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Article:	Hegemonic Masculinity as Conventional Heroes in Pakistani Dramas: An Analysis
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ABSTRACT

This research is a content analysis of four Pakistani dramas with conventional heroes and non-conventional heroes. In the Pakistani media landscape, the male protagonists are most often portrayed as “conventional heroes” upholding masculine hegemonic traits and norms. The male protagonists’ primary emotions depicted are rage and obsession. These conventional hero portrayals perpetuate limited visual representation. The portrayal of non-conventional heroes, resist the notions of masculine hegemony. Non-conventional heroes defy the characteristics of a conventional hero. Though non-conventional heroes in the Pakistani media landscape are few and far between, they have resonated with audiences. This paper examines the visual characterization of masculinity and analyses the construction of conventional and non-conventional heroes through narratives, visual framing and dialogues in Pakistani media.

Keywords: Masculine hegemony, Pakistani Dramas, Conventional heroes, Non-conventional heroes.

Introduction

The iconography employed by the queen Cleopatra explains the portrayal of the gendered medium. Looking as far back as the Roman empire it can be deduced that gender tropes have always been used in iconography to exalt either the feminine or masculine identity. The stringent portrayals of gender stereotypes and visual representation in media has always been present. At the time of established monarchies paintings and coins were often used to promote “desired artwork” of the ruling King or Queen.

The strategy of Kings and Queens using the media of the time in order to curry favor with their subjects or establish legitimacy of rule is a recorded fact, as stated with Cleopatra. As time has progressed the medium and the message have become intertwined.

It is important to note that the significant portrayals of Cleopatra in literature, with Shakespeare being the most popular, is dedicated to her feminine iconography. Even though the Queen Cleopatra herself used both masculine and feminine iconography, what has stood test of time is not her power, but the use of her beauty to consolidate power. Herein we have the basis for the gendered hero.

From the times of the Romans there have been strong depictions in the media of masculinity. This is reflected in literature as conventional heroes.

Conventional heroes depicted in literature and media were the tall, broad, and brooding men as depicted by Jane Austin in *Pride and Prejudice*. However, with time the portrayal of conventional heroes in the media and literature have become extremely aggressive and violent. This marked change is visible through the popular novel by E. L. James, *50 Shades of Grey*.

The masculine hero in popular media is cast in a mould where wealth, power and physical aggression are dominant traits and characteristics. The portrayal of heroes holds a pivotal place within the media industry, as these characters entertain and serve as role models for the audience. Popular media today is responsible for identity formation and impacting young minds and socialization of the youth.

In today’s digital era the media as we know it, has several roles. Media is a tool that informs, entertains, persuades, and shapes public opinion. It influences public perception and is responsible for establishing and upholding social and cultural norms. In today's digital age, media has penetrated from television screens onto mobile phones. The urban youth are submerged in a digital space now more than ever.

Background:

Hegemonic Masculinity is defined by Connell as a framework for male assertiveness, dominance and performative roles and expectations of men in society. “Initially the term hegemonic masculinity was first proposed in reports from a field study of social inequality in Australian high schools” (Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W., 2005).

Connell highlights the issue with hegemonic binaries as it sets rigid standards for masculinity. This limited definition of masculinity works on the basis of exclusion, as the criteria is narrow and stringent. The importance of men is therefore seen as only importance to their relation to women, and not as individuals (Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W., 2005).

The depiction of the conventional heroes needs to be studied to gain a conclusive understanding of what is being promulgated as the norm in our media as it is curating identities. In order to understand the conventional hero, one must also assess the target audience or the masses that male hegemony is being curated for.

While media houses are responsible for creating and establishing such narratives, the public is responsible for media consumption of such heroes.

Problem statement:

In the Pakistani media landscape, the protagonists are portrayed as “conventional heroes”. The protagonists are depicted with rage and obsession as being their primary emotion. These conventional hero portrayals are dismissive of men from various ethnicities, age and body-type and perpetuate limited visual representation. The limited representation means that a vast majority of people do not see themselves represented in the media.

The non-conventional hero’s characteristics is one where the persona and identity of the male protagonist is not defined through his physical appearance. The portrayal of non-conventional heroes, resist the notions of masculine hegemony. As global trends change towards non-conventional heroes, there has been a slight shift in the Pakistani media landscape as well. Though non-conventional heroes in the Pakistani media landscape are few and far between, they have resonated with audiences.

Current research includes the feminist perspective of toxic male hegemony portrayed in dramas and serials. This paper expands the scope of the discourse to include the effect on the men who are shown in a negative light. An understanding of how men are depicted, is crucial in addressing inclusivity, diversity and representation.

Objectives:

Owing to the preceding statements these are the objectives of this research:

- To examine the visual characterization of masculinity in Pakistani media.
- To analyze the construction of conventional and non-conventional heroes through dialogues and narratives in the Pakistani media.
- To analyze the construction of the hero image in establishing and mirroring gender stereotypes in our society.

Significance:

The Pakistani media landscape like all other electronic media has become a source of transmitting information and entertainment and is a pillar of societal values. Audio-visual communication is the norm today and television shapes the thinking of a society and greatly influences the youth. Therefore, it is crucial to critically view the heroes that are being constructed and promulgated by the Pakistani media.

This study will analyze the local content of drama series in order to gauge the value system and ideals that are being promoted in the media and assess if there is a schism between the Pakistani media and global trends and how vast that schism actually is.

This research on media-driven hero portrayal will address the impact on sociological relations. It will question the role played by the Pakistani media industry in reinforcing established gender and cultural norms. By analysing the representation of heroes in Pakistani media, we can gain insights into the underlying values, beliefs, and ideals that shape the nation's collective consciousness.

Literature Review:

Pakistani dramas are under scrutiny for their portrayal of abusive and toxic relationships, particularly in the context of the glorification of masculine hegemony with male protagonists exhibiting harmful behaviors.

Global trends indicate that male protagonists today are created by scriptwriters in the lens of how the audience would like to view them. In today's age these protagonists are viewed through a multi-dimensional lens. Depictions of hegemonic masculinity are becoming archaic and are being replaced with more nurturing and caring portrayals of men. (Lisa Culkanz, Ali Erol, 2021).

This literature review examines the concerning trend of glorifying abuse, harassment, and toxic masculinity in Pakistani dramas, emphasizing the urgent need for meaningful content that challenges prevailing stereotypes and promotes healthier portrayals of relationships.

Conventional Male heroes portrayed with toxic characteristics:

Masculine hegemonic portrayals of characters that display dominance, assertiveness and physical violence are most often the protagonists in Pakistani Drama serials.

The character of Shamsheer as seen in *Kaise Teri Khudgarzi* and Mir Hadi in *Khaani* serves as an archetype of a toxic male lead whose abusive actions are eventually excused or glamorized. This recurring pattern contributes to the normalization of harmful behaviors.

The Portrayal of non-Conventional Male Heroes:

There is a growing urgency to shift away from the traditional depiction of the 'hero' as someone with unbridled wealth and power. Meaningful content should challenge these stereotypes and present characters that exemplify empathy, respect, and healthy relationship dynamics.

Masculinity has now expanded to include a more holistic perspective of men as individuals, and showcase them as parents and fathers. This has become the norm now in television. (Lisa Culkanz, Ali Erol, 2021).

The American sit-com domain has greatly challenged the traditional narrative of masculinity, as evident with comedy series *Modern Family*, which aired from 2009 to 2020. The role of Phil Dunphy, husband and father challenges the adopted narrative of hegemonic masculinity. Gender roles are deconstructed where both spouses are the breadwinner in some capacity and equal weightage is given to parenting and being home-makers.

"Modern Family resists hegemonic masculinity. When Phil tells her he always wanted to be a hero, Gloria responds, "'Hero?' You're so much more than that. You have flaws...you cry a lot" (Abbott, J. , 2021)

This statement is indicative of a more nuanced realistic portrayal of men who are portrayed with their flaws and failures. This resists the stark portrayals of individuals in black and white, and includes the grey, humanizing men as encompassing beings.

In recent years, the landscape of Pakistani dramas has undergone a gradual transformation, marked by a shift in the portrayal of masculinity and the conventional hero archetype.

While the industry has traditionally adhered to certain norms, a notable deviation is observed in dramas like *Kabuli Pulao* (2023) and *Parizaad* (2021). These productions, through their distinct perspectives, challenge traditional notions of heroism, offering a refreshing alternative that resonates with audiences. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that such

progressive narratives remain the exception rather than the norm within the Pakistani drama industry.

Both *Kabuli Pulao* and *Parizaad* have challenged existing norms of masculine hegemony in heroship and also resonated strongly with audiences. The popularity of these dramas among the masses indicates a growing acceptance and appreciation for narratives that offer a different perspective on heroism and masculinity.

Theoretical Framework:

The permeation of television screens from our lounges and into our lives began in the 80s and the same plays, movies and serials which one had to gather around the Television to watch are now accessible at any time. As life became fast-paced evolved into digitalization TV followed suit. Hours that were allotted to TV were first separate but now have become part and parcel of daily routine.

The normalized characterization of men largely portrayed in Pakistani drama serials is one-dimensional figures. The protagonists' in these stories often swing from the pendulum of heightened emotions of love (junon) to madness and violence. This is visible in both television serials, *Deewangi* and *Khaani*. The protagonists' actions are out of "love", which is more often the "acquisition" of a woman they happen to meet or see in a social setting. It perpetuates the myth that women are an object to be acquired. Power, money and influence are the tools required to acquire the women. Even though these are not authentic portrayals of love, they are depicted in a glamourized manner to the viewers.

In the Pakistani media landscape, hegemonic masculinity is particularly relevant, where traditional gender roles are reinforced. These serials are a significant cultural product and contribute to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and stringent norms of "manhood".

There is a repetition of the same type of heroship that is constructed, time and time again, by the Pakistani media to portray extremely wealthy men with the license to intimidate and harass women, especially those in vulnerable situations or from lower financial backgrounds. Sensationalism is a rating driven metric for these dramas to gain popularity among the masses.

The concept of dominance and violence is conflated with love and romance. Masculine hegemonic portrayals of conventional heroes are problematic as they confuse ideals of love with heightened aggressive behaviours. Not only does this glorify the actions of the abuser, but it creates situations where women tolerate different levels of abuse and toxicity in the name of "love".

Methodology:

The methodology used for this research paper is content analysis of four Pakistani dramas. The content analysis will be a critical analysis on the portrayal of conventional and non-conventional heroes, through a structured examination of the character arcs, the narrative, the dialogues, and framing for visual impact. This content analysis will examine the visual characterization of masculinity. It will also delve into the construction of both conventional and non-conventional heroes through analysis of dramatic devices employed such as dialogues and narrative.

During selection of drama serials for content analysis there were many conventional hero depictions in Pakistani drama series and very few in non-conventional heroes comparatively.

The landscape of Pakistani media at this time is vastly different to global trends. If we look at the local content that is currently being produced and the shows that are top-trends (in terms of numbers and viewership) it is a traditional portrayal of gender norms and restrictive masculinity. Hegemonic portrayals of masculinity in drama serials are especially prevalent in the prime time viewing, which is from 7pm-10 pm.

Drama serials in Pakistan are structured to uphold rigid gender binaries and restrictive representation of manhood. These drama serials are founded on curating cultural narratives that uphold the established patriarchal norms. The protagonists in these drama serials, portraying the roles of fathers, brothers, and husbands are the main breadwinners. They are most often characterized as stoic, dominating, and physically strong. The fathers who are gentle, caring and nurturing are only portrayed for a few episodes before succumbing to either an illness or heart attack, making the female protagonist often lose her only supporter and confidant.

Nature of Methodology:

The methodology employed in this research is qualitative in nature. This method offers a holistic understanding of masculine hegemony.

Main Variable:

The majority of drama serials in Pakistan currently portray men negatively and with toxic characteristics. The main variable in this research would be the portrayal of masculine hegemony. Masculine hegemonic portrayal of male protagonists is an established trend and popular theme of the majority of Pakistani dramas.

The two dramas with conventional heroes are *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi* and *Khaani*. The dramas with non-conventional heroes are *Parizaad* and *Kabuli Pulao*.

Variable Dimensions:

In determining the dimensions of masculine hegemony there were three sub-variables:

- I. **Physique:** There is a specific physique of conventional heroes that are adhered to in the portrayal of conventional heroes. These men are tall, athletic and well built.
- II. **Socio-economic status:** The men portrayed as conventional heroes belong to financially affluent backgrounds. Their wealth is displayed through their opulent lifestyle; including designer wardrobe and accessories, luxury cars, and sprawling mansions.
- III. **Physical aggression:** Conventional heroes are always portrayed as dominant and therefore physical aggression is often displayed through power. To further the point of affluence and power the male protagonists is surrounded by armed guards that enable their aggression. Physical aggression is shown through temper tantrums, breaking objects, and using violence on weaker subjects. There is often an audacious display of weapons and guns.

A combination of these three sub-variables determined the characteristics for conventional heroes in most Pakistani dramas. In non-conventional heroes these characteristics were not visible, as they are the antithesis to the portrayal of masculine hegemony.

Content Analysis

Conventional Heroes: *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi* and *Khaani*.

Weapon touting, and careless displays of violence and aggression are a common motif in dramas. The two most popular actors today, Feroze Khan (*Khaani*) and Danish Taimor (*Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi*) are both responsible for doing many such roles. (Pakeeza Dar, 2022).

In the drama *Khaani*, the female lead never falls in love with her harasser Mir Hadi (played by Feroze Khan), who is also the cold-blooded killer of her twin brother. However, the cinematographic glorification of Mir Hadi's "love" creates empathy with the viewers.

Dramas that depict abusive behaviors further perpetuate this power dynamic and reinforce harmful gender norms. The concept of love is often exploited in these dramas to justify abusive actions. The narrative subtly suggests that extreme behaviors, such as harassment and manipulation, can be excused or even deemed romantic when framed within the context of love as witnessed repetitively in *Kaise Teri Khudgarzi*. Dramas glamorize characters who abuse their wealth and power perpetuating the notion that these attributes make an individual more desirable.

Non- Conventional Heroes: *Parizaad* and *Kabuli Pulao*

The protagonist, Parizaad challenged the norm of masculine hegemony as he does not hold the stereotypical identity of a hero as defined by the Pakistani media. Parizaad has a darker complexion, for which he is ridiculed from the day he is born and well into adulthood. Parizaad belongs from a lower income class and is an avid reader, which makes him book-smart, not street smart.

The body language of Parizaad throughout the entire serial is of a diffident, shy individual. Parizaad's shoulders are often hunched. The characterization of Parizaad is such that he is the exact opposite of a formula hero as presented by the Pakistani media industry.

Another drama serial that has challenged the norm in 2023, is *Kabuli Pulao*. The drama *Kabuli Pulao* speaks to human condition and how responsibilities shape individuals, particularly men who are the bread-winners for the family. *Kabuli Pulao* provided audiences with a non-conventional hero, and won the hearts of the widespread masses.

Haji Mushtaq marries an Afghan refugee, who is a widow even though she is very young. Barbeena chooses to marry Haji Mushtaq because she trusts and respects him. Despite there being a great age difference, Haji Mushtaq is shown as hesitant to reveal his marriage to his family but faces the consequences for keeping it a secret. Haji Mushtaq acknowledges that he kept a sacred bond to be declared and celebrated a secret as it were a sin. Therefore the repercussions from his family were justified as his initial secrecy brought about the reaction.

One of the main differences between conventional heroes and non-conventional heroes is that non-conventional heroes take responsibility for their actions.

The response for dramas with non-conventional heroes whether Parizaad or *Kabuli Pulao* has been immense. These dramas have challenged masculine hegemonic norms and realistic portrayals of men has been met with so much appreciation that hopefully it has established a new trend in the Pakistani media landscape.

1. Narrative

In many dramas, particularly evident in "*Kaise Teri Khudgarzi*," the toxic male protagonists often find themselves with a favorable resolution. A notable instance is observed in the character Shamsheer, who undergoes a sudden transformation, evolving from a negative, toxic

individual into a virtuous person. This drastic over-night change in his character prompts the female protagonist to develop romantic feelings for him. In an extended narrative arc, Shamsheer not only manages to secure the approval of family members but also those whom he had previously abducted, tortured, and subjected to hospitalization under duress.

The consistent presentation of these characters in a favorable light establishes in the collective psyche of the audience the idea that force, power, coercion make the means to the end okay. This perpetuation of the notion that even characters with harmful behaviors can achieve a happy ending may contribute to the normalization of problematic attitudes and behaviors in real-life situations.

In dramas where the hero fails to establish a successful connection with the female protagonist, as witnessed in the case of "Khaani," an intriguing narrative twist unfolds. The character undergoes a seemingly abrupt transformation, embracing religious fervor. While there's no inherent issue with a character turning towards religion, the portrayal of this change is problematic. Notably, this narrative tactic lacks a sense of accountability, and the hero is not held responsible for his past actions.

The sympathetic trajectory established for the hero from the outset is further intensified. The once controversial character, such as Mir Hadi, is depicted as a devout and pious religious figure. This deliberate whitewashing of the hero's past serves to nullify his earlier actions and crimes, shaping a narrative that seeks sympathy from the audience. Consequently, the complete redemption of these characters from their dubious histories detracts from the gravity of their past deeds.

Even in the depiction of a female protagonist enduring hardships, including abduction, public shame, and the loss of her father, as exemplified in Khaani's narrative, the culmination of the story renders these tribulations seemingly inconsequential. The narrative pivot toward portraying the hero as a reformed and devout individual effectively undermines the gravity of the female protagonist's sufferings, creating a dissonance that challenges the portrayal of accountability and justice within the storyline.

The drama Parizaad provides a counter-narrative that encourages a more nuanced understanding of men, one that acknowledges their vulnerabilities, challenges societal expectations, and rejects the perpetuation of toxic masculinity. In doing so, Parizaad contributes significantly to dismantling the hegemonic norms that have historically dominated Pakistani television, paving the way for more inclusive and authentic portrayals of masculinity in the media landscape. Parizaad's transformative force lies not only in its storytelling but also in its deliberate efforts to redefine the contours of masculinity.

Through his journey of multiple heart breaks and struggle, in the end, even Parizaad succumbs to the power money holds, albeit temporarily.

What is unique for this storyline, is that the hero is held accountable for his actions. Parizaad faces the consequences for his ill-acquired wealth and serves years in prison. When he is freed from jail, he visits his friend who abandons him because of his former ties to an underworld and gifts him an apartment. Parizaad then donates all his money to charity and transforms his life for the better by establishing a school in a remote area in northern Pakistan. It is here that the radio jockey who falls in love with him, eventually discovers him again. While the story's ending is open ended, it is satisfactory for the audience.

Dramas like this hold the viewer to task, without insulting them, or belittling them and that's why this drama was popular with the masses.

2. Dialogues:

In *Kaise Teri Khudgarzi*, Shamsheer often employs the powerful dialogues where he is shown to be standing up to his father who has rigid ideals about family status for marriage. There is a power tussle between the old generation and the new generation, with two alphas in a standoff. It would be an admirable stance of Shamsheer's character, had the female protagonist ever shown any interest to him. However, Shamsheer is only standing up to his father because his father has parented him a way where he believes might is right and Shamsheer feels entitled to acquiring the object of his desire.

Another important related component in the process of this masking is the structure of the dialogues.

In the portrayal of non-conventional heroes, the two dramas are *Parizaad* and *Kabuli Pulao* have introspective and thought-provoking dialogues.

There are many heart rendering dialogues in *Parizaad* that shows us the evolution of the character. It is through these simple and poetic dialogues that creates empathy with the audience for *Parizaad*'s complexes.

Parizaad speaks on how the *first impression of a person is through his appearance, the second should be through his speech*. "*Shakal o soorat insaan ka pehla taruf hai, insan ka dusra aur asal taruf uske alfaz hain. Apna dusra taruf mukammal karlo, itna mukammal ke lough tumhara pehla taruf bhool jae*".

Parizaad highlights that while he may not be able to change the color of his skin or how he appears to people at first, he decides to change their impression through the power of his words.

In *Parizaad* one of the dialogues that is the underpinnings of the story and acts as a catalyst for the male lead to change his whole persona is the dialogue: "Tum paisay banao, log tumse rishtay khud banaenge". (Make a lot of money and people will automatically want to establish ties and build a relationship with you).

"Mujhe tanhai bohat pasand hai...tanhai ke ehsaas ko khatam karne ki zarorat hi kia...insaan tanha aya hai iss duniya main , usne tanha wapis jana hai".

Parizaad speaks to loneliness of the human condition where he says that we entered this world alone and we have to exit it alone, and since he is mindful of this, he does not mind being alone, rather he quite enjoys it.

1. Framing for Visual impact (dressing/aesthetics)

Conventional heroes are visually presented in a way that makes them appealing to both the male and female audience. Pakistani dramas appeal to the aspirational aspect in men setting a mold of what an empowered male would ideally be like. Wardrobe, aesthetic dress sense and visually pleasing frames the construct of power and dominance is re-enforced in the depiction of conventional heroes. There is a whole department consisting of wardrobe, stylists, and make-up artists, in order to achieve the purpose of creating a hero persona for a character. This is evident in both male protagonists' in the dramas *Khaani* and *Kaise Teri Khudgarzi*.

Apart from the ever-changing luxury cars that Mir Hadi (*Khaani*) and Shamsheer (*Kaise Teri Khudgarzi*) have at their disposal, they're always accompanied by armed guards. Both

Hadi and Shamsheer adorn designer attire in both casual and formal wear, replete with luxurious accessories.

Parizaad completely over-turned the established narratives of hero in Pakistani television, through its masterful storytelling, and sensitive portrayal. Parizaad wore ordinary shalwar kameez throughout the series and established that heroism is through charisma.

In the drama serial *Kabuli Pulao*, Haji Mushtaq was so encumbered with responsibilities for his family that he never takes the time to marry, and reaches middle-age. He eventually feels he is unworthy of the marital bond.

A heart rendering moment for audiences was when his wife Barbeena tells him to take care of himself and encourages him to wear a brightly colored outfit for his niece's wedding. Haji Mushtaq is very touched by the action, as he has never been showed such kindness by his family. The irony is that Haji Mushtaq is the owner of a cloth market and sells formal wedding attire to people.

Haji Mushtaq's attire seldom changes after the wedding, with him being clad in a simple shalwar kurta through-out the rest of the drama. Through this conscious decision the makers of the drama reject the notion that a character has to adorn western attire, or designer wear in order to resonate with audiences.

Conclusion:

A content analysis of Pakistani drama reveals the widespread presence of masculine hegemony, which perpetuates traditional gender roles and reinforces male dominance in society.

The content analysis for dramas with masculine hegemony determined that there was always a happy ending for toxic male leads in dramas. In *Kaise Teri Khudgarzi*, Shamsheer suddenly changes and evolves into a good person, which makes the female protagonist fall in love with him. Over-time this toxic male protagonist gets the blessing of the family members, even of those he abducted, tortured and put in hospital. There is a conscious decision to glamourize conventional heroes in a sympathetic light which leaves the audience clamoring for a happy-ending. This perpetuates the notions of masculine hegemony and establishes in the psyche of the masses that "*might is right*".

As seen with the second drama *Khaani*, after *Kaise Teri Khudgarzi*, here too the character of Mir Hadi suddenly over-turns a new leaf and becomes a devout Muslim. The sympathetic arc that is set from the first frame for the hero is even more re-enforced in the minds of the people. Mir Hadi's conclusion is that he is portrayed as a pious, devoted religious figure. Therefore, even if toxic male protagonists do not end up happily married to the female protagonist, the concluding arc glorifies and exalts them.

In non-conventional heroes portrayed in the dramas *Parizaad* and *Kabuli pulao* the characters have satisfactory conclusive arc.

Parizaad has been a transformative force in the landscape of Pakistani television, representing a significant shift in narrative and character portrayal. The narrative approach in *Parizaad* delves into the intricate psyche of the protagonist, confronting and dismantling societal expectations and stereotypes associated with conventional masculinity. *Parizaad*, the drama, challenges the established norms that traditionally glorify a singular, unattainable version of masculinity. The whole narrative and arc show that while money may possess an allure, it

always comes at a heavy cost. In the end Parizaad doesn't let power and money corrupt his ideals.

The character's journey becomes a testament to the authenticity of human experiences, breaking away from the confines of stereotypical depictions that reinforce the notion of an unyielding masculine hegemony.

Kabuli pulao showcased another non-conventional hero with aplomb. Haji Mushtaq's young wife Barbeena, chooses to stay married to him, despite the emergence of her former and much younger husband who did not die in a terrorist attack as formerly believed.

In conclusion, the emergence of dramas like Kabuli Pulao and Parizaad signal a positive shift in the Pakistani drama industry's portrayal of masculinity and heroes. However, the scarcity of such serials underscores the industry's reliance on conventional hero archetypes.

In the context of non-conventional heroes Parizaad and Kabuli Pulao showcase that it is not necessary to uphold masculine hegemonic portrayls in dramas in order to please the masses. There is great scope in the Pakistani audience for acceptance of non-conventional heroes. The audience's response to these non-conventional masculine heroes shows that they harbour the emotional bandwidth and intelligence to empathise with a multitude of charcters: of different bodytypes, age and looks.

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