

VOICING THE TABOO: SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HUM AND ARY DIGITAL TV DRAMAS IN PAKISTAN

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INTRODUCTION

This research examines representations and public response to representations of sexual harassment in Pakistani TV dramas, considering the public considers it immoral to mention sex at any place or time. The society may ignore if the matter raises in discussion among males but it will mark a woman as shady if she mentions sex. It is out of question for a woman to mention harassment or abuse, as it will draw attention of the predators to the woman or the victim. Though the voicing of sexual issues was strictly considered a taboo in Pakistan until recently, an openness on the matters is seen since the telecast of the first TV serial *Udaari* (Duraid, & Ehteshamuddin, 2016) on incest. Its controversy lead popularity encouraged HUM and ARY digital TV channels to enter a race for producing and screening more and more plays on all kinds of sexual harassment or women liberation issues in Pakistan. The TV blockbusters include *Cheekh* (Mustafa, Kazmi, & Mehmood, 2019) on rape, *Ranjha Ranjha kardi* (Duraid, & Nisar, 2019) on marital rape, and *Meray pass tum ho* (2019) on a working woman's liberation and engagement in an extramarital relationship. The study examines representations of sexual abuse in fourteen *HUM TV* and *ARY DIGITAL* serials, and measures the present status of public fear, inhibition, and openness regarding sexual matters in an orthodox Pakistani Muslim society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers real life sexual abuse, representations of sexual harassment and their effects on audience. As the selected television plays focus on various types of sexual abuse to women and children, the literature covers different types of child molestation and rape. We noticed a gap in research on silencing and opening up experiences of, what Shumaila Imtiaz and Anila Kamal call, tabooed sexual issues in Pakistan (2021). According to UNICEF, "around 15 million teenage girls universally face forced sex" at some point in their lives "yet many women do not speak up for themselves against sexual harassment" (2017). Anita Hill says women stay silent to avoid "labels as shady," or "a victim of sexual harassment" (Chance, 2017). The selected plays attempt to break the silence and show that the head or a male member of a family kills or attempts to kill the dishonored woman, or pressurizes her to remain silent to save the face and respect of the family in society.

The plays show how society blames innocent victims and their families for crimes against their women, or predators try taking advantage of the situation, or make the image of a victim dangerous for the image of the family. Yasmin Jiwani says women are seen as exotic, erotic and dangerous (1992), hence, punished. Eleanor Busby says, men are inclined to understand issues from "the male criminal's point of view" and hold women responsible for crimes committed against them (2019). Hence, punish them. Sadaf Ahmed says Pakistani films not only end life of the raped or a prospective rape victim in advance, they also punish prostitutes with incurable

disease for sexual misconduct (2016). The matter of voicing of sexual issues has always met a serious general controversy in Pakistan and created a never ending spiral of silence on TV until recently. Sex, rape, venereal disease, or even breast cancer related topics are banned on radio Pakistan even today that reaches the largest audience in the country (Anila Saleem, Station Director, Radio Pakistan, Islamabad, personal communication, February 09, 2021). They are banned in apprehension of social disorder or protests by certain segments of society. Silence prevails even if someone wishes to voice an issue. Elisabeth Noelle Neumann says “people have a tendency to stay quiet when they sense their views are contradictory to those in the majority on a matter” (1974).

Apprehension of sexual harassment, silencing and shame issues are common and they have an impact on women’s freedom and mobility. Meera Senthilingam says sexual harassment deprives women of their freedom of mobility in public places in their daily lives (2017). Men run public places and can harass women if they are seen in these places, depriving them of their freedom of mobility. The fear of unsafe street gives men a reason to keep women at home or out of school. This way they claim they keep adolescent girls safe from dishonor or sexual harm. The UNICEF reports: “around 15 million teenage girls (aged 15 to 19) universally face forced sex at some point in their life..., and yet many women do not speak up for themselves against sexual harassment” (2017). Hill says women stay quiet against harassment as they wish to avoid labels such as shady or “a victim of sexual harassment” (Chance, 2017). Males misunderstand women’s sexual issues from the male attacker’s point of view (Busby, 2019). Nighat Dad says that even those who know a harasser stay quiet and this stance often facilitates the inclusion of the culprits in the society (Sethna et. al., 2018). “Rape is justified” on the ground that the victim “surpassed the lines of advised gender roles and feminine principles... Women demanding independence on their own bodies” are seen as women “promoting nudity” (Sethna et al., 2018). Men often have justifications for committing rape and ferocious physical crimes against women (Russell, 1990).

Real Life Sexual Harassment

Shumaila Imtiaz and Anila Kamal studied a sample of “452 victims (197 men and 255 women) with age ranging from 16 to 40 (M = 22.29, SD = 3.83)” to examine “the gender and city-wise” differences in experiences of “sexual harassment” from “different public places” situated in “three major cities of Pakistan including Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore” (2021, p. 1808). They found that sexual harassment is a common “social problem” in “public places” in Pakistan. More women than men fall prey to “sexual harassment” though “men are the major perpetrators” and they also experience “sexual harassment in public places” in Pakistan (Imtiaz, & Kamal, 2021, p. 1808).

Imtiaz and Kamal quote Anila [Kamal] (1995) and Kamal (2005) who used sexual harassment attribution and sexual harassment experience scales developed by Michele J. Gelfand and Louise F. Fitzgerald and Fritz Drasgow’s (1995) to study “gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion” in Pakistan. [Kamal] (1995) and Kamal (2005) found that unwanted attention, catcalling and degrading were foremost social problems in educational institutions and work and public places and they greatly hindered social life and livelihood of Pakistani women (Imtiaz, & Kamal, 2021, p. 1808-09). Gelfand et. al. (1995, p. 164) say that

“the structure of the construct is isomorphic across settings (i.e., work vs education) and, within settings, across cultures” such as US and Brazil. Indian and Pakistani social life reflect the replication of the construct in daily life.

Farida Anwar, Karin Osterman, Kaj Bjorkqvist (2019) developed scales for measuring actions and reactions to “physical, verbal, and nonverbal sexual harassment” in “public places in Pakistan” through a questionnaire filled by “543 female students” who were in their early twenties. They found that “sexual harassment” was “most common in market places, and the perpetrator was typically a [male] stranger” (Anwar, Osterman, & Bjorkqvist, 2019, p. 65). They added that

nonverbal sexual harassment was the most frequent type. Only 2.8% of the respondents had never been victimised from any of the three types of sexual harassment. The most common reaction of the victims was to run away. Respondents highly victimised from physical, verbal or nonverbal harassment scored higher than others on defensive reactions, immediate distress, and long-term negative concomitants (Anwar, Osterman, & Bjorkqvist, 2019, p. 65).

Over 97% young Pakistani women were found exposed to experience of physical or (non)verbal sexual harassment without significant difference in their education or social stature. Anwar, Osterman and Bjorkqvist found that “educational level was not associated with the amount of victimisation from any type of sexual harassment”, but highly educated respondents “scored significantly higher on negative reactions to sexual harassment” (2019, p. 65). As seen in most of the mentioned plays “sexual harassment” naturally accompanies “negative psychological concomitants” for the protagonists. Thus, the study is important considering both “sexual harassment in public places in Pakistan” and associated “negative psychological concomitants for the victims” need to be addressed by the state and the society (Anwar, Osterman, & Bjorkqvist, 2019, p. 65). “A variety of negative psychological concomitants” include “embarrassment, humiliation, and fear” as were experienced by “young Nepalese females”, while “American female students reported feeling intimidated, afraid, distressed, and threatened when targeted” and the Australian “female victims” expressed “feelings of being anxious, humiliated, depressed, confused, or fearful” (Anwar, Osterman, & Bjorkqvist, 2019, p. 65). Frequent exposure to sexual harassment causes “loss of self-confidence, interruption of studies, and substance abuse” in females (Anwar, Osterman, & Bjorkqvist, 2019, p. 66). In Pakistani cases, families interrupt regular education of their daughters and discourage self-confidence in females to serve the patriarchy.

Bilal Ahmed, Farhan Naveed Yousaf and Umme Rubab Asif (2019) point to the issue of “street harassment” that “has become an alarming issue in Pakistan”, but “no efforts have been made to collect/compile data of this phenomenon” (2019, p. 283). They conducted “in-depth interviews with teachers of public sector colleges” and lawyers to study “experiences of the college teachers about street harassment and the status of current legislation to counter the malaise” and found that “the gendered/aged aspects of street harassment” hurt “the personal and social lives of women” in Pakistan (Ahmed, Yousaf, & Asif, 2019, p. 283). “Although teachers had themselves experienced and/or observed street harassment, they tend to adopt non-reactive coping strategies ignoring the harassers” (Ahmed, Yousaf, & Asif, 2019, p. 283). In their

opinion, victims did not “report street harassment to police” because they feared “society will blame them for the victimization and might further restrict their mobility”, owing to prevalent “rigid patriarchal structures and gendered socialization” practices (Ahmed, Yousaf, & Asif, 2019, p. 283). They argued that “teachers could play a significant role in educating the youth to help reduce the street harassment” issues in Pakistan (Ahmed, Yousaf, & Asif, 2019, p. 283). According to *The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010*, “harassment” means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, or the attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment; The above is unacceptable behavior in the organization and at the workplace, including in any interaction or situation that is linked to official work or official activity outside the office” (Gillani, 2010). The Act condemns the abuse of authority, creating a hostile environment and retaliation, limiting one’s growth or future promotions (Gillani, 2010).

Representations of Sexual Abuse

Naz Khaliq (2019) says no one believes a rape victim as the rapist hides in the guise of a loving family member in *Chup raho* (Be Quiet; Saeed, Naseeb, & Nawaz, 2014); *Ruswai* also depicts the lack of family support for a rape victim who is struggling to get justice; *Udaari* points to difficulties in getting justice though the culprit openly commits the crime and is not afraid of legal punishment. Hasrat Babul and Babrak Niaz (2019) insist that Pakistani plays are more effective than the Internet in influencing society and are negatively influencing society through portraying stereotypical, unintelligent women who never emancipate (p. 328). Babul and Niaz add that Pakistani private channel plays emphasize on sexual and physical beauty, religiosity and entertaining role of wives though not simple¹ (2019, p. 333). They add that audience is bored with the good woman image, and evil or negative images prevail. Babul and Niaz revealed that Pakistani plays show “33% of women characters” as strong, “48% as bold”, “26% as independent”, 44% as “victims, 33% as weak”, 25% as “emotional and 40%” as dependent (2019, p. 334). These characters “mostly end up with death, mishap, and disaster” though they appear “successful and beautiful” (Babul, & Niaz, 2019, p. 333). In *Besharam* (Shameless; Saeed, Nasib, & Rind, 2016), Sara is imperfect and scheming mother who not only has a number of extramarital affairs but also attempts to destroy her own daughter’s marital life because she married a middle class guy who she believes cannot pamper her like Sara.

Ayesha Ashfaq and Zubair Shafiq (2018) say that Pakistani plays reinforce the patriarchal stereotypes (p. 45) along the lines of Deaux and Model that emphasizes on physical appearances, behaviors, traits and occupations whereby body language and nature of speech become important (p. 49). They like Frantz Fanon (2008) and Patricia Hill Collins (2002) insist that Pakistani plays emphasize on “four cardinal virtues [of good women] suggested by Welter (1978) [which are] ‘piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity’ (p. 313)” (Ashfaq, & Shafiq, 2018, p. 59). But from the Pakistani perspective, these 18-25 years old young lead women meet perfect body standards of natural beauty: fair complexion, ultra-thin bodies and long black hair as opposed to

those women in side roles who bear modern looks, wear makeup with dark lipsticks and have short and stylish haircuts (Ashfaq, & Shafiq, 2018, p. 59). Good and righteous women modestly wear the national dress shalwar-kameez with dupattaⁱⁱ and bad women wear jeans, t-shirts, maxis, or designer made modern or traditional dresses (Ashfaq, & Shafiq, 2018, p. 60; Ahmad, 2016; Tasker, 1998). These traits “problematize and question”, what Anam Fatima calls, “the relationship of aesthetics to politics and culture” (2019, p. 5; Kaplan, 2000; Mulvey, 2007). Fatima says “the concept of honour and the resulting discourses have always affected women’s lives in Pakistan” in view of women’s performativity and politics of gender (2019, p. 3). In her opinion, “some of the most prominent concepts that are influenced by honour discourses include marriage, domestic violence, economic roles, labor participation, silencing of victims of sexual harassment or rape and even one’s religious standing (Fatima, 2019, p. 3). She quotes Katie Milestone and Anneke Meyer (2012) who say women’s matters are not personal but gender-wise political, “extricable, pervasive and complex” (Fatima, 2019, p. 3). Ruksana Faiz, Sumera Khalid and Tahir Mahmood found that private channels promote anti-social and anti-cultural behavior (2020, p. 761). ARY and HUM included 201 violent scenes in two dramas, promoting violence, westernization and unequal power relations (Faiz, Khalid, & Mahmood, 2020, p. 778).

Effects of Representations on Public

Anam Fatima used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method to study “honor discourses surrounding sexual violence” in *Sangat* (Zulfiqar, Qamar, & Nisar, 2015), *Chup raho* (Saeed, Naseeb, & Nawaz, 2014), and *Dastaan* (Duraid, & Hussain, 2010). She showed “how by resorting to honour discourses, mainstream representation of women’s roles in Pakistani serials, naturalizes women’s roles as bearers of honour whether in society (marriage, education) economics or history” (2019, p. 13). Women’s honor is community’s honor and not just her own or of her family. Mah-e-Laqa Zainab, Shehla Jabeen and Abida Noureen (2021) studied effects of plays on social behavior of a sample of 300 women and found that plays are representing and creating awareness of real issues in society since the start, and many viewers believe that they are effective in decreasing the cases of sexual abuse, gendered harassment, honor killing, domestic violence (p. 155, 163). Anjum Zia says Pakistan television (PTV) serials have strong effects on people due to the higher illiteracy rate and they had frustrated and cultivated “alien culture and norms” and gradually changed “the attitude of youth” (2014, p. 1394). Salman Amin, Saadia Fatima and Sajjad Ali argue that GEO, HUM and ARY serials promote “Western and Indian” lifestyles on “an equal basis” and they are quite entertaining and educating for people of different backgrounds and age and “occupational groups” and (2018, p. 34). Audience in their 30s and above watched GEO serials more frequently than adolescents up to 20 years who preferred HUM and ARY Digital plays (Amin, Fatima, & Ali, 2018, p. 40). Housewives watched the serials more frequently than students or working women (Amin, Fatima, & Ali, 2018, p. 40). Matric (10 years’ school education) pass women watched GEO serials more frequently while those with higher education preferred HUM and ARY plays (Amin, Fatima, & Ali, 2018, p. 40). Muhammad Sher Juni and Javeria Kareem et. al. (2014) studied 154 male and 154 female respondents in the rural district Layyah in Southern Punjab. They found that most respondents watched PTV prime time serials and followed the mediated modern lifestyles and manners:

handshaking in mixed gatherings, eating, drinking, singing, dancing and wearing modern dresses. In their opinion, narratives, sets, song, dance and music used in PTV prime time comedy, romance, suspense and violent genre plays largely affected the rural culture, changing “the language, dresses, lifestyle, festivals, music, food habits and traditional games” of the native rural viewers (Juni, & Kareem et. al., 2014, p. 1). Zainab Malik found that females were more prone to social learning and “adaptive of the lifestyle” and culture “presented in modern television dramas” or Turkish dramas that affected their social life and mental health and gave them “a more liberal approach”ⁱⁱⁱ towards life (2020, p. 10, 13, 16). Zubrah Shakir found that public loves watching “unique but real” stories like that of a sexually liberated working woman Mehwish (Ayeza Khan) in the most popular TV serial *Meray pass tum ho* (I have you; Saeed, Nasib, & Baig, 2019) though most of the respondents indicated that society zips “our lips due to many social restrictions” (2020, p. 19). Old PTV dramas had zero tolerance for vulgarity, emphasized modest dressing, moral, ethical and Islamic values and promoted tolerance and gender awareness while modern plays on private channels promote vulgarity, child abuse, rape, wanni, homosexuality, rude and liberated women, “wrong concepts of talaq and halala” (divorce, and permissible reunion), deformed social values through physical contact, romantic dialog and bedroom scenes (Shakir, 2020, p. 21-22). 78.9% respondents pointed to the lack of Muslim social values in modern Pakistani plays (Shakir, 2020, p. 26). While 59% respondents showed dissatisfaction, 34.4% showed satisfaction and 6.6% had mixed opinion about the content of the plays, 67.5% respondents believed Mehwish represented real women, 22.5% disagreed and 10% were not sure (Shakir, 2020, p. 26-7). Ayat Zaheer (2020) found that Pakistan plays are naturalizing “a certain form or notion of femininity” and “a theory of work” that not only “denies the actual work” women do but also discourages their entry into the male dominated marketplace (p. 102). Ghulam Shabbir, Ghulam Safdar, and Muhammad Imran found that HUM and ARY dramas as opposed to GEO TV represent Pakistani culture and had increased gender awareness in Bahawalpur city through “the modeling styles and the promotion of modernization” (2013, p. 102).

METHOD

We used mixed method approach to qualitatively and quantitatively study the voicing of sexual harassment issues via the television plays. We qualitatively examined representations of sexual harassment and abuse in fourteen plays telecast on HUM and ARY Digital TV channels in Pakistan from 2011 to 2020 and quantitatively examined public response to representations of sexual harassment online during the Covid-19 lockdown of 2020. We developed three scales for measuring openness to the discourse of sexual harassment, awareness (rights, misconceptions, education) and rape myths through 18 questions. The variables covered the taboo (or shame, indecency, immorality and openness in discussing sexual matters), awareness and rape myths (acceptance of television, or of the mentioned plays as a mean of communication on sexual harassment issues, incest/child molestation, rape, marital rape, the marital rape in Islam, rights, desensitization and the role of education and financial independence in women voicing sexual harassment complaints). We used Statistical Package for Social Sciences to analyze data and

checked the reliability of scales through Cronbach Alpha test. The values 0.71, 0.75 and 0.82 reflect internal reliability of scales, as the cut off value is 0.7.

Sample: We collected data from 244 male and female respondents of age group 18 to 50 years from all over Pakistan via the social media but compared the data collected from 100 males and 100 females on first come first serve basis. Most respondents belonged to working class and filled the questionnaire in English though we also shared the Urdu version of the questionnaire online. The study excluded the population segment that did not have the access to the internet or technology during the lockdown.

FINDINGS

We analyzed quantitative data collected through a survey questionnaire and the qualitative content of seven HUM TV and seven ARY Digital plays as discussed in the following sections:

Quantitative Study

A total of 244 male and female respondents of age group 18 to 50 years responded to the online survey questionnaire, circulated through the social media. We included a total of 100 male and 100 female respondents in the study on first come first serve basis. Though they belonged to different places from the north to the south of Pakistan, about 80% responses were from Lahore, three responses were from those settled in USA and one from Dubai. The average age of the respondents was 26.9 years. Three females were divorced, 36 married and 61 single whereas three males were divorced, 54 married and 43 single. They lived in joint families (mean value 5.6), including one or more children (mean value 1.31). Most families watched TV for about two hours daily, and also watched two to three dramas daily.

Hypothesis-1: The HUM TV and ARY DIGITAL plays are breaking the taboos about the sexual harassment issues.

We used four items in the questionnaire to test the hypothesis that HUM and ARY plays were breaking the taboo about the sexual harassment issues. They measured if viewers see shame, immorality, indecency in openly discussing sexual harassment acts in plays and endorsed to avoid discussion on sexual harassment issues in social gatherings. The responses are recorded in the tables below:

Table 1

Is it a shameful act on the part of HUM and ARY channels to depict the discussion of sexual issues in the TV plays?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	30	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Disagree	56	28.0	28.0	43.0

Neutral	69	34.5	34.5	77.5
Agree	31	15.5	15.5	93.0
Strongly Agree	14	7.0	7.0	100.0
Total	200	100	100	

The table-1 shows the response to item 1 if it was a shameful act on the part of HUM and ARY TV channels to depict the discussion of sexual issues in the television plays. The study found that 7% respondents strongly agreed, 15.5% agreed, 15% strongly disagreed, 15% disagreed to the statement. Overall, 22.5% agreed, 43% disagreed and 34.4% remained neutral in response to the statement. It implies that only 22.5% thought it was shameful to raise voice on sexual harassment issues through television plays and 77.5% audience were comfortable with television raising voice on sexual issues through the plays.

Table 2

Is it an indecent act on the part of HUM and ARY channels to discuss sexual issues in the dramas?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	37	18.5	18.5	18.5
	Disagree	64	32.0	32.0	50.5
	Neutral	51	25.5	25.5	76.0
	Agree	39	19.5	19.5	95.5
	Strongly Agree	9	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	216	100	100	

The item 2 examined if it was an indecent act on the part of HUM and ARY television channels to discuss sexual issues in the plays. 18.5% respondents strongly disagreed, 32% disagreed, 25.5% remained neutral, 19.5% agreed and 4.5% strongly agreed to the statement. Overall, 24% agreed, 50.5% respondents disagreed and 25.5% gave a neutral response to the statement. It implies that 76% audience were okay with the discussion of sexual awareness issues in the plays and only 24% audience found the television content indecent.

Table 3

It is an immoral act on the part of HUM TV and ARY Digital channels to discuss or depict sexual issues in dramas.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	Strongly Disagree	45	22.5	22.5	22.5
	Disagree	67	33.5	33.5	56.0
	Neutral	44	22.0	22.0	78.0
	Agree	37	18.5	18.5	96.5
	Strongly Agree	7	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	216	100	100	

The item 3 examined if “it is an immoral act on the part of HUM TV and ARY Digital channels to discuss sexual issues in dramas.” 22.5% respondents strongly disagreed, 33.5% disagreed (56% altogether), 3.5% strongly agreed, 18.5% agreed (22% altogether), and 22% remained neutral in response to the statement. It may be inferred that overall 78% audience did not think it was immoral to discuss sexual issues in television plays and 22% found it immoral.

Table 4
People should openly discuss sexual issues in social gatherings.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	19	9.5	9.5	9.5
	Disagree	50	25.0	25.0	34.5
	Neutral	60	30.0	30.0	64.5
	Agree	55	27.5	27.5	92.0
	Strongly Agree	16	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	200	100	100	

The item 4 examined if “people should openly discuss sexual issues in social gatherings.” 9.5% respondents strongly disagreed, 25% disagreed (34.5% altogether), 8% strongly agreed, 27.5% agreed (35.5% altogether), and 30% remained neutral in response to the question. Overall, 64.5% respondents (strongly) disagreed or remained neutral to the question and only 35.5% respondents believed that sexual issues should not be discussed in social gatherings. It may be further inferred that most audience felt comfortable with the idea of discussing sexual issues in social gathering or the television dramas.

Hypothesis 2: The HUM TV and ARY Digital dramas are creating awareness about sexual harassment issues.

We added six items (5-10) in the questionnaire to test the hypothesis that the HUM and ARY Digital dramas are creating awareness about the gendered sexual harassment issues and rights of the mother and child, marital rape and child sexual abuse.

Table 4.5
TV plays increase awareness of sexual harassment issues.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	17	8.5	8.5	13.0
	Neutral	34	17.0	17.0	30.0
	Agree	100	50.0	50.0	80.0
	Strongly Agree	40	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	200	100	100	

The item 5 examined if “TV plays increase awareness of sexual harassment issues.” 20% respondents strongly agreed, 50% agreed, 17% remained neutral, 8.5% disagreed, 4.5% strongly disagreed to the statement. Overall, 87% of the respondents strongly agreed, agreed, or remained neutral and 13% strongly disagreed or disagreed to the statement. It may be inferred that most audience agreed that the sexual harassment content educates the viewers about the issues.

Table 6
TV plays increase awareness of gendered rights in case of sexual harassment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Disagree	23	11.5	11.5	14.5
	Neutral	30	15.0	15.0	29.5
	Agree	97	48.5	48.5	78.0
	Strongly Agree	44	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The item 6 examined if television plays increase awareness of gendered rights in case of sexual harassment. 22% respondents strongly agreed, 48.5% agreed, 15% remained neutral, 11.5%

disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed to the statement. Overall, most of the respondents agreed that TV plays increase awareness of gendered rights and only 14.5% respondents disagreed that television educates people about their rights in case of sexual harassment.

Table 7

HUM TV and ARY DIGITAL channels are educating the masses.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	11	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Disagree	31	15.5	15.5	21.0
	Neutral	66	33.0	33.0	54.0
	Agree	76	38.0	38.0	92.0
	Strongly Agree	16	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The item 7 examined if respondents believe if HUM TV and ARY Digital plays are educating the masses. 8% respondents strongly agreed, 38% agreed (46% altogether), 15.5% disagreed, 5.5% disagreed (21% altogether), and 33% remained neutral to the claim. Overall, most respondents agreed that HUM and ARY channels were educating the masses.

Table 8

HUM and ARY dramas are educating children about sexual harassment issues.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Neutral	11	5.5	5.5	7.0
	Agree	77	38.5	38.5	45.5
	Strongly Agree	109	54.5	54.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The item 8 examined if HUM and ARY plays are educating children about sexual harassment issues. 54.5% respondents strongly agreed, 38.5% agreed, 5.5% remained neutral, and 1.5% strongly disagreed to the statement. Overall, 93% respondents supported the idea of educating children on sexual harassment issues via the television plays and only 1.5% of the respondents unsupported the statement.

Table 9

Non-consensual sex with wife is an act of rape.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	22	11.0	11.0	13.5
	Neutral	34	17.0	17.0	30.5
	Agree	65	32.5	32.5	63.0
	Strongly Agree	74	37.0	37.0	100.0
	Total	200	100	100	

The item 9 measured the respondents' response to non-consensual sex with wife as an act of rape. 37% respondents strongly agreed, 32.5% agreed, 17% remained neutral, 11% disagreed, and 2.5% strongly disagreed that non-consensual sex with wife was an act of rape. Overall, most audience agreed that non-consensual sex with wife was an act of rape.

Table 10

A complaint of the marital rape is un-Islamic.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	62	31.0	31.0	31.0
	Disagree	67	33.5	33.5	64.5
	Neutral	52	26.0	26.0	90.5
	Agree	15	7.5	7.5	98.0
	Strongly Agree	4	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	200	100	100	

The item 10 measured if the respondents consider a complaint of the marital rape un-Islamic. 2% respondents strongly agreed, 7.5% agreed, 26% remained neutral, 33.5% disagreed, and 31% strongly disagreed that a complaint of the marital rape un-Islamic. Overall, most respondents disagreed that a complaint of the marital rape un-Islamic. It may be inferred that 64.5% did not consider a complaint of marital rape un-Islamic and 9.5% agreed that a complaint of the marital rape is un-Islamic.

Hypothesis 3: Pakistani TV dramas should cover sexual harassment issues.

We added five items (11-15) in the questionnaire to test this hypothesis that Pakistani plays should cover sexual harassment issues. The findings are recorded below:

Table 11

Should HUM and ARY cover sexual harassment in television plays.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Disagree	16	8.0	8.0	12.0
	Neutral	44	22.0	22.0	34.0
	Agree	84	42.0	42.0	76.0
	Strongly Agree	48	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The item 11 examined if HUM and ARY should cover sexual harassment in TV dramas. 24% respondents strongly agreed, 42% agreed (66% altogether), 8% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed (12% altogether), and 22% remained neutral in response to the statement. Overall, more respondents supported than condemned the coverage of sexual harassment issues by HUM and ARY channels via the television plays.

Table 12

It is okay to include sexual harassment in Pakistani plays.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	7.0	7.0	7.0
	Disagree	31	15.5	15.5	22.5
	Neutral	49	24.5	24.5	47.0
	Agree	76	38.0	38.0	85.0
	Strongly Agree	30	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The item 12 examined if it was okay to include sexual harassment in Pakistani plays. 15% respondents strongly agreed, 38% agreed, 24.5% remained neutral, 15.5% disagreed, and 7% strongly disagreed with the statement. Overall, most audience supported the idea that Pakistani plays should cover sexual harassment.

Table 13

It is okay to include rape in Pakistani plays.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	29	14.5	14.5	14.5
	Disagree	39	19.5	19.5	34.0
	Neutral	48	24.0	24.0	58.0
	Agree	59	29.5	29.5	87.5
	Strongly Agree	25	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The item 13 examined if it was okay to include rape in Pakistani plays. 12.5% respondents strongly agreed, 29.5% agreed, 24% remained neutral, 19.5% disagreed, and 14.5% strongly disagreed with the idea of including rape in Pakistani plays. Overall, most audience agreed to including rape in Pakistani plays.

Table 14

It is okay to include marital rape in Pakistani plays.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	22	11.0	11.0	13.5
	Neutral	34	17.0	17.0	30.5
	Agree	65	32.5	32.5	63.0
	Strongly Agree	74	37.0	37.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The item 14 examined if it was okay to include marital rape in Pakistani plays. 37% respondents strongly agreed, 32.5% agreed, 17% remained neutral, 11% disagreed, and 2.5% strongly

disagreed with the statement. Overall, most audience agreed that marital rape could be included in Pakistani plays.

Table 15

It is okay to show child molestation in Pakistani plays

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	26	13.0	13.0	13.0
	Disagree	39	19.5	19.5	32.5
	Neutral	42	21.0	21.0	53.5
	Agree	65	32.5	32.5	86.0
	Strongly Agree	28	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The item 15 examined if it was okay to show child molestation in Pakistani plays. 14% respondents strongly agreed, 32.5% agreed, 21% remained neutral, 19.5% disagreed, and 13% strongly disagreed with the idea of including child molestation in Pakistani plays. Overall, most audience supported than unsupported the idea that Pakistani plays should cover child molestation.

Hypothesis 4: HUM TV and ARY DIGITAL dramas are desensitizing the public to the sexual harassment issues.

We added just one item 16 in the questionnaire to test the hypothesis 4 that HUM TV and ARY Digital plays are desensitizing the public to sexual harassment issues.

Table 16

HUM TV and ARY Digital plays are desensitizing the public to sexual harassment issues.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Disagree	40	20.0	20.0	24.0
	Neutral	77	38.5	38.5	62.5
	Agree	60	30.0	30.0	92.5
	Strongly Agree	15	7.5	7.5	100.0

Total 200 100 100

7.5% respondents strongly agreed, 30% agreed, 38.5% remained neutral, 20% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed with the statement. Overall, 24% respondents disagreed and 37.5% agreed that the channels are desensitizing the audience to the sexual harassment issues.

Hypothesis 5: Independent (educated and financially stable) women more likely to report sexual harassment issues than dependent (uneducated and financially weak) women.

We added two items (17-18) in the questionnaire to test the hypothesis 5 that independent women are more likely to report sexual harassment issues than dependent women.

Table 17

Educated women are more likely to report sexual harassment.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	3.5	3.5	3.5
	Disagree	13	6.5	6.5	10.0
	Neutral	27	13.5	13.5	23.5
	Agree	78	39.0	39.0	62.5
	Strongly Agree	75	37.5	37.5	100.0
	Total	200	100	100	

The item 17 examined if educated women are more likely to report sexual harassment. 37.5% respondents strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 13.5% remained neutral, 6.5% disagreed, and 3.5% strongly disagreed with the statement. Overall, most respondents agreed that educated women are more likely to report sexual harassment.

Table 18

Financial independence helps a woman stand up against sexual harassment.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Disagree	14	7.0	7.0	9.0
	Neutral	37	18.5	18.5	27.5
	Agree	77	38.5	38.5	66.0

Strongly Agree	68	34.0	34.0	100.0
Total	216	100	100	

The item 18 examined if respondents believe financial independence helps a woman stand up against sexual harassment. 34% respondents strongly agreed, 38.5% agreed, 18.5% remained neutral, 7% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed with the statement. Overall, most respondents agreed that financial independence helps women stand up against sexual harassment. It is inferred that it is relatively much difficult to sexually harass financially independent than dependent women.

We also examined the difference in perceptions of sexual harassment issues between Pakistani males and females through Independent Sample t-tests as shown below:

Table 19
Independent Samples t-test

Gendered perception of sexual harassment (N=200)

Variable	Men (n = 100)		Women (n = 100)		<i>t</i> (198)	<i>P</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Sexual Harassment Issues	7.87	2.44	10.65	2.65	4.626	.032	0.47	0.91

Note. Sexual-H-Issue= Sexual Harassment issue, CI = Confidence Interval, LL= Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.

In table 19, the mean value 10.6 versus the mean value 7.87 indicates that more females than males believed that HUM and ARY plays are breaking the taboos.

Table 20
Independent Samples t-test

TV plays increase awareness of sexual harassment issues.

Variable	Men (n = 100)		Women (n = 100)		<i>t</i> (198)	<i>P</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Awareness	20.7	3.74	23.3	4.15	6.81	.001	0.64	1.54

CI = Confidence Interval, *LL*= Lower Limit, *UL* = Upper Limit.

The mean value 23.3 for women as compared to 20.7 for men in table 20 shows that more women than men believe that the television plays are creating awareness of sexual harassment issues.

Table 21
Independent Samples t-test

It is okay to include sexual harassment in Pakistani plays.

Variable	Men (n = 100)		Women (n = 100)		<i>t</i> (198)	<i>P</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Believe	10.1	1.83	7.23	1.87	3.41	.021	0.63	0.41

CI = Confidence Interval, *LL*= Lower Limit, *UL* = Upper Limit

The table 21 shows the higher mean value 10.1 for men as opposed to the mean value 7.23 for women. It implies that more men as opposed to women believed that Pakistani TV dramas should cover sexual harassment issues.

Table 22
Independent Samples t-test

HUM TV and ARY Digital plays are desensitizing the public to sexual harassment issues.

Variable	Men (n = 100)		Women (n = 100)		<i>t</i> (198)	<i>P</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Desensitization	3.12	0.89	3.24	0.98	-0.90	0.36	0.38	0.14

CI = Confidence Interval, *LL*= Lower Limit, *UL* = Upper Limit

The table 22 shows the mean value 3.12 for men and 3.24 for women, which indicates there is no significant difference in the male-female perception that the channels are desensitizing the public to sexual harassment issues.

Table 23

Independent Samples t-test

Independent women more likely to report sexual harassment issues than dependent women.

Variable	Men (n = 100)		Women (n = 100)		<i>t</i> (198)	<i>p</i>	95% CI	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Reporting	3.81	1.12	4.23	0.86	-2.9	0.003	0.69	0.14

CI = Confidence Interval, *LL*= Lower Limit, *UL* = Upper Limit

The table 23 shows the mean value 3.81 for men as opposed to the mean value 4.23 for women, which indicates that more women than men believe that independent and educated working women are more likely to report sexual harassment cases than uneducated and financially dependent women.

Qualitative Study

We analyzed the content of seven HUM TV and seven ARY Digital plays. They include *Gul-e-Rana* (Rose; Duraid, Saeed, & Rind, 2015), *Sangat* (Company; Moomal, & Nisar, 2015), *Udaari* (To fly; Duraid, & Ehteshamuddin, 2016), *Dar si jaati hai Sila* (Sila gets scared; Duraid, & Nisar, 2017), *Ranjha Ranjha kardi* (Keeps on uttering Ranjha Ranjha where Ranjha is the name of the beloved from the folklore, *Heer-Ranjha*; Duraid, & Nisar, 2018), *Inkaar* (Refuse; Duraid, Nisar, 2019), and *Naqabzan* (Burglar; Duraid, & Siddiqui, 2019) from HUM TV and *Roag* (Misery; Mir, & Javed, 2011), *Chup raho* (Be Quiet; Saeed, Naseeb, & Nawaz, 2014), *Muqabil* (Opponent; Mustafa, Kazmi, & Ali, 2016), *Aisi hai tanhai* (Such is the loneliness; Mutafa, Kazmi, & Mehmood, 2017), *Bay-khudi* (Trance; Saeed, Nasib, & Raza, 2017), *Meri guriya* (My doll; Mustafa, Kazmi, & Hassan, 2018) and *Cheekh* (Scream; Mustafa, Kazmi, & Mehmood, 2019) from ARY Digital. These plays focus more on child molestation and rapes by people known to the victims than strangers. The various types of sexual coercion incidents reflect day to day reality. In Rawalpindi, on 19th of January 2018, a 15 years old girl reported she was repeatedly raped by her father, and her maternal aunt had witnessed the man raping the daughter (Naseer, 2018). Similar incidents were repeated in Lahore in Faisalabad and other parts of the country whereby the culprits stuffed girls' shirts in their mouths to make them quiet and also threatened to kill them if they told anyone (Fareed, 2018; Khalil Ud, 2021). The dramas mostly cover sexual coercion by victims' so-called innocent and supportive own family members. The phenomenon complicates the question of women's mobility which is seen as a bigger threat to their sexual purity as beings. Immobility and home restriction appear as unsafe for women in plays as is mobility, which challenges toxic masculinity of random people out of sexual desperation. Its example was seen in the motorway rape case whereby two strangers raped a woman in her 30s in front of her children in 2020. Another was Ibsham Zahid who was

detained in Lahore for harassing a girl online. According to Mehreen Saqib, the harasser sent her rape and death threats along with his own videos and pictures with weapons and the lady uploaded the materials on Twitter with hashtag #ibshamzahidbehindthebars that started trending and the police helped her on public uproar in support of her courage to voice the issue (2020). The following section provides some details of the content of the mentioned plays.

Incest and Child Molestation

Roag (2011) and *Meri guriya* (2018) from ARY and *Udaari* (2016) from HUM focus on incest, rape and murder stories of eight nine years old girls by male family members or reliable neighbors. While Nimra's rape in *Roag* brings humiliation to her entire family, in the other two plays the families do not believe in sexual harassment stories of their daughters for a long time until the culprits attack more little girls. Sajida's daughter Zebu and her friend's daughter Meera face sexual assault by Zebu's stepfather Imtiaz in *Udaari* and is raped and murdered by her neighbor Dabeer in *Meri guriya*. Sajida does not believe Zebu's repeated complaints for a long time, and ends up hurting Imtiaz's ego when she finally stands up against him and warns him. In revenge, Imtiaz rapes Zebu. Both the plays show seasoned, uncaught rapists who are considered pious. In *Meri guriya*, Abida's mother is constantly nagging chronic single Dabeer to get married without knowing that he finds solace in raping very young girls. Little Abida though completely avoids strangers falls prey to Dabeer on her way to Madrassa on a van.

In *Dar si jaati hai Sila* and *Naqab-zun*, HUM and in *Chup raho, Muqabil* and *Bay-khudi* ARY show long term consequences of silencing, incest and rape by victim's own family members. *Dar si jaati hai Sila* shows incest by Sila's taya abu (dad's elder brother) after her mother Sadia's rape. Uncle Joyee appears like a sensitive and innocent man who no one can think is a rapist. He faultily believes that Sadia birthed his son, Hatim, after the rape. Sadia also is unaware that she had conceived Hatim from her husband before his brother raped her. The serial shows Sila continuously scared and confused. She is unable to voice the issue before her mother or family. When Sadia learns and condemns Joyee, he threatens her that he will tell everyone that Hatim is his son. As the drama progresses, Joyee gets married to Nadia who soon finds out that her husband is sexually harassing both Sadia and Sila. Nadia brings Joyee's medical report and proves he is medically unfit and cannot give birth to a child. Sila's fiancé also figures out why Sila is always scared of her uncle and oddly behaves in get-togethers. He helps Sila muster courage and break the silence against Joyee.

Muqabil furthers the mission by engaging the child molestation victims into social cause. It shows the molestation of ten years old Parisa by their driver Mehmood who her family treats like a family member but has to thrust aside. Later in life, Parisa falls in love with Mehmood's son Armaan and marries him despite the resistance by the two families. Mehmood requests Parsia to hide his sin from his son but she discloses it. Armaan starts hating both his wife and father who does not survive this shock of shame before his son. Parisa joins her mother's NGO, holds a press conference to raise voice against child sexual abuse and tell her dark secret. Armaan joins her to start a new chapter of their lives.

HUM and ARY started producing *Roag* and other plays against the backdrop of increasing child molestation, incest, rape and murder cases in Pakistan. According to Global

Village Space, an aggregate of 2,846 child sexual abuse cases of 54% girls and 46% boys were reported in four provinces of Pakistan in 2019 (“News Desk,” 2020). The girl-boy abuse ratio was 51% and 49% in 2021 (Pansota, 2021). *Meri guriya* represents the rape and murder cases of many prepubescent girls who lost lives like a 5 years old girl who was raped, hit on the head and set on fire in Karachi on 11th September, 2011 and 7 years old Zainab Ansari who was extensively raped and tortured before strangling to death in Kasur on 4th January 2018. According to the *New York Times*, “the girl was abducted when she went out to buy cookies at a shop in the southern port city of Karachi;” her body was found two days later, and the postmortem report indicated she had been sexually abused (Masood, & Ives, 2020). Zainab also went missing on her way to Quran recitation classes, leaving Pakistan in rage. The U.N. also noted Pakistan’s constant poor standing on the rights of the children. The said plays depict sexual assault if females of any age group resist or refuse to give sexual favors to males of any age.

Rape

HUM and ARY plays focus more on rapes of single or married women by people known to the victims and less on rapes by strangers. Hum’s *Sangat* (2015) and ARY’s *Aisi hai tanhai* (2017) cover rape by strangers while ARY’s *Chup raho* (2014), *Bay-khudi* (2017), *Cheekh* (2019) and HUM’s *Naqab-zun* (2019) show the family members and close acquaintances as rapists. *Sangat* shows rape of a married woman Aisha by an odder Shavez who along with other men enters her house for robbery, rapes her and leaves her pregnant. Aisha does not tell her husband Adnan about the incident until such time her daughter Sangat is born with thalassemia and needs the DNA and blood tests and a donor. They find Shavez who though donates blood tries to take Aisha and Sangat away from Adnan in his weak moment when he moves away from Aisha, and Adnan shoots him. The story sounds similar to the real case of “a teenage girl [who] was allegedly raped during a robbery in Lahore’s Gujjarpura area, leaving her unconscious in the field” (Gabol, 2020). In *Aisi hai tanhai*, a ward boy rapes a student Pakeeza in the hospital and the head Dr. Saad recalling a similar incident with his own sister stands for her. Both the plays emphasize on voicing of issues, both natural and pragmatic punishment of culprits and support for the victims.

Bay-khudi, *Cheekh* and *Inkaar* depict rape or attempt to rape if a female rejects sexual advances of a male, or he feels rejected if she gets engaged elsewhere. In *Bay-khudi*, Fiza unaware of her cousin Saad’s feelings for her, gets engaged with Ashar and Saad rapes her in his obsession. *Inkaar* offers a standard rape-rescue plot, followed by obsession and attempt to murder. Shayan rescues Hajra when their university fellow, his childhood friend and Hajra’s beloved, Rehan tries to rape her when she visits him at his house without informing anyone. Later, Shayan approaches her family, asking her hand in marriage. It annoys Rehan who approaches Hajra at the beauty salon on the day of their marriage and stabs her 25 times when she refuses to run away with him. While she survives and fight a court case against the feudal and the political support system for the culprit, in *Cheekh*, the victim commits suicide, having no other option to save herself from sexual advances of her best friend’s brother. The culprits refuse to understand the significance of woman’s no and continuous resistance to sexual advances in the mentioned plays.

In *Naqab-zun* and *Chup raho*, a virgin Dua's and a married woman Rameen's brothers in law rape them. Dua having not seen the rapist's face, finds him very supportive of her and believes he is helping her cope with the trauma. Amir slowly poisons and kills his wife, and assures that anyone who comes to ask Dua's hand in marriage knows she was raped and in the end he is the only one left who is willing to marry her. He creates situations to break Dua's engagement with her fiancé. But, Dua gathers he is the rapist when Amir touches her on their wedding night. She also learns he killed her sister to marry her. The play depends on the victim's six sense for recognizing her sinner. In *Chup raho*, Azar's cousin Numair rapes his wife Rameen. Numair attacks Rameen's father when he learns he is sexually harassing Rameen and he dies of a heart attack. Rameen's mother denies the truth in an attempt to save her elder sister's marriage with Numair. As the facts unfolds, Azar commits suicide out of guilt that he did not believe his wife. Numair loses his mind and is admitted in a mental hospital as he believes god punished his daughter with incurable sickness for his sins.

Marital Rape

In *Ranja Ranjha kardi*, Noori's mentally unfit husband Bhola rapes her. Bhola's mother tries to justify his act by blaming it on his mental health and defended him saying nothing is wrong as it happened between the husband and wife. But, the viewers protested against the forced sex scene with the wife all over print and social media (Zia, 2019; "Entertainment," 2019). In *Gul-e-Rana*, Adeel forcefully marries a poor girl Rana and rapes her, believing she is now his asset and a lesser being. Rana tries to change Adeel for good but leaves him, calling him an animal. In Pakistan, marital rape cases are hardly reported because the public does not perceive forced sex between husband and wife as rape, and believes their bedroom stories should stay within the walls of their rooms and should not be discussed publicly. According to Raffat Hussain and Adeel Khan (2008, p. 468) found "sexual coercion and nonconsensual sex" were common problems in Pakistan though the husband in only one marital rape case admitted that he had to have nonconsensual sex with his wife because his mother forced him to complete his marriage if he was not impotent. Marital rapes are prime examples of forced male supremacy set by the patriarchal system in Pakistan. Sarah Zaman says such "harmful customary practices against women and girls in Pakistan are the pillars of patriarchal architecture based on the historically misplaced notion of supremacy of men. Men use customs and traditions as convenient tools to make women subservient, bodily and mentally" (2014, p. xi).

DISCUSSION

The qualitative study reflects toxic masculinity, misogyny and cultural and legal hurdles in keeping women and children safe before or after sexual abuse, whereas the quantitative study reflects gendered difference in response to mediated experiences of tabooed sexual matters. The data collected through the questionnaire helped in measuring the public response to voicing of sexual harassment issues by ARY Digital and HUM TV plays. We studied the response to the first hypothesis "The HUM TV and ARY DIGITAL plays are breaking the taboos about the sexual harassment issues" through four items. Most of the respondents disagreed or remained neutral to the questions that asked if covering sexual issues in the said plays was an immoral,

indecent, or shameful act on part of HUM TV and ARY Digital channels (78%,76%, 77.5% respectively). It is inferred that the channels have broken the silence on sexual harassment issues through the dramas without offending most of the public. The second hypothesis “The HUM TV and ARY Digital dramas are creating awareness about sexual harassment issues” is measured through six questions on awareness of sexual harassment issues, nonconsensual sex, marital rape, gendered rights, education of masses and children. Most respondents agreed that HUM TV and ARY Digital plays are creating awareness and educating the masses and children about sexual harassment issues and types. Most respondents emphasized on the significance of consensual sex and did not think that a complaint of the nonconsensual sex with wife was un-Islamic. The third hypothesis if “Pakistani TV dramas should cover sexual harassment issues” was measured through five specific questions on the coverage of sexual harassment, rape, marital rape and child molestation issues in plays of the said/any channel(s). Most respondents agreed supported the idea that television plays should cover sexual harassment, rape, marital rape and child molestation issues. They supported the initiative of HUM TV and ARY Digital channels in this regard. Most respondents agreed with fourth hypothesis that HUM TV and ARY DIGITAL dramas are desensitizing the public to the sexual harassment issues. Most respondents also agreed with the fifth hypothesis that educated and financially independent women are more likely to report sexual harassment issues as opposed to uneducated and financially dependent women. More women than men believed that HUM and ARY plays are breaking the taboos, creating awareness of sexual harassment issues and independent and educated working women are more likely to report sexual harassment cases than uneducated and financially dependent women. Though more men than women believed that Pakistani television dramas should cover sexual harassment issues, there was no significant difference in the male-female perception that the channels were desensitizing the public to sexual harassment issues.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that HUM TV and ARY Digital plays have broken the taboo associated with voicing of sexual issues. Most respondents supported the coverage of sexual harassment issues, rape, marital rape and child molestation in TV drama. They agreed that the dramas are creating awareness about sexual harassment, and rape, marital rape and child molestation should be covered in Pakistani television plays. Though the dramas are desensitizing masses to sexual harassment issues, educated and independent women are more likely to report cases of sexual harassment than those uneducated or financially dependent. Thus, television dramas are playing a positive role in educating men, women and children about sexual harassment, the power of voicing the issues and making victims aware of their rights in seeking justice.

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ⁱ sexual (66%), thin (66%), attractive (66%), beauty (55%), entertainer (55%), religious (18%), simple (18%) house wives (25%)

ⁱⁱ A trouser and shirt stitched in a particular style with scarf.

ⁱⁱⁱ Disturbed (43.4%), liberated (43.4%), deviated from Islamic culture (38.3%)