. Consequently, it causes a gap between surface and deep meaning of communication where the actual message conveyed by the producers is somehow different from the actual purpose. The researchers of discourse analysis have explored the communication from different aspects and tend to reveal that how sentences

or utterances are combined to formulate the texts and interactions meaningful as well as how they become fit within their social world. Earlier, the background and context of the situation as well as the subject was considered more important, thus the ethnographers used to study a community by becoming a part of that situation.

With the advent of technology, now trends have been changed and new offshoots like mediated discourse analysis, corpus-based analysis as well as multimodal discourse analysis. Various researchers (Kubra et al., 2017; Ashfaq and Shafiq, 2018; Fatima, 2019; Masroor et al., 2019; Sultan et al., 2019) have worked on Pakistani Media i.e news, editorials, speeches, talk-shows etc., though dramas are found to be a least explored genre. Thus, the present study aims to work on Pakistani dramas. The past works have explored the Pakistani media from the lens of critical discourse analysis to explore the ideological and social viewpoints or focused on feministic representation of characters in Pakistani dramas. The present research is unique in nature as it aims to conduct a semiotic analysis of the title images of Pakistani dramas as well as critical discourse analysis will be used for linking the findings of semiotic analysis with the ideologies and context of national level. Pakistani drama is the considered to be the most influential genre of Showbiz and is the most selling product of lollywood industry (Hasan, 2000). These dramas have been passed through various phases with the change of time but their plots, structure and storylines remained interesting and attractive throughout the time. Title images of dramas change within change of story. The researcher has taken 3 title images of each drama. The researcher has taken title images most popular dramas of 2020-2021, named as Fitrat, Muqadar.

1.1 Research Questions

The research aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do the title images of Pakistani dramas represent the storyline of drama?
- 2) How do the title images of Pakistani dramas contribute the popularity of these dramas?
- 3) How the semiotics of title images of Pakistani dramas portray the ideologies of Pakistani society?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Previous Works

Semiotic discourse analysis is one of the contemporary off-shoot of discourse studies; it is employed by the scholars in various fields. Though the focus of the present study is its incorporation in the field of applied linguistics but it has also been used in the field of social scientists as well. In this regard, Bjorkvall et al. (2020) analyzed the spatial

semiotics of international airports to investigate the influence of semiotics on people as well as different statements written on different parts of the airports i.e. consumption areas, shopping place security check etc., They found that the building structures of different parts in diverse ways play an important role to control the consumers' emotions and psyche in a particular way. This study proved that spatial semiotics had great influence on people's emotions and thoughts. Similarly, Shin (2019) claimed that semiotics has a great deal in the field of mathematics as each mathematical problem is solved through signs, expressions. The researcher conducted a study by taking ESL students and teachers and found that the ESL teacher's everyday language helps a lot to understand the pure visual and semiotics expressions of mathematics.

Elmasry and El Nawaway (2016) conducted a semiotic discourse analysis of the video made for Egyptian Presidential campaign (2014) of Al-Sisi. The research aimed to uncover the hidden ideologies conveyed through this campaign. The analysis revealed that the video depicted Al-Sisi as a familiar strongman through semiotics so that the viewers can get convinced and make president a successful candidate by trusting him. This study highlighted the significance and crucial role of semiotics in a discourse.

Al-Yousef (2020) conducted a multimodal discourse analysis of students' assignments to investigate their level of understanding about a given topic. The researcher took assignments of eight Saudi students of undergraduate level from the department of dentistry as corpus of the study. The researcher employed models by Halliday (1978), Kruger (2002), Kress and Leeuwen (2006) to study the written as well as pictorial images of the students in the selected texts. The findings showed that the students have a clear understanding of the topic that is reflected by their verbal interpretation and pictorial evidences. The study found that the selected texts included extensive use of textual themes, non-defining relative clauses with pronouns for explaining an entity, illustration of key points in bullet points as well as logico semantic relations to explain the visual drawings.

Sajid and Khan (2020) conducted a semiotic discourse analysis of cartoons in Pakistani Newspaper i.e. Dawn regarding Pak-US relationship ranging from April 2018 to December 2018. The researcher took two groups of people one was of MPhil Linguistics while other group was of miscellaneous departments. The findings revealed that semiotics possess a lot of space for manipulation and interpretation as they can reflect ideologies as a prism as well as identify changes happening around the world.

2.2 Pakistani Dramas and Previous works

Pakistani society is enriched with its social, cultural and political assets thus its media covers broader diversity. Fatima (2019) analyzed seven Pakistani dramas and

highlighted the themes and ideologies propagated through them. She employed Butler’s theory of performativity as well as feminism stance as tool of analytical framework. She conducted a content and discourse analysis of the selected dramas. She found the honor discourse as a dominant theme portrayed by all the selected dramas and they tend to frame a particular image of femininity through media. Iqbal and Abdar (2016) investigated six soap operas by Hum TV and they found that women were suppressive and in low-empowerment. Moreover- they were shown indecisive in nature that reflects the strong hold of men in the society. Ashfaq and Sahfiq (2018) analyzed Pakistani dramas and found stereotyping on gender basis an important feature of the selected pieces. They claimed that the image of “perfect woman” is being framed by Pakistani dramas in such a way that such ladies should be submissive, obedient, wearing national or cultural dress code properly, modes and decent while talking. On the other hand, the women in the opposite role were found to be bold, selfish, modern, active and dominant. This depiction shows that Pakistani society has patriarchal patterns, thus here connotations attached to perfect and bad women are being promoted in these patterns. Abbas et, al., (2020) investigated Pakistani dramas of last decade (2010-2020) and identified the new trends regarding the roles of female characters. They analyzed the normative model of woman by using Dutoya’s (2018) theory. It was found that a change has occurred in contemporary dramas that might be as a result of western wave of feminism and liberalism as well as a reaction of religious orthodoxy. It was also discovered that Pakistani modern woman has their own identity they are neither puritan nor totally western commodities rather they try to follow religious and cultural values along with their personal grooming in terms of empowerment and boldness.

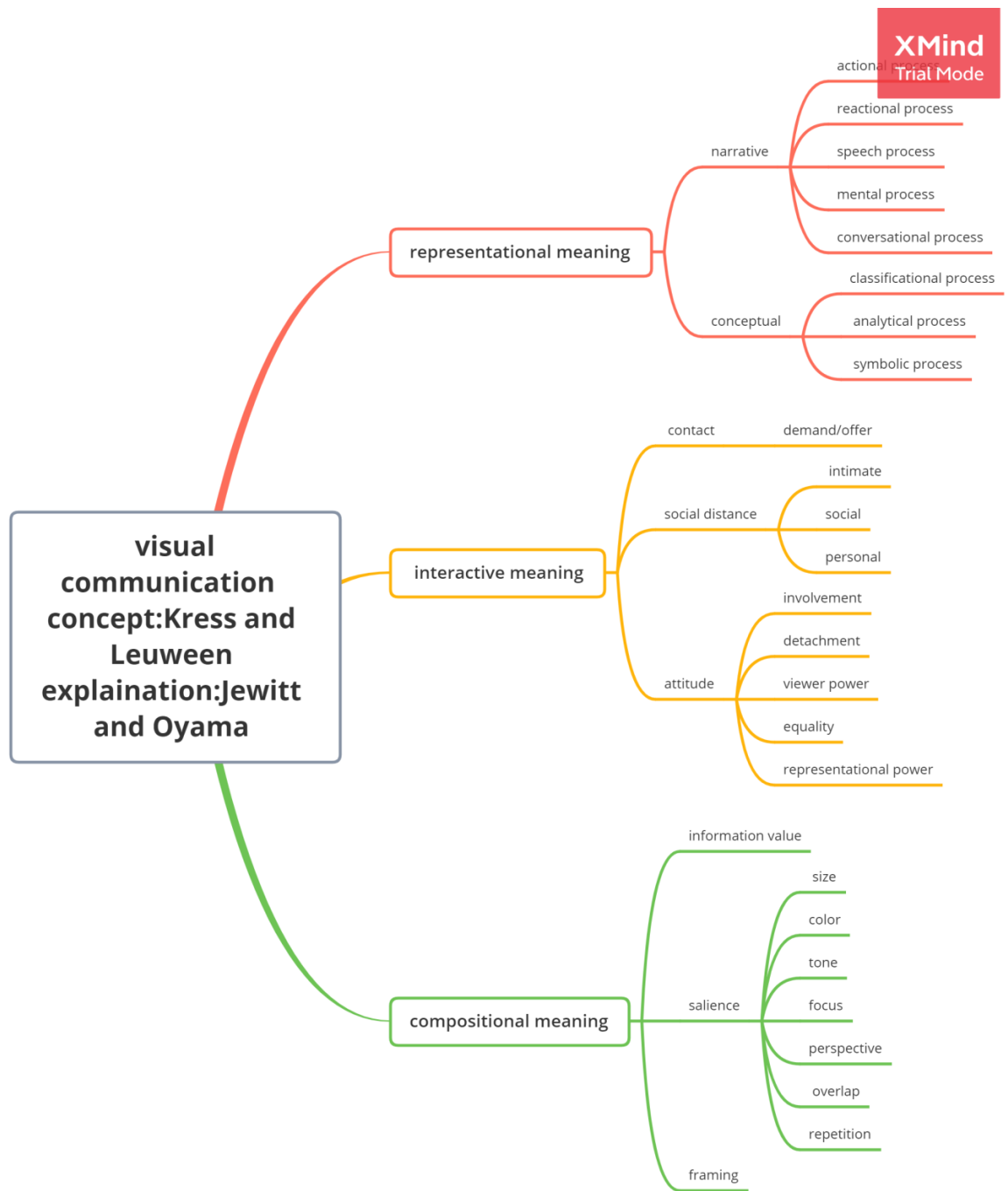
These all works have worked on Pakistani dramas from different perspectives but the analysis from the semiotic perspective is missing. In this regard, only one work has been done by Kubra et, al., (2017). They analyzed the semiotic analysis of title images of Pakistani dramas. Their work focus on what was represented through the title images? What do they contain? The aspect of its link with society is missing as this work just focused on the content of the image not its deep relationship with the context, so a scarcity remained. The present research aims to fill the gap by analyzing the semiotic perspective of title images of Pakistani dramas as well as their link with the Pakistani society. For analysis, the researcher will employ framework by Kress and Leeuwen (2006) to read the grammar of visuals as well as the theoretical insights will be taken from the field of critical discourse analysis to have a deep understanding and better interpretation of selected images.

2.3 Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Kress and Leeuwen (1996) are of the view that text is not only a mode of interaction rather here are many modes those constitute a communicative event. These

modes include gesture, posture, gaze, visual images layout and design of graphics. This multimodality has been extended in many ways though the present research tends to employ the semiotic analysis of the selected images, thus the detail of this strand will be discussed. Our society comprises of signs, symbols, visual images those are used for communication among language users. Barthes (1995) claims that “the world is full of signs”, as cited in (Nwaway & Elmasray, 2016). Similarly, Pakistani society has its own ideologies, culture, schemas and social issues thus the signs and symbols of this territory depict the prevailing reality of their contexts. These meanings are not as simple and straightforward as they seem rather, they contain multilayered interpretations strongly linked with the ideologies and discourses of our society. Semiotics is an approach that provides a platform for the analysts to understand the relationship between language and all other symbols they have, to construct the whole view of the world.

Liu (2013) summarized the past explanations given by different scholars (Halliday, 1978; Kress & Leeuwen, 2006; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001) regarding multimodality, grammar and meanings conveyed through visual images so that the readers can have better understanding of the multimodal analysis. He (2013) mentions (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001) those are of the view that the three metafunctions proposed by Kress and Leeuwen (2006) are termed differently as compared to Halliday's (1978) as the representational instead of ideational, interactive instead of interactional and compositional instead of textual. Jewitt and Oyama (2001) explain different ways to understand and interpret the visual communication on basis of ideas given by Kress and Leeuwen, those can be displayed in the following form:



To answer the first two research questions, the present study tends to analyze the title images of selected dramas from visual semiotic perspective by using framework by Kress and Leeuwen (2006) while the third research question will be answered through the lens of discourse analysis so that ideologies behind these images can be explained.

3. Analysis of the samples



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Figure 4

Sample 1:

A) Multimodal Analysis

The analysis is done in three dimensions, proposed by Kress and Leeuwen (2006); representational meaning, interactive and compositional meaning. These three dimensions would explore the storyline being represented through the images as well as how do they are made catchy and attractive so that popularity can be gained. Representational meaning refers to the syntactic patterns or narratives being conveyed through the images as well as they can provide some conceptual clues as well. Narrative meanings are usually formed in form of vectors that can be linear, sub-ordinate in nature.

The narrative meanings can define a process happening in an image as well as actors, reactors phenomenon and action that refers to the first research question here.

For example, in fig 1 that is also the title image of the drama, portrays an overall picture of the drama can be observed as it shows the main characters in it. The vector of this image represents a connection of dominance and sub ordination among the displayed characters. Here are two girls (g1, g2) and two boys (b1, b2); all are having a confident and explicit gaze throwing a glimpse of confidence and attention for the viewers. Though the expression of the girl (g1) in white shirt seems to be dominant over others as the size of her image is magnificent than others. While in fig 2 the position of same girl again reflects the dominant role of female as well as an actor where the male is displayed as a reactor. Similar meanings are given in fig 3 where the girl (g1) is being dominant over the male person while in fig 4, the facial expressions of the dominant girl (g1) of the picture show that she had some problem and facing a difficult time.

Interactive meanings are represented through the angle, gaze, face direction or pose if the participants, they formulate the nature of relationship the participants tend to create with their viewers, (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). This interaction can be conveyed in the form of demanding or offering something to the audience as well as close and far shots or distance of the participant's image causes a sense of intimacy or closeness. Similarly, angles of a participant's position in a visual reflects his relationship with the viewers; a frontal angle will show more interactivity, equal level and shared goals while the vertical or high angles produce a sense of power and dominance (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). Body movements and gestures of characters represent a controlling feature of the girl 1 and it gives her a as she has a close shot as well as her side angle shot reflects her dominance over others with a broad face as when participants look at the viewers in a vector form the relationship is established even at imagery level (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Moreover, the smile on the face of girl 2 is showing her positive character as smile shows cohesion and shared goals with the audience (Teo, 2004). Contrastively, in fig 2 the girl 1 is smiling that shows the progress of story where the girl seems happy but her side angle shows that she has some secrets thus avoiding to face the audience regarding her relationship with the boy as well as her body gesture displays a sense of intimacy with boy. The straight gaze of girl 2 in fig 1 and 4 shows that she is a positivist and had no regrets that is why she is nothing to conceal or worried about as the frontal angle involves the maximum involvement (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). The facial expressions of boys also reflect the story of drama as in fig1 the gaze and posture of both boys show a neutral image. In fig 2 the boy 2 has a smile on his face that shows his happiness with the intimacy she had with girl, shown in the picture, while in fig 3, the expressions of boy 1 show that now he is protecting the girl and happy with the relationship he had with the girl, and facial expressions of boy 2 tell that he is not easy rather knows something that

disturbs him though he is not talking about it. Fig 4 reflects the resolution of the problems of the story as now all three characters are easy and facing the audience with a relax mood while the girl 2 who remains dominant and mysterious all over the story has some problem thus the lines on her forehead and scared eyes reflect a troublesome situation. The audience can assume that she must have facing the consequences of her bad deeds now. The angle and distance of the characters (g2, b1, b2) in the fig. 1 are medium sized and straight forward, while the girl1 has a bended and curved side angle as well as a close-up position in terms of distance that shows less-communicative tone by the girl while other three characters are suggesting a social relationship with the audience (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). In fig. 1, the text is written below the faces of participants that usually complete the sense of an image as a visual is too broad to produce diverse interpretations while language provides it a direction. While, in fig. 3 and 4 the text is written above the images of participants that reflects the significance of the text, the difference in position reflects the change in the story as it must have made progress or highly influenced by the text written on the images.

These posters provide a compositional meaning of the drama in which the girl 2 is being represented saliently from all other characters, as she is shown in all images of drama and her framing is done by a distinctive dress color from the background and her co-actors. All the selected images represent reality in maximum terms as they reflect the clear images of participants not in animated format, even the emotions can be noted either of happiness or being worried.

B) Ideological analysis

These all images convey an ideology of girl's dominance and control over other characters, the shift in her facial expressions and postures reflects that she has played a game, engaged both boys and influenced other three characters. The dressing and way of looking of girl 1 shows her role of an antagonist, while the other girl is being represented as a protagonist; being shown a tolerant, passive and kind lady with a smile on her face, traditional outfit with duappatta and long-shot angled images. In this regard, Tarar and Pulla (2014) are of the view that Pakistani society consider outspoken, dominant and authoritative ladies as “bad women”, while the passive and tolerant women having eastern dressing a “good woman”. The ideology of this drama is little bit different from this conventional belief system, as the leading girl in this drama seems to be strong, dominant and outspoken instead of being submissive and tolerant. Yet, the projection of ending episodes shows that she has a problematic resolution that might reflect the ideology of our society, that is bold and dominant girls are not bad until they have done something discursive with others. It shows the changing trend of our society that is influenced with the current wave of feminism, as the past study (Ali & Khan, 2012) claimed that, Pakistani media construct a weak, inferior, dumb and dependent image of

women. The ideology of this drama also agrees with the previous studies (Jiwani, 2013; Khan & Zaheen, 2011), those indicate a changing trend in Pakistani dramas, as cited in (Shafiq & Ashfaq, 2018).

The bold and western styled shirt with short sleeves reflects the objectification of women, through which the goal of publicity and gaining more popularity among masses is being achieved. This is done by the producers to make their items more demanding and catchier, that again links the cultural and social norms of people. Objectification of women is a commonly used tool employed by the media persons to attract the male audience and satisfy their sexual appeal (Lin, 1998; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Moreover, this dressing also implies that the modern and liberal women tend to be “irreligious” and this is causing a new feministic image of women in Pakistani dramas. (Fatima, 2019), though the selected drama does not explicitly represent religious ties. However, the word “FITRAT” that is the title of drama also reflects the ideology of Pakistani society, which refers to the clever and cunning tricks of women and the audience can infer that the antagonist must have done something selfish and cruel with others as she is a female. Another perspective of “catharsis” given by Aristotle is relevant here, as if the leading role has done something bad and immoral, she must have to pay for it, it will also provide a moral training of the viewers as well as lay a base for being positive, tolerant and ethically honest those all collectively emerge from the Islamic teachings, a major religion being followed by the Pakistani audience. In the light of above discussion, it can be concluded that the trends in Pakistani dramas have been changed regarding roles of women, a shift from passive, compassionate and unemployed character to dominant, outspoken and bold is being made which can be a result of feministic movement.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Sample 2

A) Multimodal Analysis:

Fig5 is the profile picture of the drama, representing all the characters and overall picture of the storyline. In terms of representational meaning, it can be seen that b1 is dominant and controlling all other participants, his position in the visual on seems to be strong. Only he has the chair and all others are around him as they depend on him. G1 is the most oppressed and down position as she is sitting down near the feet of others. Her facial expressions convey that she is not happy and comfortable in this way, and these interpretations combine to shape the representational meaning of the image. The vector being drawn in this image is not of linear nature rather the b1 is main-participant whole g1, g2, b2, b3 are sub-ordinates of him. The narrative meanings refer to what is happening or being done by the actors and participants of the visual. While in terms of interactive meaning, it can be seen that b1 is controlling all others specially his hand on the shoulder of g1 shows his grip while hand of g2 on the shoulder of b1 reflects a strong relationship between them as she tends to pull and control him towards him. The side angle and face expressions of g2 display that she has a strong position though she needs support of b1 thus, standing the mocking and sarcastic smile on the face of b1 refers to something being discursive practiced by the b1. The position of b2 shows that he is in a weak position as he has long-angled shot as well as taking support of b1's chair that shows he is dependent on b1. The side angled picture of b3 shows that he is also influenced by b1 though has not a direct relationship with b1 but must have some link with other characters. Similar narrative meanings are being conveyed in fig 6, where b1 is holding g1 firmly and frowns on her forehead shows that she is not happy rather being snubbed by him. In fig 7, the posture of g1 and g2 are being manipulated by b1 as he is sitting in a very authoritative way with a relaxing smile, while in fig 8, the position of g2 is nearly equal to the b1 which shows progress of the story that points towards the stabilization of g2's lifeline. All pictures convey a common theme of patriarchal society where men control the women. Another aspect being represented by these pictures is that women are not behaving as the conventional women rather they resist the oppression and as a reaction g1 has been successful to get the position equal to b1 as well as the g2 is also not tolerating without any reaction rather she tries her best to undo the happening event. Difference in angles for close up or far shots represent a lot of things (Jewitt & Oyama, 2014). It can be observed that no character has a smile on his face that reflects a tussle amongst all as (Teo, 2004) considers smile as a symbol of cohesion, unity and confidence. Compositional meaning conveys that the b1 is distinctive and framed saliently amongst all as well as g1, their position, angles and face expressions convey a lot other than just visual.

B) Ideological analysis:

These all pictures of sample 2 convey a theme of oppression and resistance; they reflect the dominance of male (g1) over other characters which hints towards the patriarchal structure of Pakistani society. While, the fig 6, 7 and fig 8 reflect that the women of visuals are not happy and accepting the dominance and oppression of women. Rather they are resisting and raising voice against the b1. Thus, shift in theme has also been indicated by previous works (Shafiq & Ishfaq, 2018; Jiwani, 2013; Khan & Zaheen, 2011), they are of the view that trend has been changed in Pakistani dramas regarding representation of females from oppressed ones to bold and confident women. Similarly, the girl in this drama at last wins the race and gets her position equal to the man which reflects the current situation of Pakistani society, where majority of the women know about their rights and are well educated. The dressing of women in the figures corresponds with the culture of Pakistan reflecting the assimilation and strong bond with the cultural ties of homeland. The chair in these figures represent the power and symbolizes the political scenario of Pakistani society where most powerful actions are conducted by political leaders and they hide the discursiveness of their deeds on the basis of their positions. A similar pattern has been depicted through these visuals. Moreover, the title MUQADDAR (destiny) of dramas says a lot about the ideology of Pakistani society, where majority of the people accept the injustice and illegal actions of powerful people as it is despite of showing any resistance, they consider it as a part of their destiny. But, here this girl (g1) acted differently and went against her destiny by winning a proper place for her against the dominant and powerful man (b1). This reflection tends to raise awareness among viewers; they should not bear the cruelty of powerful people instead work for their rights as well as it portrays an influence of feminism on society. Furthermore, it has a correspondence with Islamic teachings as well those provide more than equal respect to women in society as compared to men as well as consider it a big crime to bear the misdeeds of cruel. They persuade Muslims to stand against the injustice and struggle for gaining their rights.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that semiotic representation of Pakistani dramas has a great input in gaining popularity among audience as they are quite catchy, attractive and persuasive, this proves visual images have also a crucial role in communication as language has. Moreover, Pakistani dramas tend to polish the ethical and moral values of viewers by showing them that a bad doer will end in bad way and a person for good cause will win the game as well as aim to depict the empowered, dominant and bold women contrary to the old times. These dramas have a correspondence with cultural, social and moral values of society as well where viewers can get a positive vibe if they want, thus making Pakistani dramas a source of producing positive discourse. Moreover, it is found

that the multimodal discourse analysis provides diverse ways for interpreting and getting meaning from the visual images.

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