

## IMPACT OF FORCED MARRIAGES IN TV DRAMAS: A CASE STUDY OF FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

1: Dr. Irem Sultana, 2: Dr. Faiza Latif , 3: Dr. Abida Noureen

### ABSTARCT

*This study investigates the role of TV dramas in highlighting the problems of forced marriages and impact of these dramas on females. Pakistani TV dramas are produced on various social issues and taboos exist in our society with a view to create awareness among the viewers, the young generation in particular. Islam strictly prohibits forced marriages. This awareness helps them understand and resolve their issues. The research was conducted with the help of survey method while using questionnaire as a tool of data collection of 200 females through random sampling. The theoretical framework of the study was based on Cultivation Theory. The findings showed that TV dramas with forced marriage content are creating awareness and leaving impact on female viewers.*

**Keywords:** TV, dramas, impact, awareness, forced marriages, females

### INTRODUCTION

Forced Marriage is considered to be a serious issue not only in Pakistan but also in many parts of the world. In Pakistan, many a young girls have been forced into wed-lock against their consent. Marriage is an important social institution in Islam, which is regarded as a union of two person's that aims at their well-being through better understanding, love and affection. Islam prohibits forced marriages. Islam makes it binding to seek consent of a woman before her marriage. Abu Hurairah transmits from the Holy Prophet (PBUH) who said: "No female whether a widow or divorcee will be forced to marry any one unless her express and categorical consent has been freely taken and in the same way a woman not previously married can never be forced to marry anyone unless her free consent and permission is taken" (Mohi ud Din Qadri, 2009). According to Sahih Al-Bukhari, "Any parent or any relative cannot insist their children to get married to someone against their free will and consent. In another Hadith in the Sahih of Imam Bukhari, "Holy Prophet (PBUH) said that if a woman wants to marry and is already a divorcee or widow, her right of free consent and free choice is superior then the right of her guardian. If she is not previously married and this is her first marriage even, then her parents or other guardians cannot enforce their choice on her. They are not allowed to force her to marry any one against her free choice and free consent." (Mohi ud Din Qadri, 2009). Pakistan is an Islamic country, and Islam gives right to women to marry as per their choice within the guidelines drawn for the purposed. But unfortunately, the practice of forced marriages of women is common in our society. There are many causes of forced marriage in Pakistan including the notion of 'honor' (*izzat*), marriage in exchange (*watta satta*) that is supposed to maintain the balance of power between the two families, male domination (gender inequality), illiteracy or lack of education, the economic burden (Naveed & Butt 2015). Forced marriage is a form of controlling independence of women. It includes mental and physical abuse, emotional stress, and extreme social pressure.

\*Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, GCU Faisalabad

\*\*Assistant Professor, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

\*\*\*Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

In some incidents, violence, kidnapping, sexual harassment, rape and killing was also involved. There is no official agreed upon definition of forced marriage at international level (Hossain & Turner 2001). In general, forced marriage means one or both of girl and boy do not agree to the marriage and some kind of mental, emotional or physical pressure is involved in it. Sometimes risk of violence, or social rejection is also there if one or both refuse to marry (Zaman 2014). One attempt to define forced marriage was made by the government of the United Kingdom (UK), which has characterized forced marriage as a “marriage without the consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor” (Crown Prosecution Services, UK 2010).

Amongst electronic media, TV is considered the most effective medium as it is watched by a large segment of society comprising both literate and illiterate for entertainment and information in Pakistan. In addition to entertainment, TV dramas are also a source of awareness for many viewers as these dramas highlight and provide information about many social issues. TV dramas highlight the issues like extra-marital affairs, forced marriage, corruption, domestic violence, harassment at work place, oppression etc. TV dramas have been giving projection to the forced marriage issue with different aspects. In Pakistan, many TV dramas like *Meri Zaat Zarra e Be Nishan*, *Mann Mayal*, *Teri Raza*, *Anna*, *Gul e Rana* and *Sammi* were based on the taboo issue of forced marriage.

TV content has been cultivating the minds of viewers. If some issue is portrayed positively, it will have positive impact but if the presentation is in negative context, it will create negativity in viewers (Gangoli & Chantler 2009). Keeping this in view, the present study aimed at exploring and analyzing the impact of forced marriage TV dramas on females, which is one of the major issues for them.

### Literature Review

Relif (2019) stated that The Qur’an has specifically mentioned that “orphan girls have as much right to choose their marriage partner as other girls, given that they are more likely to be vulnerable to exploitation”. And that The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that “the consent of a bride is a prerequisite to the validity of the marital contract”.

Akhtar (2016) conducted a study “Forced Marriages in Pakistan (From Islamic Perspective)”. The basic aim of the study is to explore the behavior of couples who contacted forced marriage and also the parents who were involved in this act. The results of the study concluded that Islam permits the parents to plan and make possible arrangements for the marriage of their children because they are the most heartfelt and true persons.

Zaman (2014) concluded in a study that in Pakistan the women issues related to forced marriages and inheritance are quite common. Hossain & Turner (2001) concluded in a study that Government and voluntary organizations should take intensive and instant actions to stop the practice of kidnapping for forced marriage in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Samad & Eades (2002) analyzed context, issues and the perceptions of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi people of forced marriages. The results showed that lack of education, unemployment and poverty are the main reasons of forced marriage in the developing countries.

Reuben Ackerman (2018) concluded that Pakistan is failing to fulfill their responsibilities under the international agreements to ensure the rights of minorities protect them from forced marriages.

Market & Markaz (2012) conducted a study to analyze the trend of radicalization, and an analysis of domestic violence and women’s rights for marriages in Pakistan. The results of the

study revealed that forced marriage and domestic violence are a mounting fear in Pakistan, with growing radicalization.

Haster et al (2008) in a study found that there was no statistical evidence in increasing of the age of sponsorship and the cases of forced marriage. Reasons for growing forced marriages are pressures by family members, mental issues, parental death and sexual behavior of potential spouses.

Myers & Harvey (2011) conducted a study is to find out the causes and consequences of forced and early marriage. The results of the study revealed that the reasons of forced marriage were gender inequality, poverty, traditional and religious practice and weak legislative enforcement. And the consequences are lack of education, violence and forced sexual relations, reproductive health issues and isolation and psychological trauma.

Anitha & Gill, (2017) conducted a study in United Kingdom to examine of case of forced marriage showed that other than physical abuse, the role of emotional pressure is also very important.

Anitha (2015) explained in a study that British newspapers created hype about the issue of forced marriage. The British newspapers gave less attention to the other issues of violence on women and presented that forced marriage is only an important issue to address in British society. The hype in issue of forced marriage created a moral panic in the British Society.

Nancy (2018) analyzed, newspapers, in order to find that how these newspapers presented the news of child marriages. The findings showed that, media reports and newspaper provide enough coverage to the issue of child marriage, but media never mention about the results of child marriage on the health of young girls. The research study points out that, print media should put more efforts in creating proper awareness about child marriages.

Shafiq (2018) concluded that the stereotypes for “perfect women” in Pakistani tv drama serials support the male-controlled system of Pakistan. It was also observed that women were mostly portrayed as daring, frank, highly modern, educated and professional who mostly belong to elite class having latest and western kind of dresses. Those characteristics highlight them as “imperfect women”.

Abbas (2018) conducted a study to explore the dichotomy of a “good and bad” woman portrayed in TV dramas (1977-88) in Pakistan. Discourse analysis of dialogues and women roles, showed that dramas in Islamization period depicted images of women that were highly traditionalist. Fatima (2018) concluded that despite of increase in female education and modernity honor issues still continue to be the most dominant feature of a woman’s life on screens.

### **Statement of problem**

Pakistan is an Islamic country. It is among the top ranked countries with forced marriage cases. It is basically one of the main issues for female, impact of which needs to be analyzed through the research. Hence this study evaluates impact of TV dramas about forced marriage on female.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to:

- Find out the role of TV dramas in highlighting the problem of forced marriages of females
- Explore the impact of forced marriages TV dramas on females

### **Rationale**

### ***Rationale for Selecting TV Dramas***

TV dramas are said to be a strong medium of entertainment and awareness not only in Pakistan but also in other countries of the world. Because of their popularity and power to influence the audience, TV dramas have been selected to conduct the study.

### ***Rationale for Selecting Forced Marriage***

Like other countries located in South Asia, females in Pakistan also have to face a number of social issues which adversely impact their life. However, the issue of forced marriage is the most important one, as it shapes rest of their life. Owing to its paramount importance for females, the issue of forced marriage has been selected to carry out this research.

### ***Rationale for Selecting Female***

Ours is a male-dominated society wherein females, in general, are deprived of their rights. Marriage is the most decisive event of their life, but ironically, most of them are not consulted before their marriages which is against Islamic teachings. That is why, female segment of the society has been chosen for the study. This study is significant as it helps and benefits the other organizations like education institutions, NGO'S and government of our country to make policies to control this issue of forced marriages. So that the right of marriage given to women by Islam can be implemented.

### **Hypothesis**

**H1:** Pakistani TV dramas are creating awareness regarding forced marriage among females

### **Research Question**

The research has the following research questions:

1. Do Pakistani TV dramas create awareness regarding forced marriage among youth?
2. Do Pakistani TV dramas highlight problems regarding forced marriages among youth?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical ground of this study is Cultivation Theory by George Gerbner. Cultivation theory proposes that exposure to television over time, subtly "cultivates" viewers perceptions of reality. According to cultivation theory, there are light and heavy viewer who watch TV less than four hours and more than four hours respectively (Gerbner et al,1994). Heavy viewers have different perception than light viewers, heavy television viewers often give answer that is closer to the way the world is portrayed on television.

### **Research Methodology**

This study was designed to find out the impact of TV dramas showing forced marriage on young female students of G.C. Women University Faisalabad. Survey method was employed for data collection in this research. A close ended questionnaire with five points Likert Scale was fashioned Quantitative data (Bacon John, Taplin Margaret,2015) was obtained through that questionnaire. And to analyze the data SPSS (statistical package for the social science) software was applied for analyzing the received data. The researcher selected 200 samples from G.C. Women University Faisalabad via simple random sampling. Through this study the researcher explored the opinion of female young students regarding the impact they receive from the dramas which show forced marriages. Since it is observed in Pakistani society the girls make victim of forced marriages, the female respondents' opinion could be of value.

### **Data Presentation**

Collected responses from the respondents using survey method, with close ended questionnaire, are presented in the form of bar graphs (Bounford, T.2000). To show the study's finding more vividly, bar graphs along with interpretations are presented as follow;

**Figure 1**

**Preference of Female University Students for TV Dramas Channels**

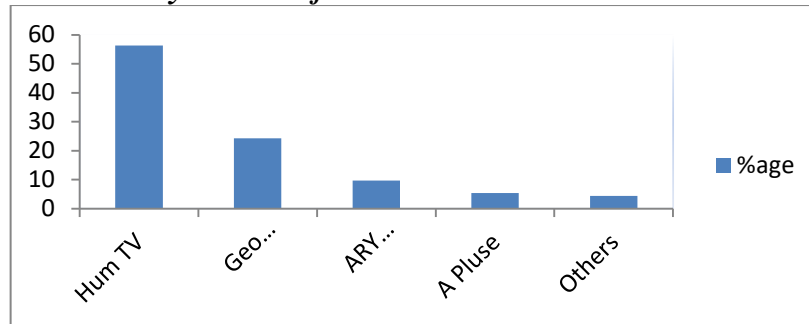


Figure 1 shows the respondents' choice among different drama channels. Out of 200 respondents 90 chose Hum TV while 50 went with Geo entertainment channel, 30 preferred ARY entertainment 18 selected A Plus and 12 chose other TV channels. This sets the percentages 56.31, 24.27, 9.7, 5.3, and 4.3 respectively. The majority with 56.31 selected HUM TV.

**Figure 2**

**Time spent for watching Drama**

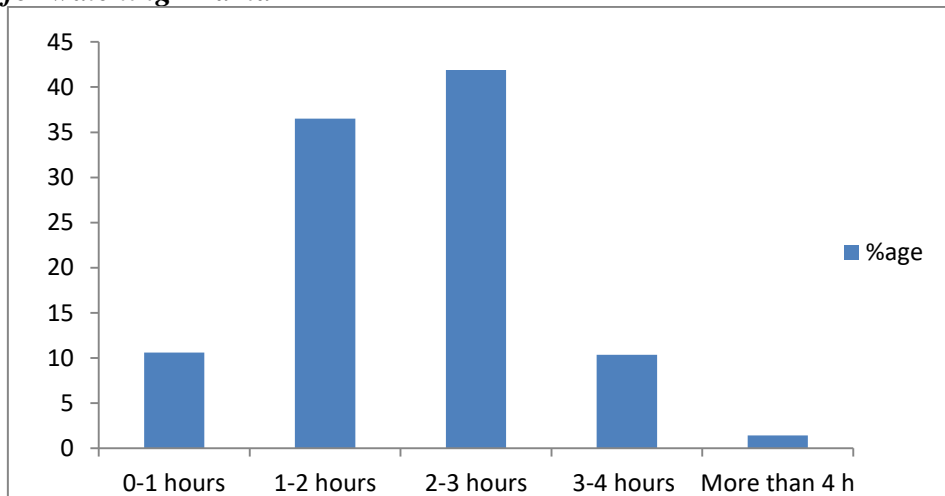


Figure 2 shows that majority of the students understudy watch dramas for 2-3 hours (41.90%), and respondents who watch drama for 1-2 hours make 36.51%, while two categories of watching dramas for 0-1 hour & for 3-4 hrs are almost equal in %age i.e 10.12% and 10.00 % respectively. Those respondents who watch more than 4 hrs make least percentage. i.e. 1.5 %

**Figure 3**

**Dramas Showing Forced marriages, are based on reality**

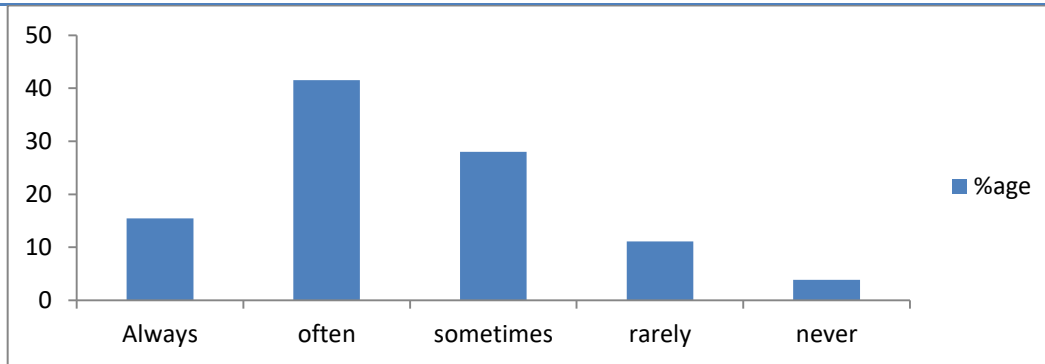


Figure 3 tells that out of 200 respondents 30 of the opinion that dramas always show the reality, while 80 thought often they show reality, 52 said sometimes they show reality while 20 expressed that rarely dramas show reality and for 18 dramas never show reality. The percentage wise they are 15.46, 41.55, 28.02, 11.11 and 3.86 in that order. Majority of the respondents thought that dramas do show reality.

**Figure 4**

*Pakistani Dramas showing forced marriages are creating awareness*

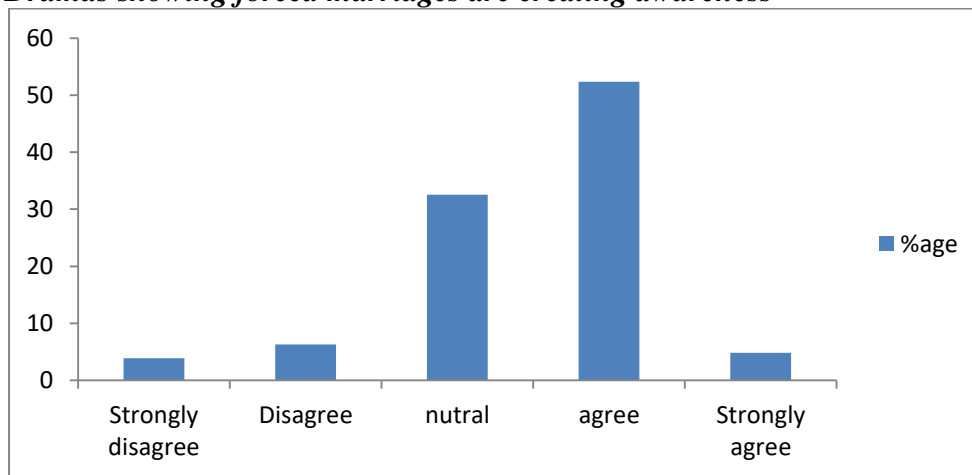


Figure 4 displays the outcome of the question if dramas are creating awareness regarding forced marriages. The findings show the frequencies of choices of 200 respondents as 8 strongly disagreed if dramas creating awareness while 11 disagreed and 54 remained neutral in their opinion, whereas 118 agreed to it and 09 strongly agreed. They made percentage in the sequence of 3.8, 6.3, 32.5, 52.4 and 4.8. The majority agreed to the statement that dramas are creating awareness.

**Figure 5**

*By showing forced marriages and problems in them, dramas are rousing hatred for forced marriages, in young female students.*

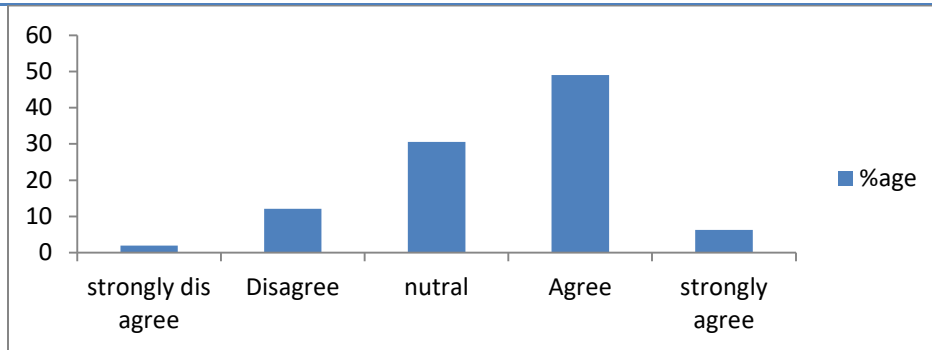


Figure 5 reveals by showing the subjects of forced marriages, dramas are influencing female students' perceptions negatively for forced marriages. There 4 respondents strongly disagreed to the statement while 20 disagreed and 62 remained neutral whereas there were 102 who agreed and 12 strongly agreed to the statement. They made percentage as 1.9, 12.1, 30.5, 49 and, 6.3 respectively.

**Figure 6**

*Husbands in Pakistan inflict violence on wives in forced marriages*

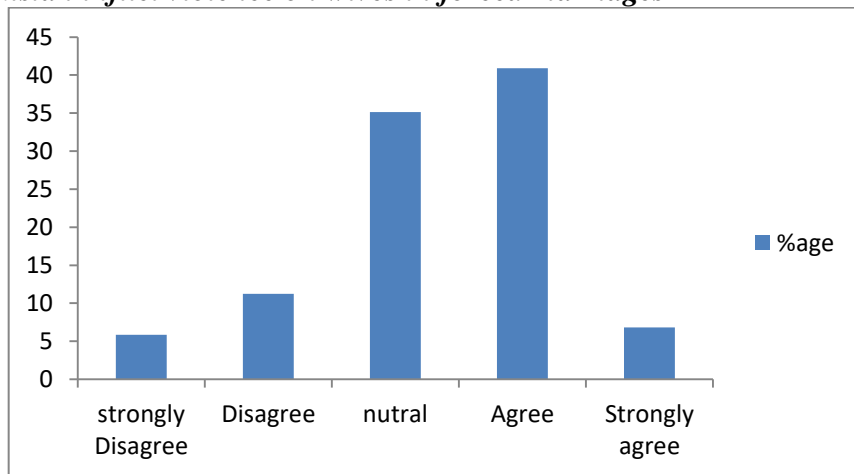


Figure 6 shows that out of 200 respondents 10 (5.854%) strongly disagree that husbands in forced marriages inflict violence on wives, 20 (11.22%) disagreed while 71 (35.12%) remained neutral whereas 84 (40.98%) agreed to the statement and 15 (6.829%) strongly agreed. The majority of respondents agreed that Husbands in Pakistan are violent towards their wives contacted through forced marriages.

**Figure 7**

*Wives in forced marriages make compromises*

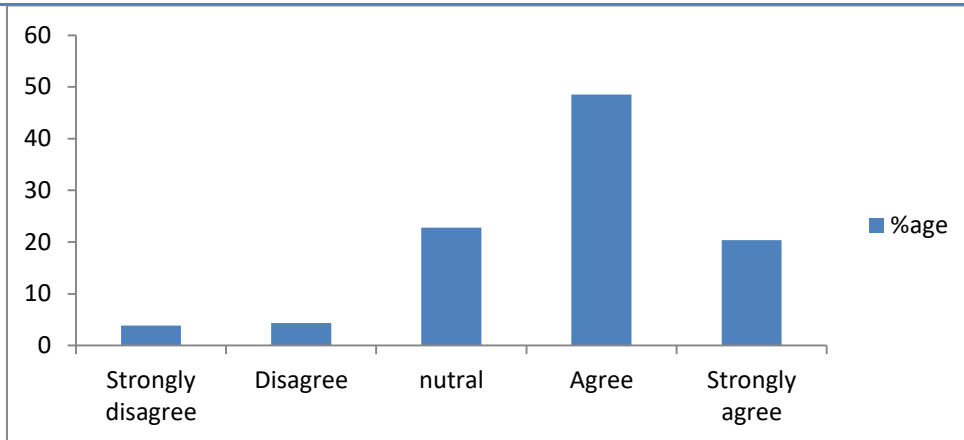


Figure 7 depicts that dramas are showing that wives make compromises in forced marriages and majority of respondents agreed to it. The findings showed that 6 (3.8%) respondents strongly disagreed to the statement, 7(4.3%) disagreed, 43(22.8%) remained neutral whereas 100(48.5%) agreed and 43(20.3%) strongly agreed to the statement. The majority agreed that wives have to compromise to hold onto their forced marriages as also reflected in dramas.

**Figure 8**

*Due to family pressures girls feel afraid of refusing forced marriage*

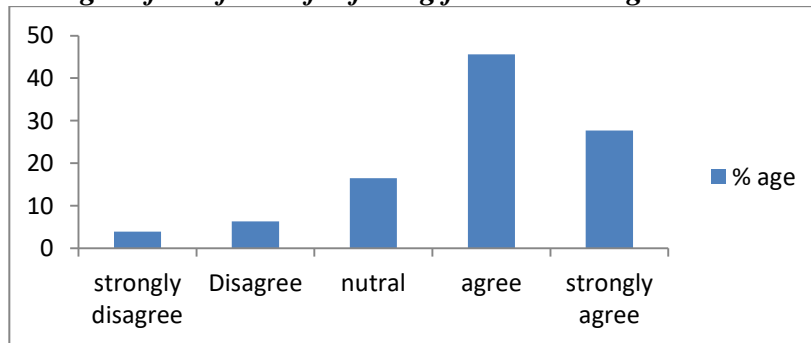


Figure 8 opens up that from 200 responses, 8 (3.883%) strongly disagree that family pressure make young females afraid of refusing forced marriages, 13 (6.311%) disagreed to the statement and there were 28 (16.50%) who remained neutral on the opinion, whereas 94 (45.63%) agreed and 57 (27.67%) strongly agreed to the point. The majority of the respondents were those who agreed to the statement.

**Figure 9**

*Dramas are changing parent’s thinking towards forced marriage*



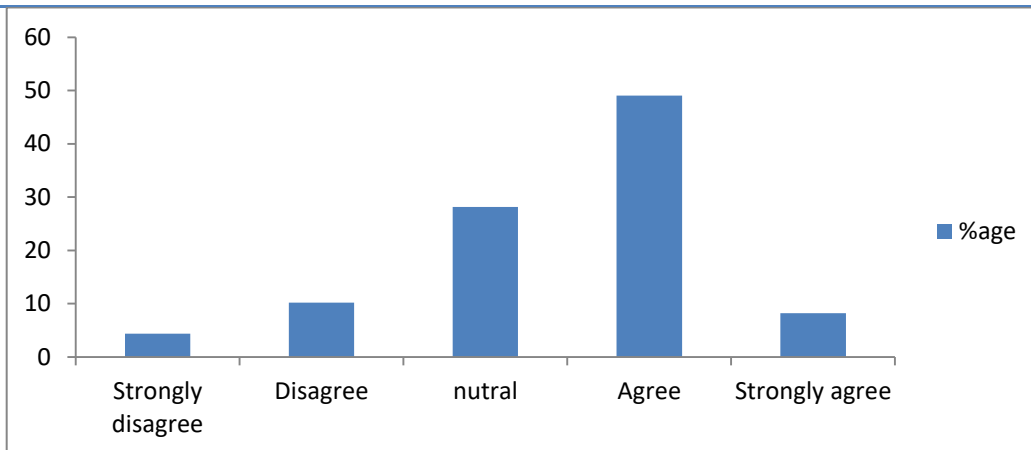


Figure 9 shows that 7 (4.3%) respondents strongly disagreed that parents opinion about forced marriages, is being influenced by the dramas, 20 (10.1%) disagreed, 55 (28.1%) remained neutral in their opinion, whereas 101 (49%) agreed to the statement and 17 (8.2%) strongly agreed that dramas showing forced marriages are influencing parents mind too. As per results, it is shown that majority of respondents agreed that dramas are leaving impact on parents' opinion.

### Findings and interpretation

The research study looked for the impact of TV dramas, showing forced marriages, on the young female students. The respondents were the 200 students of Government College Women University Faisalabad. The study showed that young female students preferred viewing dramas over other genres of TV programs. The finding further revealed that mostly they chosed the dramas presented by HUM TV drama channel. One of the question related to the spent duration for watching dramas dug out that majority of female students watch dramas for 2 to 3 hrs per day. The duration of their watching dramas confirm cultivation theory.

The outcome of the survey showed that the dramas showcasing forced marriages are creating awareness among young female viewers about the very social issue. The findings endorsed the cultivation theory. They showed that females spending more than 4 hours a day viewing TV dramas which present content having forced marriage, receive strong impact. The objectives of the research and answers of the research question were gained through the results revealed and hypothesis was tested through the results of the data collected.

The questions of the research, through survey, met their answers. Findings revealed that female students prefer HUM TV dramas over others. The study showed that Pakistani TV dramas are creating awareness and leaving impact related to the issue of forced marriage among young female students. As well as the study further showed that Pakistani TV dramas draw attention to the issues emerged by forced marriages. The hypothesis of the study was proved through the findings. When it was asked if dramas are based on reality, majority of the respondents agreed that dramas are showing real issues.

The finding showed that the young female students are getting strong impact on their perception regarding forced marriages shown by TV dramas. Majority of the respondents told they have started feeling hatred for forced marriages. As depicted in dramas, girls in forced marriages make compromises to run the marriage, many respondents could relate to it and agreed therefore, in real, wives compromise even when they are in forced marriages. The respondents moreover, do realize and relate, the fact dramas are showing i.e. husbands go aggressive towards wives in forced marriages. The impact of TV dramas showing forced marriage, proved that

mostly young female students refused to accept the forced marriage for themselves after viewing such dramas. But study also revealed that many respondents feel that family pressure does make young females accept the forced marriage against their will. The young female students perceived that TV dramas not only changing the opinion of young females but also leaving impact on parent's take for forced marriage.

### **Conclusion**

The study achieved the objectives in a way that Pakistani dramas, through showing forced marriage issues, are leaving impact on female university students. Moreover by presenting issues like violence from husband and compromises made by wives, they are shaping the perception of female students negative regarding forced marriages. Current study also got a result that female students were afraid of getting married, as they found themselves depressed by viewing dramas on forced marriages. The opinions of young female students are being fashioned by the viewing of such dramas where they show forced marriages putting female counterparts in trouble.

In an Islamic country where Islam gives lawful rights, to choose marriage partner, to the female counterparts too, it is always depressing when societal norms deprive them of their due rights by putting them into forced marriages. According to drama depiction, in forced and unwanted marriages where husbands usually go violent, wives have to make compromises to prevent marriage from falling apart. According to the respondents when they see and relate these things they feel offended and do not want to get into forced marriage for themselves. But having said that they also shared that the pressure from family often not an easy thing to negate therefore many girls, despite of loathing forced marriage, have to accept it as their own reality, exactly as dramas show. Here it is seen that findings present paradoxical results to the cultivation theory where audience who are glued to the TV for longer times get strong impact on their perceptions related to even the real issues.

As quoted above media is playing a vital role in shaping not only individual opinion but also on collective level where masses are getting storm impact and being influenced by the content shown by the media generally and dramas (entertainment) specifically. This study also reached the conclusion that forced marriage issues depicted by the dramas do influence the opinion of the girls. Thus it can be rightly said that nowadays it is not only parents and family who influence the young girls but also the dramas have their pivotal role to play. (McQuail, 2005) such impact so to speak, is affecting human life in broader prospect. (Narula, 2006)

The study revealed that media in form of dramas is playing its role positively and highlighting the one of the vices of Pakistani society i.e. forced marriages which is ruining many young lives. When investigated it was revealed that mostly girls prefer watching HUM TV which is a private channel specifically built its TRP through its dramas. Mostly their dramas revolve around domestic issues. According to the respondents they find HUM TV dramas more relatable to their real lives. Forced marriages and complications related to such marriages, as conflicts between spouses, non acceptance of relationship on the part of both spouses and mostly violence and aggression inflicted by the husband and submissive attempts of compromise by the wives, that all together horrify the audience and as young girls, most of them feel hatred for such situation for themselves.

Most importantly the study findings showed that young females, who are exposed to such media where they are raising curtain on societal vices, consider those presentation based on

reality and for them the drama presentation speak of true happening and this shows their trust on media and eventually their opinions are easily mold up by these depictions.

Although the girls showed disliking and disapproval of such marriages for themselves, they also expressed that family pressure can make them go into such marriage. the study reveal the vulnerable part of this issue and it is open despite of rejection as a choice, females in Pakistani society have to accept it because their families would not listen to them.

As a hope there came another revealing through findings about parents' opinion reshaping. The study dug out that according to young female opinion, the parents too are being influenced by these dramas and they refrain to impose such marriage to their daughters. Here another positive impact is seen where media is playing its desired role towards positive opinion building.

In short, this study achieved its objectives and proved the hypothesis and explored that TV dramas showing forced marriages are leaving strong impact on viewers especially young female students by creating awareness about the sensitive issues related to forced marriages. Not only young girls but the dramas are also influencing the parents' opinion too. Thus, we see by exposing societal vice like forced marriage in dramas media is playing its positive role and leaving its forceful impact.

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