



GENDER DYNAMICS IN PAKISTANI MEDIA CONVERSATIONS

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Abstract

This study assesses the gender aspects of Pakistani media interactions, specifically the gendered aspects of turn-taking in Pakistani podcasts and TV shows. It analyses interruptions, turn-taking, and language use between different combinations of genres and formats. Results show that despite the gender representation, males are still the most dominant in the reporting of TV shows, with dominance coming from the amount of time they speak, the level of interruptions, and a panel of men. On the other hand, the 'power' relations are more evenly distributed in the podcasts. However, the guest male members still have absolute control over the dynamics of the subject matter and provide comprehensive answers to the issues at hand. This study examines the problem of balancing cultural aspects and mediated forms of conversation, pointing at the necessity to balance the representation of various voices and meaningful communication in a social context.

Keywords: Gender Dynamics, Conversational Dominance, Media Representation, Turn-Taking, Interruptions, Linguistic Strategies

Introduction

The significance of gender equality for continuous success and development is generally accepted because of its role in advancing growth and efficiency. Gender issues are superficially mentioned in media, podcasts, and talk shows, which point out the deeper levels of inequality slowing down women's success. Podcasts and talk shows are essential in shaping the public's opinion (Zia, 2007). According to Zimmerman and West, females are interrupted more frequently in cross-sex conversations than males. They notice that men can do interruption more easily, but women hardly do it. In previous studies, this behaviour has been associated with gender power and status. This research highlights the importance of understanding the complexity of gender representations before analysing them in a discussion style.

According to Merchant, most women converse in a friendly way to maintain relationships, while men converse to show dominance (Yuliana, 2021). The conversation about gender differences shows clear contrasts in their style. This research also shows that men usually use interruptions and shift topics as tools to show their dominance. This behaviour has been established in a broader aspect that shows men hold authority, leading to a conversation style that shows their power and control. In conversation, male partners mostly dominate the conversation by interrupting females. This pause is, however, not a failure for female partners to take the floor. Identifying the interruptions is the natural consequence of applying most linguistic models as Zimmerman and West did.

Ameera Syafillah (2022) on mixed-gender interruption in Malaysian podcasts challenged the concept that females are less competitive in mixed-gender conversations, finding that both males and females interrupt each other but with different intents and frequencies. Although men interrupted more frequently, women made more disruptive interruptions. This study also showed that men frequently used cooperative interruptions while women made more competitive interruptions, contradicting the previous studies that argued that women are more caring and less disruptive. The findings also showed that pre-existing relations and conversational familiarity may alter the traditional roles of gender in a conversation (Syafillah, 2022).

Turn-taking is organised with basic rules determining the right to speak next. According to Yule (1996), it is a "scarce commodity" known as ground, which refers to the right to speak. In any conversation, the speaker completes the conversation and then nominates the other person to speak. Thus, the process in which two or more people are involved and make conversations with some dialogues, where the roles of speaker and listener alternate, is called "turn-taking." This is the most crucial aspect of conversation management. Turn-taking helps organise conversation so that there is clarity and more involvement from everyone, regardless of the culture. For example, in a talk show, the host asked Will Smith, "What is your favourite role?" and Will Smith replied, "I loved playing in 'The Pursuit of Happiness,' and immediately, the host replied, "That is an inspiring movie! Can you tell us more about it?" Thus, the host uses turn-taking to continue the conversation more smoothly. By sticking to these conversational norms, participants can create more meaningful interactions. Turn-taking ensures clarity, and everyone should participate (Yule, 1996). According to Ronald Wardhaugh, studies have found that in cross-sex conversations, women are less likely to protest when they are interrupted. They also tend to ask more questions, encourage people to speak, and show supporting gestures like saying "mhmm" to show they are listening. On the other hand, men challenge others; they interrupt them more and control the theme of conversation by making strong statements. However, while conversing in same-gender groups, both males and females talk more collaboratively. Despite the notion that women are more cooperative and men are more competitive, the research showed that the context of conversation decides the communication style rather than gender. These differences can usually be explained by socialization instead of biological predispositions, implying that gender-specific communication behaviours are learned, not innate (Ronald Wardhaugh, 2015).

The comparative analysis by Bilal Ahmad, Naznina Hakim Khan, Irfan Ullah, and Raeesa on the sociolinguistic features in the genderlect of American and Pakistani TV talk shows highlights the cultural, linguistic, and gender dynamics in this context. In this research, they have used a quantitative approach to investigate the sociolinguistic features. They retrieved 40 talk shows from YouTube from the same region to ensure a balanced comparison. They mainly selected political or social conversations that frequently reflect communication styles and language patterns. They utilised AntConc, a corpus analysis software, to examine the linguistic features and speech patterns. The software helped us to analyse every language pattern and trend that might have been missed in the manual analysis. Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory (1990) also helped us and served as a theoretical framework for this research (Bilal Ahmad, 2024).

This research is based on gender representation and have different findings. As cited by Pakzadian and Totkaboni, many researchers like Finlay (2015), Tannen, Zimmerman, and West have highlighted that males mostly dominate the conversation (Pakzadian, M., & Tootkaboni, A. A. (2018). However, in recent research, Dunbar (2015) has put forward this theory that genders not

only shape conversational dominance but also have different patterns. For example, one less emotional person quickly takes control of the conversation and thus does turn-taking (Aledavood et al., 2016). The research concludes by highlighting that males dominate in fields like business, and gender dominance still exists in conversations. Although both sexes contribute to discussions in this era, women are still under-represented in most essential fields where they can contribute a good part. This under-representation results in limiting the number of opinions in essential discussions. Moreover, it is necessary to accept factors like cast, creed, colour, gender, and cultural background when analysing gender dynamics in communication (Sagheer & Zubair, 2020). This study promotes the importance of a more equitable and diverse public sphere that is inclusive of all genders.

Research Questions

1. How does gender composition affect speaking time, turn-taking, and interruptions in Pakistani podcasts and TV shows?
2. What linguistic strategies do male and female participants use, and how do they contribute to conversational dominance?

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the distribution of speaking time among male and female participants in podcasts and TV shows with varying gender compositions.
2. To investigate turn-taking patterns in male-dominated, female-dominated, and mixed-gender conversations.
3. To identify the linguistic strategies (e.g., hedging, assertiveness, politeness, topic control) used by male and female participants in podcasts and TV shows.

Statement of the Problem

Concerns about gender dynamics in mixed-gender discussions are becoming increasingly prevalent in Pakistani political talk shows and podcasts. Even though there has been some progress towards gender equality, communication patterns in public discourse may still impact the deeply ingrained societal norms and power imbalances. The main objective of this research is to explore the possible continuation of gender-based communication variance within these influential media platforms. There are two key issues that are needed to be addressed.

Firstly, dominance presence in gendered conversation, which is an essential issue to be explored. Men tend to dominate mixed-gender discussions in Pakistani political talk shows and podcasts. This dominance may appear through more frequent interruptions and a greater share of speaking time, affecting the representation and influence of different genders in public political discourse. Secondly, instrumental communication and patriarchal influence seek to investigate whether male participants in such discussions adopt an instrumental communication style to assert dominance or not. This approach, marked by goal-driven, direct, and often assertive language, may echo the broader patriarchal factors within Pakistani society. Understanding and examining this dynamic is essential for understanding how societal structures and cultural norms might perpetuate gender inequalities in public communication.

Research Methodology

This research is based on qualitative-descriptive analysis to explore gender representation in Pakistani television shows and podcasts, with particular emphasis on the influence of gender on conversational dominance. According to Spender (1980), language is a tool historically shaped by men to maintain dominance over women, which reflects patriarchal power structures, creating a

reality in which their authority is legitimized and normalized. This theory complements Zimmerman and West's Dominance Theory by offering a framework for examining how gendered power dynamics appear in communication, making it relevant to study interruptions and conversational dominance between mixed-gender interactions in Pakistani TV shows and podcasts. The analysis will focus on how men and women introduce and maintain or shift topics.

Sampling

The purposive sampling approach is adopted for the research to ensure that selected episodes are based on their relevance to the research objective. This type of sampling, also known as judgment sampling, involves the researcher using their expertise to select the most useful sample for the research purposes. The domain chosen for the research is Business. The researchers have selected one podcast and one TV show from this domain.

Data Collection and Analysis

A. Male Host

TV Show # 1: Idea Croron ka |S02E01

Podcast # 1: In-drive: The ride-hailing leader of Pakistan; The Startup Pakistan Podcast

1. Speaking time

The overall speaking time in the podcast and TV show is given below, respectively.

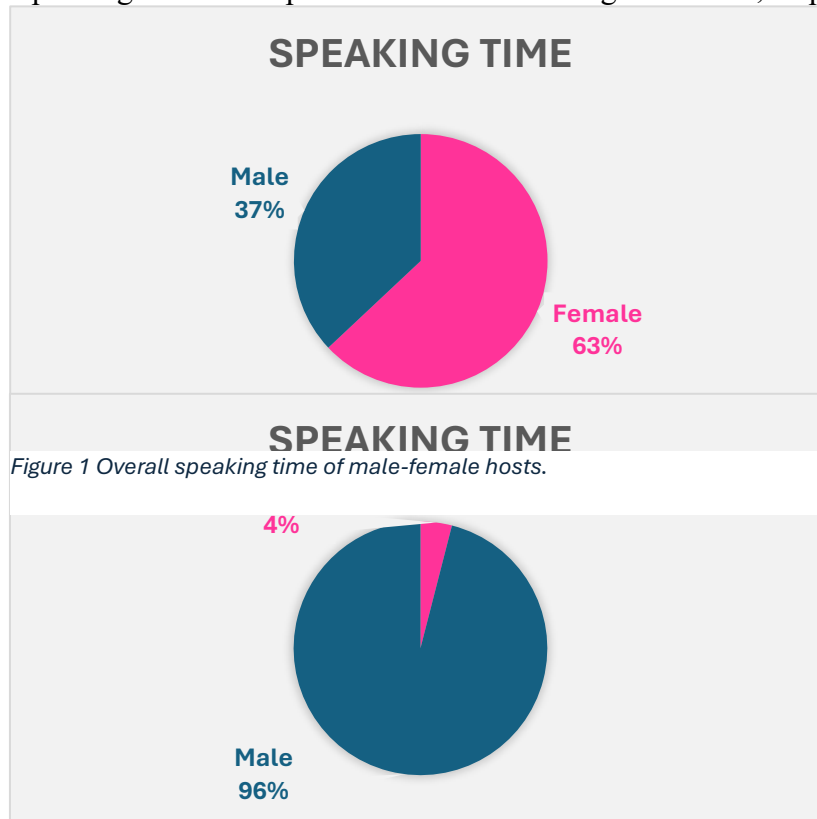


Figure 1 Overall speaking time of male-female hosts.

Figure 2 Time allotted to male-female hosts

2. Turn-Taking

In the podcast, there are 2 males (1 host & 1 guest), and 1 female. Here are the numbers of turns each gender takes during the podcast.

Table1

Table 1 No. of turns taken by male-female hosts.

	Male (2)	Female (01)
No. of Turns	40	24

Similarly, the number of turn-taking in the TV show is given below:

Table 2

Table 2 No. of turns taken during the TV show.

	Male (7)	Female (01)
No. of Turns	89	13

3. Interruptions

The table presents the number of interruptions overlapping in the **podcast**. In this table, the number of interruptions made by the males is 7, while that of the females is only 2. Similarly, the number of overlaps by males is more significant 8 than by females 3.

Table 3

Table 3 No. of interruptions & overlapping in podcast

	Men (02)	Women (01)
No. of Interruptions	7	2
No. of Overlapping	8	3
Total	30	44

In the TV show, the following table represents the same points as discussed in the podcast.

Table 4

Table 4 No. of interruptions & overlapping in podcast

	Men (07)	Women (01)
No. of Interruptions	2	0
No. of Overlapping	1	1
Total	3	1

4. Topic Control

The podcast is about startup ideas, and the host hosted 2 members of the Indrive company to get some knowledge and information for his viewers. Initially, he introduced the topic by asking them about their company's working system and advancements. Later on, he kept asking questions to steer the conversation.

Similarly, in the TV show, Nabeel Qadeer (male host) has the full influence over the conversation. He gave the speaking time to every member of the panel and also invited and started the conversation with them. The male host has the topic control and also the format on which the TV

show is conducted. He gets the point of view of all the members and steers the conversation by cutting the members' speaking time.

5. Question Types

In the podcast, the host (Adeel) asked the guests open-ended questions. The guests answered his questions and also told their company's structure and how it works and how it is helping people in the society. However, the host didn't know much about the structure, so he interrupted more often than the guests (Kiran and Hassan) and used more linguistic strategies than a female guest.

The question types are open-ended in this show. Because the young entrepreneurs have goal of convincing the businessmen panel in order to get an investment from them. So that is why the panel asked some questions from the guests, and they replied by explaining their answers, except for One guest (Dr. Amjad Saqib) who narrated his story of founding Akhuwat.

6. Linguistic Features

We have included direct language, time stamps, and hedging for podcasts.

Table 5

Table 5 Linguistic strategies in Podcast

Linguistic Strategies						
No.	Utterance Dialogues	Assertive Sentences	Direct Language	Hedging	Tag Questions	Time Stamp
By Female						
01	Sidra: I believe, jis trh sy ap ny kaha			I		3:36
02	Sidra: we can share live location to our family, right?				I	23:48
03	Sidra: hamara community system bhi, aesa nhi hy ky, women ko support krta hy	I				39:40
By Males						
01	Host: Correct me if I am wrong, jo community ko wpis deny wala factor hy,I think that is the core ethos of the company				I	9:40
02	Host: Sidra insurance to ap unko provide kr rhy hain				I	13:18

03	Host: i think, jo ek apki kamyabi ki ek bari misaal, hywo			I		16:18
04	Host: I don't hear, lot of people saying that we are working for indrive, you are the 1 st 2people jinka mujy pata chla ky,wo indrive mein kam krty hain	I				20:49

Here are the linguistic features used in the TV show:

Table 6

Table 6 Linguistics strategies in TV show

Linguistic Strategies						
No.	Utterance Dialogues	Assertive Sentences	Direct Language	Hedging	Tag Questions	Time Stamp
By Males						
01	Ma apni sari gariyaan beech k fatima ko paisa da raha hoon, ye muja bohat kama k da ge		I			8:25
02	I think issue ye ha k ap ko model refine krna ha			I		13:23
03	Saleem do you sell your car to invest in his company?		I			28:56
04	I think logon ko parhana zarori ha			I		30:08
05	Mera khiyal ha k iss ko consider karen ap			I		32:26

7. Guest Composition

In the podcast, there is a male host and 2 guests one male and one female. Host doesn't have much knowledge about the topic, being discussed, but the female guests have much knowledge and she takes more speaking time to answer the questions asked by the host. But the linguistic strategies are more frequently displayed by male host and he interrupted more often.

In the TV show, there is a male host (Nabeel Qadeer) and a panel of 3 big business tycoons of the country and a business advisor. The host invited 1 male and 1 female entrepreneur to present their business models to the panel. And after this, the host invited a very known personality Dr. Amjad saqib (the founder of Akhuwat). At the end of the show, the host invited a male to present his business model on book publications. Overall, there are a larger number of male guests and also in the panel. So, this composition effects the dominance greatly. The male host also plays an important part in influencing the conversation in the show by connecting the whole members and guests with each other.

8. Talk Show Vs. Podcast

Analysis shows that the host holds the topic control throughout the Podcast by asking open-ended questions. Guests answer his questions confidently because they know a lot about the topic being discussed. However, the male host displays the linguistic strategies more frequently, and he is interrupted more often. In conclusion, it was a male-dominated podcast. Also, we have more interruptions, overlapping, and linguistic features displayed by males.

In the TV show, there are not many interruptions and overlapping because the panel asks some questions, and the guests answer their queries. The host has some influence over the conversation, but overall, it is a friendly TV show.

B. Female Host

TV Show # 1: Shark Tank Pakistan | Episode 1 | Pitch 1 and 3

Podcast # 1: Emerging Jobs Opportunities by Realme for Pakistanis |Startup Pakistan

1. Speaking Time

The TV show features Host Rubab Hashim and a panel of 6 members, which includes Romanna Dada (Founder & Investor), Faisal Aftab (Founder & CEO of Zayn VC), Usman Bashir (CEO of BTCM), Junaid Iqbal (Founder & CEO of salt Ventures) and Rabeel Warratch (Founder & CEO of Sarmayacan), collectively known as Sharks. The Sharks expressed their point of view and predicted the future of Businesses, put forward by the Entrepreneurs in Pitch 1 and Pitch 3 of Episode 1.

Pie-Chart 11

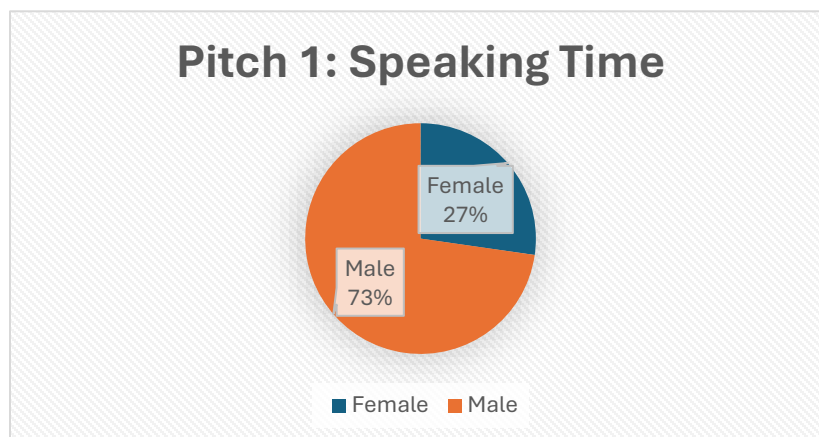


Figure 3 Pitch 1 of Episode 1.

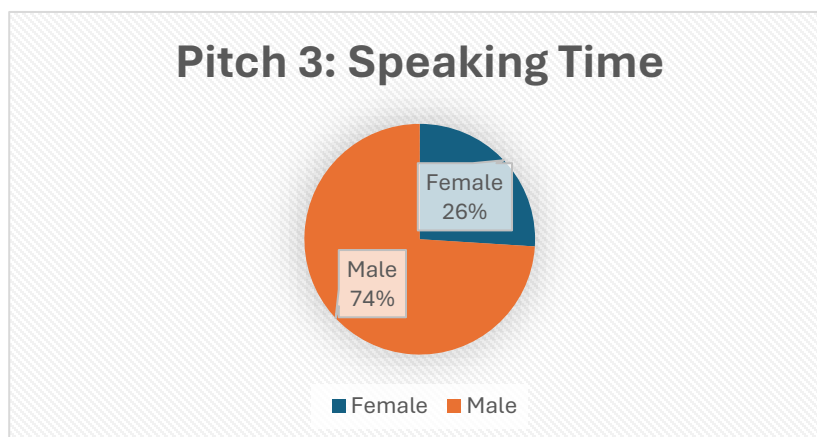


Figure 4 Figure 5 Pitch 1 of Episode 1.

On the other side, the podcast features a female host, Aliza Afaque, and a male guest, Larry Chen. Their speaking time throughout the podcast is given below:

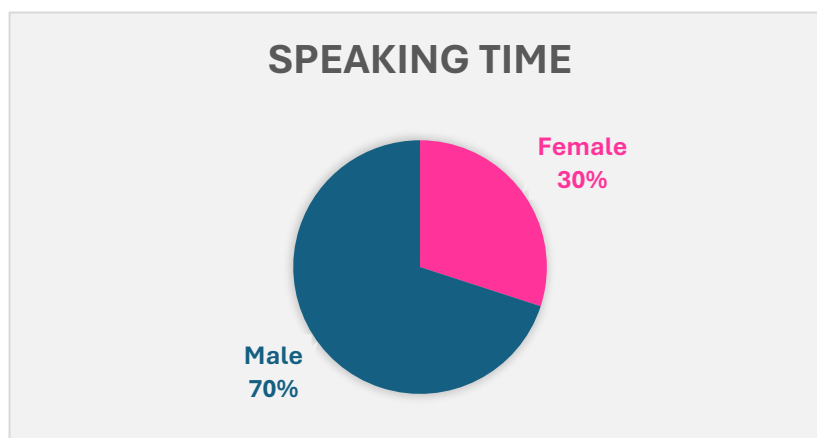


Figure 6 Speaking time in podcast

2. Turn-Taking

The table below reveals that 33 times, Females take turns speaking. On the other hand, Males take 105 turns, as there are 6 males in Pitch 1 and 3 as well; that is why the speaking time and no. of turns taken by men are significantly greater than women in TV show.

Table 7

Table 7 Turns in Pitch1&#

	MALE (06)	FEMALE (02)
NO. OF TURNS IN PITCH 1	58	23
NO. OF TURNS IN PITCH 3	47	10

TOTAL	105	33
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In contrast to the TV show, the no. of turns taken by both genders in the podcast is similar because, here, the host asks a question to the guest, and he answers it politely without any interruptions or arguments.

Table 8

Table 8 No. of turns

	LARRY (MALE)	ALIZA (FEMALE)
NO. OF TURNS	24	23

3. Interruptions

The table shows the no. of interruptions and overlapping by the TV show's Male and Female Investors and Entrepreneurs. In the first Pitch, there are few interruptions as the Guest describes his business model to the sharks, and at the end, they both accept the deal offered by the Sharks. On the other hand, some interruptions and overlapping can be seen in the third pitch as Sharks criticizes the demand of 4.5 crore.

Table 9

Table 9 no. of interruptions & overlapping in TV show

	Men (06)	Women (02)
No. of Interruptions	05	00
No. of Overlapping	03	01
Total	08	01

On the contrary, in the podcast, the interruptions by females are 02 and by males is 0.

Table 10

Table 10 No of interruption & overlapping in Podcast

	Men	Women
No. of Interruptions	00	02
No. of Overlapping	00	01
Total	00	03

4. Topic Control

Analysis shows that throughout the TV show the Sharks (5 male, 1 female) hold the Topic control. As they steer the conversation with every question, they ask entrepreneurs related to their business models, revenue management, and recent statistics. As there are 5 males in investors, so they take the turn more frequently, leading to a male-dominant show.

Similarly, throughout the podcast, the host holds the topic control as she asks the guest whatever she wants, and the guest politely replies to her. As most of the questions asked by her needed explanation, the guest's speaking time was significantly longer than hers.

5. Question Types

In this section, we have inquired about the questions asked by the Sharks in the debate with the entrepreneurs, disclosing a dynamic in which direct and open-ended questions unintentionally contribute to male dominance.

Major questions are open-ended in nature. The entrepreneurs, after describing their business model, wait for the response of every member of the panel about the Business offers. And did every member explain their offers or why they are out today? There are 2 male entrepreneurs and 5 male investors, which significantly affects the dominance of the TV show. These points give us information about the intersection of question types, power dynamics, and difficulty in managing a TV with many mixed members.

On the other hand, in the podcast, most of the questions by the host are open-ended and need explanation from guests. The guest's responses to these questions are quite logical. That is why his Speaking time is more than the female host.

6. Linguistic Features

In the TV show, linguistic strategies are not used in the first pitch. On the contrary, some male investors use direct language against the business models presented by the entrepreneurs in the third pitch. Table 6 shows that the use of linguistic strategies by the male is 5 as compared to the female, which is 0.

Table 11

Table 11 Linguistics features in TV show

Linguistic Strategies used in TV Show						
No.	Utterance Dialogues	Assertive Sentences	Direct Language	Hedging	Tag Questions	Time Stamp
By Male						
01	Ab ap kah rahy hain k ham aap ko 4.5 crore den 60 crore ki evaluation py ta k aap ja kr experiment karen farm deployment py.		I			06:36
02	Is that correct?				I	06:44
03	R ya pora khiyali palo hai k aap wahan py jao ghy...		I			08:21
04	Mujy to esa lag raha hai free k paisy mil rahy hain to 1 ni 3 try mar len.		I			08:56
05	Mujy to esa lag raha jesy aap ne hum sab ka time waste kia hai r yahan aap		I			10:01

	apny brand ko advertise krny a ghy ho k for some reason national tv py aap ka naam nikl jaye.					
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Similarly, the use of linguistic strategies in the Podcast is shown in the table below:

Table 12

Table 12 Linguistic features in Podcast

Linguistic Strategies used in the Podcast						
No.	Utterance Dialogues	Assertive Sentences	Direct Language	Hedging	Tag Questions	Time Stamp
By Male						
01	I think I should maybe have some sort of rest and have my own business to work on.			I		05:05
02	It could be condensed into three reasons so I think at first most importantly it's that you have to have the capability to produce the reliable and innovative and 1st class kind of products.			I		06:15
03	Actually, I think there more of a trade off our marketing strategy not as how other people perceive that realme just produced low end products and we don't have high end products....			I		11:54
04	Alright for those questions I think it could be put this way.			I		34:19
05	I think Labour cheap is definitely not the reason all international investors come here due to Pakistani population and demand of phones.			I		15.34
By Female						

01	There is a sigma attached to realme that it is a budget friendly phone and it can't compete with apple that might be wrong might be right.		I			11:38
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7. Guest Composition

In the TV show, the guest composition favours male dominance a lot. There is a panel of 6 members (1 female, 5 male) and 2 Male and 1 female entrepreneur, which then results in more speaking time and turn-taking by men to dominate the show.

In contrast to the TV show, there is only one male guest in the podcast, which means there is no role of guest composition in male dominance.

8. Talk Show Vs. Podcast

Analysis shows that throughout the TV show, the Sharks hold the topic control by asking a few open-ended questions about the business model. In response, the entrepreneurs share the statistics and recent data of their companies. But overall, this is a male-dominated show. Because of their greater composition in the show, they have more than 70 percent of the speaking time; also, they take turns more frequently than women in the TV show.

Similarly, the analysis shows that the overall podcast is friendly and informative, which is actually an interview by a female host and the marketing manager of Realme. She simply compared Realme with Apple and Samsung and asked some questions about their marketing strategies and future goals, and he replied to her with detailed answers, leading to a higher speaking time in the podcast. So, it is a Male-dominant podcast just because of open-ended questions asked by the female host.

Business

Podcast:

The first podcast with the male host Adeel reflected the dominance of men in discussion. Male guests provide detailed answers to the host's questions. Even with women guests, male guests have a higher rate of speaking time in business genre. The language strategies male hosts use, such as questioning, make the male more dominant.

On the other hand, in the second podcast with female host Aliza Afaque, the male dominance still remains the same despite the host's gender in the podcast. The male guest takes up more speaking time, as the role of the host is to ask questions and lead the conversation. While the host asks many sensitive questions, the male guest provides the answers easily and takes up more space, making the male dominate the conversation.

TV show:

In the first TV show, hosted by Nabil Qadir, male dominance is evident throughout the TV show. As the main speaker, the male leads the conversation, directing the discussion. The panel consists mainly of male guests. Male guests often change the topic of debate, often interrupted or overlapped, which weakens the influence of a single woman guest.

On the other hand, the TV show with a female host, Rubab Hashim, also shows male dominance despite the central role of the female host. In this show, five male investors and one female investor

play a significant role in the conversation. Male investors dominate the discussion because they ask the most questions and interrupt more. While the host is present, her role is more inactive.

Table 12

Table 13 A Comparison of male and female host in Business TV shows and Podcasts

Business				
Overall Dominance	Podcast		TV Show	
	Male Host	Female Host	Male Host	Female Host
Male	I	I	I	I
Female				

Putting the above discussion in a nutshell, the analysis shows that regardless of the genre, there is a clear male dominance in traditional TV Shows in Pakistan. On the contrary, we have seen more female Dominance in podcasts.

Genre	TV Show	Podcast
Business	Male	Male

Conclusion

The gender analysis of podcasts and television programs in Pakistan highlights a high level of male superiority in both cases. However, this is observed to a certain degree in some conditions. TV shows have been found to exhibit more male dominance due to the broader audience consisting more of men, the frequency of interruptions, and male hosts controlling the subject and the discussion. These findings underscore the influence of societal norms and professional hierarchies on conversational behaviours, reflecting broader gender disparities in communication. The persistence of male dominance, regardless of the host's gender, highlights the structural challenges women face in achieving equal representation and influence in public discourse. Media producers should prioritise diverse and balanced participant compositions and encourage inclusive moderating practices to foster more equitable conversations. Further research could explore the role of cultural context and audience reception in shaping conversational dynamics, providing deeper insights into the intersection of gender and media representation.

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