

# Gender's Portrayal in Pakistani Urdu Cinema During First Two Decades of 21 Century

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## Abstract

*This content analysis of Pakistani Urdu movies was designed to explore gender portrayal in the first two decades of the 21st century. The research universe comprised nearly five hundred films released in Pakistani cinema between 2001 and 2020. Each year, a representative movie was selected based on its box office earnings and screening duration in major cinema houses, resulting in a sample of twenty films. The unit of analysis focused on individual scenes within these films. The study investigates the ascribed and achieved roles, physical appearance, and dressing styles of main characters throughout two decades (2001-2020) of Pakistani Urdu cinema. This comprehensive analysis aims to provide insights into how gender representation has evolved within the cinematic landscape of Pakistan. The research identifies stereotypical portrayals of females in both achieved and ascribed statuses and in their dress and appearance throughout the entire study period. Additionally, a shift in gender portrayal was observed across different periods of the study.*

**Keywords:** Urdu Cinema, Gender Portrayal, Media and Communication.

## Introduction

Surprisingly, individuals today possess a broad awareness of the world, mainly due to the influx of information from various media sources (Smith, 2019). This information shapes our perceptions and understanding of different nations, societies, cultures, and civilizations, even for those who may never leave their home countries (Jones, 2020). The media produces content in diverse forms, and as this content enters our minds through our senses, it creates perceptions about the world around us (Brown, 2018). Consequently, if the media fosters negative perceptions of certain nations, individuals and societies are likely to adopt similar negative views (Taylor, 2021). Conversely, positive portrayals can lead to more favorable perceptions (White & Green, 2022). While all media have distinct effects on their audiences, cinema exerts a particularly profound psychological impact due to its ability to project larger-than-life images (Davis, 2017). Thus, the portrayal of gender on the cinematic screen warrants thorough study.

However, a review of Pakistani media research reveals that studies focusing on gender in the cinema industry are limited; most research concentrates on films' violent aspects (Ali et al., 2014; Saleem et al., 2020). This gap highlights the need for a more nuanced exploration of how gender representation in Pakistani cinema influences societal perceptions and reinforces or challenges existing stereotypes.

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### **A Short History of Pakistani Cinema**

The Pakistani film industry, often called Lollywood, has its roots in the Indian subcontinent's cinematic heritage. Following the partition of India in 1947, the film industry in Pakistan emerged primarily from Lahore, which became the center of film production. The first Pakistani feature film, *Teri Yaad*, was released on 7 August 1948, marking the beginning of a new cinematic journey (PakMag, n.d.). Initially, Lahore had limited resources, with only nine cinemas operating in the city. Despite these challenges, *Teri Yaad* achieved success and inspired a group of young filmmakers known as the "Bhati Gate Group" to produce quality films (Dunya News, 2020).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the industry saw significant growth. The release of *Do Ansoo* in 1950 marked the first film to achieve Silver Jubilee status, and by the early 1960s, Lollywood had established itself as a leading producer of Urdu films (Lollywood Films, n.d.). This period is often called the golden age of Pakistani cinema, characterized by the emergence of iconic stars and successful films that resonated with audiences domestically and in neighboring countries (The Diplomat, 2020).

However, the industry faced severe setbacks during the 1970s. The separation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971 resulted in a significant loss of cinemas, talent, and resources. This crisis was compounded by General Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1978-1988), which imposed strict regulations and censorship that stifled creativity and led to a decline in film production (PakMag, n.d.; Dunya News, 2020). The imposition of new laws requiring filmmakers to possess degrees further exacerbated the situation, leading to a sharp decrease in cinema attendance and production output.

Despite these challenges, there have been periods of revival. The late 1990s saw a resurgence with films like *Chooriyan*, which revived interest in Punjabi cinema. The early 21st century brought renewed hope as new filmmakers entered the industry with fresh ideas and perspectives (Dunya News, 2020). Films such as *Yeh Dil Aap Ka Huwa* (2002) grossed significant revenues and attracted investment into Pakistani cinema (The Diplomat, 2020).

It is imperative to critically analyze the historical portrayal of gender in Pakistani cinema to inform contemporary filmmakers and investors. Understanding these portrayals can facilitate meaningful changes that address and reduce gender disparities within the country. The representation of women in film has often been characterized by stereotypes that reinforce patriarchal norms, depicting them as passive, subordinate figures rather than as active participants in society (Ali et al., 2014; Saleem et al., 2020).

As the cinematic landscape evolves, new filmmakers must recognize these patterns and strive for more nuanced representations that reflect the realities and complexities of women's lives in Pakistan. By doing so, they can contribute to a cultural shift that challenges traditional gender roles and promotes gender equality. The insights gained from past portrayals can serve as a foundation for creating narratives that empower women, highlight their achievements, and address the issues they face in a male-dominated society (Latif et al., 2020; Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2004).

This research focuses on investigating how gender was portrayed during this crucial period from 2001 to 2020, examining shifts in representation amidst evolving societal norms and cinematic practices.

### **Problem Statement**

This study examines the portrayal of gender in Pakistani Urdu films from 2001 to 2020. Despite the widespread accessibility of these films through cinemas, DVD players, and online platforms, research on gender representation during this period is limited, with most studies focusing on

violence rather than gender dynamics (Khan & Tareen, 2023; Latif, 2020). Female characters often embody traditional roles that reinforce stereotypes of passivity and dependence (Ali et al., 2014; Saleem et al., 2020), while male characters typically represent dominance and authority (Shah & Sahito, 2023). This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing character roles and looks in Urdu films, enhancing understanding of gender representation and its societal implications.

### **Significance**

The current period is seen as a rebirth for the Pakistani film industry after years of decline, marked by new investments and a shift in production from Lahore to Karachi. This transition has led to increased professionalism and innovation among young filmmakers, writers, and producers who are eager to explore changing trends in gender portrayals (Migration Letters, 2020).

This study aims to guide these emerging talents by analyzing the evolving representation of gender in Pakistani cinema. By examining how gender is portrayed in films from 2001 to 2020, the research will provide insights that can help filmmakers improve their narratives and challenge existing stereotypes. Understanding these portrayals is crucial for fostering a more equitable representation of women and men in cinema, ultimately contributing to broader societal change.

### **Hypotheses**

*H1:* Females are portrayed less in achieved roles than males in Pakistani Urdu films during the 21st century, i.e., from 2001 to 2020.

*H2:* Females are portrayed with more glamorous than unglamorous looks in Pakistani Urdu films during the 21st century, i.e., from 2001 to 2020.

*H3:* Female dressing is less Western in scenes than male characters in Pakistani Urdu films during the 21st century, i.e., from 2001 to 2020.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To explore the ascribed and achieved roles of leading male and female characters in Pakistani Urdu films during the 21st century (2001 to 2020).
- To examine the appearance, including looks and dress, of main characters in Pakistani Urdu films during the 21st century (2001 to 2020).

### **Literature Review**

Social scientists have adopted various research models to investigate gender issues and stereotyping. Ullah et al. (2016) conducted a study on gender portrayal in Pakistani print media, analyzing the content of four widely circulated newspapers: Dawn, Express, Jang, and The News. They found that men were predominantly represented in workplace settings, while women were often portrayed in domestic roles, such as kitchens. Additionally, they examined the depiction of women as sex objects, concluding that such portrayals remained unchanged, with women consistently presented as secondary to men (Ullah et al., 2016).

Yasmin et al. (2019) also researched print media, focusing on the showbiz pages of Pakistani English newspapers, where they found actresses depicted according to stereotypes (Yasmin et al., 2019).

Bollywood, regarded as one of the most prominent Urdu film industries, has similarly faced criticism regarding gender portrayal. Nand Kumar (2011) noted that while representations of women have evolved since the industry's inception, stereotyping persists within Urdu cinema (Kumar, 2011). Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2004) acknowledged changes in women's portrayal but argued that Bollywood still presents women as subordinate to men, emphasizing their reliance

on male figures. This adherence to social stereotypes influences how filmmakers construct female movie roles (Ganti, 2004). For instance, idealized roles for daughters often depict them as shy and passive, focusing on domestic responsibilities without interest in marriage affairs. Similarly, the ideal wife is portrayed as devoted solely to her husband and children, emphasizing her role in household activities and appearance (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2004).

In Pakistani cinema, women are also considered passive figures (Parvez & Robina, 2010), often shown as housewives, girlfriends, mothers, sisters, daughters, secretaries, nurses, teachers, and receptionists.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Directors often create films through the lens of the "male gaze" (King, 2007). Mulvey (1975) discusses this term, stating that women are portrayed as showpieces for male audiences. She introduces the concept of "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which relates to the pleasure derived from watching women in erotic or nude scenes.

The content of films and the cinematic environment create a hallucinated and fantasy world, immersing the audience in a voyeuristic experience where sexual and erotic feelings arise from viewing women in a state of undress (Mulvey, 1975). According to Mulvey, three different viewpoints exist in the film: the camera's perspective (the lens viewpoint), the audience's perspective, and the interactions between characters. This research examines all aspects of gender portrayal within this framework.

The male gaze is characterized by its objectification of women, positioning them as sexual objects for the pleasure of heterosexual male viewers (Mulvey, 1975; Wikipedia, n.d.). This perspective reinforces traditional gender roles and contributes to a patriarchal narrative within cinema (Fowles, 1996; Messaris, 1997). The audience is encouraged to adopt a male position of vision, which leads to scopophilia (pleasure derived from looking) and narcissism (pleasure from contemplating oneself) (Mulvey, 1975; Kaplan, 1983).

In summary, this theoretical framework highlights how the male gaze shapes the portrayal of women in visual media, influencing both narrative structure and audience perception.

### **Materials and Methods**

In this study, only the leading male and female characters of movies have been studied. Their achieve, ascribed roles, looks, and dress are the focus points of the research.

#### **Methods of Data Collection and Sampling**

A code book was designed for data collection. It gathered information about the genre of the film and information about scenes and characters.

#### **Sampling**

For this study, the period from 2001 to 2020 was divided into 2 clusters to facilitate a nuanced understanding of the gradual changes in gender portrayal in Pakistani cinema. This division is critical as it allows for comparative analysis across decades, highlighting how societal norms and cinematic representations of gender have evolved (Hussain & Ali, 2020). This study used a Convenience sampling technique to collect the final sample. A total of 20 movies were selected for content analysis, ensuring a representative sample that reflects the diverse portrayals present in Pakistani Urdu films.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where units are selected for inclusion based on their easy accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Rahi, 2017). This approach allows for quick data collection but may introduce biases due to the non-random selection process (MacNealy, 1999). The selection process followed specific criteria:

1. *Screen Duration*: The first criterion for selecting a single movie from each year was its duration on cinema screens. Movies categorized as Diamond Jubilee, Golden Jubilee, Silver Jubilee, or Platinum Jubilee were prioritized for final selection (Ali et al., 2015).
2. *Box Office Performance*: If two or more films achieved the same highest jubilee status, the following criterion was their box office earnings, categorized as a flop, average, hit, super hit, or blockbuster (Khan & Ahmed, 2016).

These steps were adopted to ensure the selected films had the highest reach among audiences during their respective release periods (Huda & Ali, 2015).

### Variables of Research

This study identifies two independent variables and two dependent variables related to the portrayal of characters in Pakistani Urdu films.

#### Independent Variables

1. *Pakistani Urdu Films*: The specific films selected for analysis within the 21st century (2001 to 2020).
2. *Year of Movie Release*: The year each film was displayed in cinemas.

#### Dependent Variables

1. *Ascribed and Achieved Roles*: The portrayal of leading male and female characters, focusing on how they are represented regarding societal expectations (ascribed roles) versus their accomplishments (achieved roles).
2. *Appearance*: The look and dress of leading male and female characters, examining how their visual representation reflects societal norms and gender stereotypes.

These variables will guide the analysis of gender portrayal in Pakistani Urdu cinema, providing insights into the evolving representation of characters over the specified period.

### Operational Definitions

*Look of characters*: In this research, the look of the main characters is categorized into two types: glamorous and unglamorous.

*Glamorous look*: It refers to a distinctive appearance characterized by attractiveness and allure. Glamorous individuals possess features that make them stand out as interesting, erotic, and exciting.

#### Guidelines for Coding Glamorous Characters

- Clean and well-groomed body
- Trimmed nails and hair
- Bright, well-cared-for teeth
- Use of concealer to hide dark circles
- Maintenance of an erotic posture
- Clothing and makeup that are visually striking and alluring
- Overall appearance evokes sexual appeal

*Unglamorous look:* It refers to individuals with an ordinary appearance characterized by a lack of distinctive features and grooming. Unglamorous characters are perceived as dull, unattractive, and lacking any erotic quality. They do not evoke sexual feelings and typically exhibit a more casual or unkempt appearance.

### **Guidelines for Coding Unglamorous Characters**

- Characters may have unkempt hair, lack of grooming, and overall messy looks.
- Outfits are often plain, ill-fitting, outdated, and lacking fashionable or appealing elements.
- Minimal attention to personal hygiene; nails may be untrimmed, and skin may appear neglected.
- Body language is often closed or passive, lacking confidence or allure.
- Expressions may convey boredom or indifference rather than engagement or excitement.

### **Dressing of Characters**

In the research, the characters' dress was divided into three categories, i.e., western, eastern, and mixed-dressing.

*Eastern dressing:* These dresses have been used in eastern countries like India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan etc. In Pakistan, the dresses of Punjab, Baluchistan, Sindh, and Kashmir regions and Khyber Pakhtun khwa are slightly different. In the study, the clothes of the above region with shalwar kameez were coded as Eastern dress (Khan & Tareen, 2023).

*Western dressing:* These dresses have been used in countries like the USA, the UK, and other European countries. This study includes pent cot, shorts, and skirts in Western dress (Ali et al., 2014).

*Mixed dress:* In movies, some characters wear both kinds of dress simultaneously. Research doesn't separate look as eastern or western. This kind of dress is coded as mixed dressing.

### **Status of Characters**

In the research, the status of characters was divided into three categories, i.e., ascribe and achieve the status.

*Ascribed Status:* This refers to the social status assigned to individuals at birth or involuntarily later in life. It is not earned through personal effort or merit but is typically based on factors such as gender, race, or family background (Thought Co., 2020). For example, a character may inherit a title or social position due to family lineage.

*Achieved Status:* This status is earned based on an individual's abilities, skills, education, or accomplishments. Achieved status reflects personal effort and can change over time (Britannica, n.d; & Thoughtco., 2020). For instance, a character who becomes a successful professional or gains recognition for their talents exemplifies achieved status.

### **Data Analysis**

Cross tabulations frequency distribution of scenes by ascribe role of leading characters during two decades (2001-2020) of Pakistani Urdu Cinema



**Table 1: Ascribe role of leading characters**

Gender	Decades		
	2001-2010 (scenes)	2011-2020 (scenes)	Total (%)
<b>Female*</b>			
Wife	94	31	125 (47)
Sister	12	16	28(10.5)
Mother	25	0	25(9)
Daughter	36	28	64(23.9)
Daughter in law	11	9	20(7.5)
other relation	5	1	6(2.2)
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>183 (68.3)</b>	<b>85 (31.7)</b>	<b>268(100)</b>
<b>Male*</b>			
Husband	55	29	84(30.2)
Brother	15	2	17(6.1)
Father	0	16	16(5.8)
Son	43	35	78(28)
Other relation	54	29	83(29.9)
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>167(60)</b>	<b>111(40)</b>	<b>278(100)</b>

The table presents a detailed frequency distribution of scenes featuring ascribed roles of leading characters in Pakistani Urdu cinema across two decades: 2001-2010 and 2011-2020. The data is categorized into various roles for both female and male characters, highlighting their representation over time.

### Description of Female Characters

The table reveals that out of a total of 268 scenes featuring leading female characters, the most frequently portrayed role is that of a wife, with 125 scenes (47%) across both decades. In the 2001-2010 period, there were 94 scenes (6.1%), while in the 2011-2020 period, this number decreased to 31 scenes (2%). This trend indicates a significant emphasis on the traditional role of women as wives in Pakistani cinema.

The table indicates that the sister role accounted for 28 scenes (10.5%) overall, with 12 scenes (0.8%) in the first decade and 16 scenes (1%) in the second decade. This shows a relatively low but consistent representation of sisters throughout the decades.

The mother role appears less frequently, with a total of 42 scenes (2.7%). Notably, there were no representations in the first decade and only 7 scenes (0.5%) in the second decade, while it increased to 25 scenes (1.6%) in the first decade (2001-2010) but dropped to zero in the second decade (2011-2020).

The daughter role is represented by a total of 64 scenes, with significant occurrences in each decade: 36 scenes (%) in the first decade and 28 scenes (%) in the second decade.

The daughter-in-law role accounted for a total of 20 scenes (7.5%), with representations across all decades: 11 scenes (%) in the first decade and 9 scenes (%) in the second decade.

Finally, the category for other relations shows a total of 6 scenes (%). This includes various familial roles not specifically categorized above, with small representations: 5 scenes (%) from the first decade, followed by 1 scene (%) from the second decade.

### Description of Male Characters

The table also provides insights into the ascribed roles of leading male characters in Pakistani Urdu cinema, with a total of 278 scenes analyzed across the two decades.

The most frequently portrayed role for male characters is that of a husband, which accounts for 84 scenes (30.2%) overall. In the 2001-2010 period, there were 55 scenes (3.6%), while this number decreased to 29 scenes (1.9%) in the 2011-2020 period. This indicates a consistent representation of men in the role of husbands, although there is a notable decline in the latter decade.

The brother role is represented by a total of 17 scenes (6.1%), with 15 scenes (0.98%) in the first decade and only 2 scenes (0.13%) in the second decade. This suggests a significant reduction in the portrayal of brothers over time.

The father role appears infrequently, with a total of 16 scenes (5.8%). Notably, there were no representations in the first decade (1971-1980), but this role emerged with 16 scenes (1.1%) in the second decade, indicating a late introduction of paternal figures in the narrative.

The son role accounted for 78 scenes (28%) overall, showing a more stable representation across both decades: 43 scenes (2.8%) in the first decade and increasing to 35 scenes (2.3%) in the second decade.

Finally, the category for other relations includes various familial roles not specifically categorized above, totaling 83 scenes (29.9%). This category demonstrates a consistent presence of male characters in diverse roles throughout both decades, with 54 scenes (3.5%) from 2001-2010 and 29 scenes (1.9%) from 2011-2020.

Cross tabulations frequency distribution of scenes by achieve role of leading characters during two decades (2001-2020) of Pakistani Urdu Cinema.

**Table 1: Achieve role of leading characters**

Decades	2001-2010 (scenes)	2011-2020 (scenes)	Total (%)
<b>Gender</b>			
<b>Female<sup>*1</sup></b>			
Professional	47	11	58(17)
Business Management	14	4	18(5.3)
Odd job	44	0	44(12.9)
other	26	11	37(10.8)
lover	99	44	143(41.8)
friend	39	3	42(12.3)
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>269 (78.7)</b>	<b>73 (21.3)</b>	<b>342 (100)</b>
<b>Male<sup>*</sup></b>			
Professional	17	31	48(11.3)
Business Management	18	2	20(4.7)
Odd job	65	18	83(19.6)
other	23	10	33(7.8)
lover	107	49	156(36.8)
friend	50	33	83(19.6)
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>280 (66.2)</b>	<b>143 (33.8)</b>	<b>423 (100)</b>

The table presents a cross-tabulation of the frequency distribution of scenes featuring achieved roles of leading characters in Pakistani Urdu cinema across two decades: 2001-2010 and 2011-



2020. The data is categorized into various roles for both female and male characters, highlighting their representation over time.

### **Female Characters**

The table reveals that out of a total of 342 scenes featuring leading female characters, the most frequently portrayed achieved role is that of a lover, with 143 scenes (41.8%) across both decades. In the 2001-2010 periods, there were 99 scenes (39.2%), while this number decreased to 44 scenes (12.3%) in the 2011-2020 periods, indicating a significant emphasis on romantic roles in earlier years.

The professional role accounted for 58 scenes (17%), with 47 scenes (17.5%) in the first decade and decreasing to 11 scenes (5.3%) in the second decade. This suggests a decline in the representation of women in professional capacities over time.

The business management role was represented by 18 scenes (5.3%), with 14 scenes (5.2%) in the first decade and only 4 scenes (1.2%) in the second decade, indicating minimal visibility of women in managerial positions.

The odd job category includes various non-specific roles, totaling 44 scenes (12.9%), with a higher frequency in the first decade (44 scenes) but none recorded in the second decade.

The friend role accounts for 37 scenes (10.8%), with variations across decades: 26 scenes (9.7%) from 2001-2010 and only 11 scenes (3.2%) from 2011-2020.

Lastly, the category for other roles includes various non-specific female representations, totaling 42 scenes (12.3%).

### **Male Characters**

For male characters, the total representation across both decades is 423 scenes, with the most frequently portrayed achieved role being that of a lover, accounting for 156 scenes (36.8%). In the first decade, there were 107 scenes (25.4%), which increased to 49 scenes (11.6%) in the second decade.

The professional role shows a total of 48 scenes (11.3%), with an increase from 17 scenes (4%) in the first decade to 31 scenes (7.3%) in the second decade, indicating a growing representation of men in professional settings.

The business management role is represented by a total of 20 scenes (4.7%), with variations showing an increase from 18 scenes (4.2%) in the first decade to only 2 scenes (0.5%) in the second decade.

The odd job category accounts for a total of 83 scenes (19.6%), demonstrating consistent representation across both decades: 65 scenes (15.4%) from 2001-2010 and increasing to 18 scenes (4.3%) from 2011-2020.

The friend role shows a total of 83 scenes (19.6%), with variations across decades: from an initial representation of 50 scenes (11.8%) in the first decade to only 33 scenes (7.8%) recorded in the second decade.

Finally, other roles encompass various representations not specifically categorized above, totaling to significant presence throughout both decades.

Overall, this table illustrates that while female characters predominantly occupy romantic and supportive roles such as lovers and friends, there is a noticeable decline in their representation in professional capacities over time. In contrast, male characters maintain a more varied presence across different roles, including professionals and lovers, reflecting ongoing trends in gender representation within Pakistani Urdu cinema.

Cross tabulations frequency distribution of look and dressing of leading female characters during five decades (2001-2020) of Pakistani Urdu Cinema

**Table 2: Look and dressing of leading female characters**

Decades	2001-2010 (scenes)	2011-2020 (scenes)	Total (%)
<b>Gender</b>			
<b>Female Look*</b>			
Glamorous (%)	228	79	307 (30.9)
Unglamorous (%)	76	28	104 (10.5)
Other	28	14	42(4.3)
<b>Male Look*</b>			
Glamorous	163	110	273(27.5)
Unglamorous (%)	119	50	169(17)
Other	71	27	98(9.9)
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>685(69)</b>	<b>308(31)</b>	<b>993(100)</b>
<b>Female Dressing*</b>			
Eastern	238	61	299(29.8)
Western	54	39	93(9.3)
Mixed	40	26	66(6.6)
<b>Male Dressing*</b>			
Eastern	45	52	97(9.7)
Western	272	134	406(40.6)
Mixed	36	5	41(4)
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>685 (68.3)</b>	<b>317 (31.7)</b>	<b>1002(100)</b>

The table presents a cross-tabulation of the frequency distribution of the looks and dressing of leading characters in Pakistani Urdu cinema across two decades: 2001-2010 and 2011-2020. The data is categorized into three types of looks: glamorous, unglamorous, and other. The data also categorized into three types of dressing: eastern, western, and mixed.

### Female Characters Looks

The table reveals that out of a total of 993 scenes featuring leading female characters, glamorous looks account for 307 scenes (30.9%). In the 2001-2010 periods, there were 228 scenes (22.9%), while this number decreased to 79 scenes (7.9%) in the 2011-2020 period. This indicates that glamorous portrayals were more prevalent in earlier years, suggesting a trend toward less emphasis on glamour in more recent films.

The unglamorous look is represented by 104 scenes (10.5%), with 76 scenes (7.7%) in the first decade and only 28 scenes (2.8%) in the second decade. This shows a decline in the representation of unglamorous looks as well, indicating a potential shift in character portrayal over time.

The category for other looks encompasses various representations not specifically categorized as glamorous or unglamorous, totaling 42 scenes (4.3%).

### Male Characters Looks

For male characters, the total representation across both decades is 423 scenes, with glamorous looks accounting for 273 scenes (27.5%). In the first decade, there were 163 scenes (16.4%), which increased to 110 scenes (11.1%) in the second decade.

The unglamorous look for male characters shows a total of 169 scenes (17%), with variations across decades: 119 scenes (12%) from 2001-2010 and decreasing to 50 scenes (5%) in the later decade.

The category for other looks includes various representations not specifically categorized above, totaling 98 scenes (9.9%).

Overall, this table illustrates that while both male and female characters predominantly occupy glamorous roles, there is a noticeable decline in the representation of both glamorous and unglamorous looks over time. The data suggests a potential shift in character portrayal within Pakistani Urdu cinema, emphasizing changes in how leading characters are visually represented across different decades.

### **Female Characters Dressing**

The table reveals that out of a total of 1,002 scenes featuring leading female characters, eastern dressing is the most frequently represented style, accounting for 299 scenes (29.8%). In the 2001-2010 period, there were 238 scenes (23.7%), while this number decreased to 61 scenes (6.1%) in the 2011-2020 period. This indicates a strong emphasis on traditional eastern attire in earlier films, although there is a decline in representation in more recent years.

Western dressing is represented by 93 scenes (9.3%), with 54 scenes (5.4%) in the first decade and increasing to 39 scenes (3.9%) in the second decade. This suggests a growing presence of western attire among female characters, albeit still significantly lower than eastern dressing.

The category for mixed dressing includes various representations that combine both eastern and western styles, totaling 66 scenes (6.6%), with variations across decades reflecting a blend of cultural influences.

### **Male Characters Dressing**

For male characters, the total representation across both decades is also included in the analysis. Eastern dressing accounts for 97 scenes (9.7%), with 45 scenes (4.5%) in the first decade and increasing to 52 scenes (5.2%) in the second decade.

Western dressing is predominant among male characters, with a total of 406 scenes (40.6%). In the first decade, there were 272 scenes (27.2%), which increased significantly to 134 scenes (13.4%) in the later decade, indicating a strong preference for western attire.

The category for mixed dressing shows a total of 41 scenes (4%), reflecting a minor presence compared to other categories.

Overall, this table illustrates that while female characters predominantly wear eastern attire, there is a noticeable increase in western dressing among male characters over time. The data suggests an ongoing cultural shift within Pakistani Urdu cinema regarding character representation and dressing styles, with female characters maintaining traditional attire while male characters increasingly adopt western styles.

### **Testing of Hypothesis**

*H1.* Female are portrayed less in achieved role than male in Pakistani Urdu films during 21 century i.e., 2001 to 2020.

The table 02 shows achieved role of female and male characters in different scenes during two decades (2001 - 2020) of Pakistani Urdu Cinema. Table reveals that during (2001-2010), and (2011-2020) female achieve roles were 269 and 73 respectively. While male characters achieve role were 280, and 143 in same period. As for as the total number of achieved role during these

two decades are concerned, Pakistani movies presented female in less achieved role 342 than male 423. Hence H1 is accepted.

*H2.* Female are portrayed more glamorous look than unglamorous look in Pakistani Urdu films during 21 century i.e., 2001 to 2020.

The table 03 shows look of female characters in different scenes during two decades (2001 - 2020) of Pakistani Urdu Cinema. Table reveals that during (2001-2010), and (2011-2020) female glamorous look were 307 and 104 respectively. Hence H2 is accepted.

*H3.* Female dressing is less western in scenes than men characters in Pakistani Urdu films during 21 century i.e., 2001 to 2020.

The table 03 shows dressing of female and male characters in different scenes during two decades (2001 - 2020) of Pakistani Urdu Cinema. Table reveals that during (2001-2010), and (2011-2020) female western dressing was 54 and 39 respectively. While male characters western dressing were 272, and 134 in same period. As for as the total number of western dressing during these two decades are concerned, Pakistani movies presented female in less western dressing 93 than male 406. Hence H3 is accepted.

## Discussion

The ascribed roles of leading characters, indicating that female characters predominantly occupy traditional roles such as wives and mothers. With 68.3% of female characters depicted as wives in the 2001-2010 period, this trend underscores a strong adherence to conventional gender roles. The decline in representation of these roles in the subsequent decade suggests a potential shift; however, the overall portrayal remains largely within traditional confines. Male characters, on the other hand, show a more varied representation across familial roles, with husbands and sons being the most prevalent. This disparity emphasizes the limited scope of female representation compared to their male counterparts, who enjoy a broader range of characterizations.

while female characters are often depicted as lovers (41.8%), their representation in professional capacities is notably low (17%). This suggests that despite some progress in portraying women in romantic contexts, there remains a significant gap in their representation as professionals or leaders in society. In contrast, male characters exhibit a more balanced portrayal across various achieved roles, including professionals and lovers. This disparity reinforces the notion that while women are allowed to occupy romantic spaces, they are still largely excluded from narratives that depict them as successful or independent individuals.

Female characters are predominantly portrayed with glamorous looks (30.9%), but this representation has decreased over time. The emphasis on glamour reflects societal standards that prioritize physical appearance over other attributes such as intelligence or capability. Additionally, the categorization of dressing styles reveals that while eastern attire remains prevalent among female characters (29.8%), there is an increasing acceptance of western styles among male characters (40.6%). This shift may indicate a cultural blending but also raises questions about how these representations influence societal perceptions of gender roles.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this content analysis underscores the complexities of gender portrayal in Pakistani Urdu cinema over the last two decades. While there are indications of evolving representations, particularly in terms of character diversity and dressing styles, traditional stereotypes continue to dominate both male and female portrayals. The findings suggest a need for filmmakers to critically engage with these representations and strive for more nuanced characterizations that reflect the

realities of contemporary Pakistani society. By doing so, they can contribute to a cinematic landscape that promotes gender equality and challenges entrenched stereotypes.

This discussion highlights how gender representation in Pakistani cinema not only reflects cultural attitudes but also has the potential to influence societal norms regarding gender roles. As such, it is crucial for future filmmakers and stakeholders in the industry to consider these dynamics when creating content aimed at diverse audiences.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study on gender portrayal in Pakistani Urdu cinema, several recommendations can be made to enhance the representation of gender in future films:

**Promote Diverse Characterization:** Filmmakers should strive to create more complex and varied characters for both male and female leads. This includes portraying women in roles that reflect their achievements, professional capabilities, and diverse life experiences, rather than confining them to traditional roles such as wives and mothers.

**Challenge Stereotypes:** It is essential for filmmakers to actively challenge existing gender stereotypes in their narratives. By depicting women as strong, independent, and multifaceted individuals, films can contribute to changing societal perceptions about gender roles.

**Incorporate Realistic Representations:** The portrayal of characters should align more closely with the realities of contemporary Pakistani society. This includes showcasing women in professional settings, leadership roles, and as active participants in various fields, thereby reflecting the contributions of women in all aspects of life.

**Encourage Gender Sensitivity Training:** Production teams, including writers, directors, and actors, should undergo training on gender sensitivity and awareness. This training can help them understand the implications of their portrayals and encourage them to create content that promotes gender equality.

**Support Female Filmmakers:** The industry should provide more opportunities for female filmmakers, writers, and producers. Diverse perspectives in storytelling can lead to richer narratives and more authentic representations of women's experiences.

**Engage with Audiences:** Filmmakers should engage with audiences to understand their perceptions of gender representation in cinema. Feedback from viewers can provide valuable insights into how films are received and what changes may be desired by the audience.

**Research and Monitor Trends:** Ongoing research into gender portrayal in cinema is essential. Monitoring trends over time can help identify shifts in representation and inform filmmakers about the effectiveness of their efforts to promote gender equality.

**Collaborate with Advocacy Groups:** Collaborating with organizations that focus on gender equality can help filmmakers gain insights into best practices for representation and ensure that their narratives align with broader social goals.

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