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Article:	Body-representation and sexual identity projections: A survey of advertising in print media
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Abstract

Matrimonial advertisements provide an unobtrusive site where the image, construction and perpetuation of normative heterosexuality are observed through socio-cultural discourses. The current study focuses on self-representation and gender role expectations in 550 classified matrimonial ads from two popular newspapers (The Daily Dawn, The Daily Jang) in Pakistan. Gender differences in desirable physical attributes, occupational preferences and personality traits are examined. The results revealed that gender polarization in ideal spousal occupations, and the relative variability in gender identities of women as compared to men. A strong preference for pretty and slim women is observed. Implications for the sexual objectification of women and changing gender roles in changing socioeconomic landscape of Pakistan is due to the impact of globalization.

Key Term: sexual identity, matrimonial advertisements, identities

Introduction

Pakistan has historically been a hierarchical, patriarchal male culture that expects women to obey the laws laid down by men. Socio-cultural norms in Pakistan society reinforce privileged male supremacy. The chauvinistic structure sustained creating sexual identity roles in the family and also in society at large. According to Uberoi (2006), exclusive gender scripts are perpetuated in society by defining 'appropriate' behaviours for male and female members. Such gender stereotypes are further imprinted on people's minds due to the lack of exposure to new sources of sexual learning, which leaves room for media presentations and portrayals of gender norms. In Pakistani media, images of women often tend to portray them flamboyantly: caring homemakers or sex beings of desire. However exposed to learning and the global economy of cultural norms, Pakistan, everywhere else in the world, is in a state of change. Pakistani society has the chance to become more responsive to alternate solution narratives that encourage reality to be experienced in different ways. Education and job prospects have now become an important element in the lives of women, allowing them to question traditional gendered expectations and norms (Derne, 1999).

Several surveys around the world have found recognition of gender equality in matrimonial and matrimonial placement problems (Butcher, 2003; Jain & Hazen, 2007).

Moreover, gender-based perceptions of prospective marital relationships as reflected in matrimonial advertising in print media in Pakistan. It discusses the likelihood that the cycle of transformation has contributed to a conventional gender division in Pakistan, resulting in the stronger interrelatedness between male and female roles. It Focuses on the review of matrimonial advertising reported in the Daily Newspapers in Pakistan.

Urdu and English newspapers are the major language newspapers in Pakistan: The Daily Dawn(June 2020) and The Daily Jung (June 2020). Because these two newspapers

have diverse readerships, they are both supposed to represent a detailed image of the social mindset.

The key subject of this paper is on Sandra Bem (1993), 'Gender Lens: Changing the Discourse on Sexual Injustice.' Nevertheless, the research also draws on perspectives from social communication (de Sousa Campos et al., 2002; Gist, 1953; Shukla & Kapoor, 1990) and social role theories (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Bem(1993) presented three perspectives, namely: androcentric, i.e. gender perception; gender division, i.e. viewing men and women differently by separating the universe itself into two distinct gender realities; biological essentialism, i.e. embracing gender division as a natural, human outcome rather than a socio-historical concept.

The principle of social trade implies an allocation of incentives between material and social bodies (Miller, 2005). Social exchange theory suggests that men in society are more likely to give women economic security in return for their sexual beauty and vice versa (Koestner & Wheeler, 1988). Social identity ideology applies, in comparison, to the feminine traits of women and the masculine features of men. Contrary to this hypothesis, an ideally socialized woman holds the virtues of gentleness, quietness, and endurance. At the same time, men have masculine attributes such as aggression, strength, industriousness, and superiority (Eagly & Steffen, 1984).

Problem Statement

The present research is interesting in that it discusses and analyzes a very critical part of culture linked to matrimonial advertising. These commercials represent potential socio-cultural factors of what people accept to be the features that make their children the ideal choice to become brides/grooms.. Matrimonial commercials are convenient sites for analyzing spousal expectations and normative asexuality minimally. The research discusses the mediated landscape between socio-cultural and religious beliefs, in matrimonial

advertising, on the one hand, and the demands of the modern media, on the other. The change in gender norms triggered by the evolving socioeconomic environment has also influenced the social and family spheres of society in Pakistan. Gender is described by Mukhopadhyay (1999) as a concept that refers to the roles and obligations of men and women generated in their communities, societies and cultures. The definition of gender also contains assumptions regarding the characteristics, skills, and possible actions of both women and men roles and standards are taught about anatomy, which is genetically decided. However, in the context of domestic spousal expectations, research needs to be conducted to start exploring changes in mate-selection processes in the social structure.

The objectives of study is to identify the qualities desired and revealed by potential mates and to examine the trends and gender role expectations of these advertisements in Pakistani print media.

R.Q1. Which are the attractive qualities desired and revealed by potential mates in classified advertising in Pakistan's chosen print newspapers?

R.Q2. What trends and gender role expectations are evident in the body representation of advertisements in Pakistani print media?

2. Literature Review

Boulton(1983) emphasizes the function of advertisements as socially useful, completely ethical and relatively free from semantic problems. An important type of print advertisements is classified ads that are published in great number in the newspapers. There is great diversity in classified ads. Different types of classified ads include astrology, memoirs, obituary, education, admission, tutorial, mass appeal for help, marriage anniversary, business and services, computer training, buying and selling, matrimonial, walk-in-interview, call centres.

The matrimonial ads are unique in their lexical choices and syntactic patterns. Since these ads serve the social purpose of bringing together different families in the marital alliance, so these ads reflect the psychological orientation and social factors at work behind the linguistic choices. The analysis of these matrimonial advertisements in the broader sociolinguistic perspective could be very enlightening and insightful.

According to Mukhopadhyay(1999), Sex describes the biological differences between men and women, which are universal and determined at birth. In contrast, gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). Gender roles and expectations are learned. The concept of gender is vital because applied to social analysis; it reveals how women's subordination (or men's domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined, nor is it fixed forever.

Matrimonial advertisements are a form of the arranged marriage system prevalent in Asian countries such as Japan, China, India, and Pakistan etc. These ads differ from the arranged marriage system only in terms of the medium used. The media has taken up the role of intermediary between the families or individuals interested in the marital alliance. Being the part of the arranged marriage system, it replicates the same considerations such as compatibility, economic status, and social status of the involved (Mathur & Parameswaran, 2004).

The traditional matchmakers are being replaced due to geographical mobility and ease of access to media. These classified advertisements found in newspapers and magazines are an important way of finding a suitable life partner. There are many socio-cultural factors, for instance, the tradition of mate-selection process, gender role expectations. It affects the

composition of these advertisements, as reflected in research across the world (Ottaviano & de Oliveira Siqueira, 2002). However, this phenomenon is also evident in the eastern countries, including Pakistan.

The matrimonial advertisements indicate the social beliefs of people about desirable qualities for their sons/daughters to become desirable brides/grooms. The desirable qualities mentioned in matrimonial ads often mark the beginning of a long and complex process of negotiations in the arranged marriage system. They serve as convenient sites for analyzing spousal expectations and normative heterosexuality in an unobtrusive manner (Jagger, 2001).

Traditionally, for instance, a matrimonial posting describes the expected ideal Pakistani wife to be 'fair, beautiful, quiet, respectful, innocent, humble and cultured'. According to Koestner and Wheeler (1988), in order to attract the maximum number of responses, these attributes are exaggerated by the advertisers. Hence the advertisers are trying to reach out to the potential partners, so it is inevitable for them to emphasize on 'appropriate' self-presentation and righteous image-management (Marley, 2008). The present study attempts to analyze the self-representation of the advertisers and the depiction of desirable traits in the potential mates.

3. Methodology

This research analyzes the quality of 350 matrimonial advertisements published in The Daily Jang and The Daily Dawn in June 2020. The Daily Jang and The Daily Dawn are the newspapers with the largest and second highest circulation in Pakistan, with 138,000 and 800,000 copies respectively (Gallup Poll of Pakistan, 2018).

The Sunday issues of these publications have been chosen as they contain a comprehensive supplement exclusively dedicated to matrimonial advertising. The survey, taken from a total of 350 separate advertisements (250 from The Daily Jang and 100 from The Daily Dawn).

The data, therefore, consists of four Sunday issues of June 2020. The advertisements were placed either by the males or the females themselves or by their immediate family members.

However, a large number of ads have been discarded due to not appropriate for this research study. This process produced 250 ads from The Daily Jang and 100 from The Daily Dawn. A total of 140 of these ads originated from males, and 210 ads originated from females. All ads sought heterosexual marital partners.

The advertisements were manually coded to identify the variables. The variables' codes identified traits announced by the person placing the ad as well as the traits sought in an acceptable spouse. These variables are financial status, physical attractiveness, slimness, fairness, personality traits, and occupation.

a. Physical attractiveness

This variable coded for the presence or absence of physical attractiveness as an announced or sought quality. Mention of words such as 'pretty', 'good-looking', 'attractive', 'beautiful', 'handsome', and 'young-looking' slim, fair.

b. Occupation and Education

This variable, coded dichotomously, indicated whether or not the announcer or the person seeking held employment outside the home. Mention of words and phrases such as 'employed, professional, career-minded' or indications of specific occupations such as software professional, doctor, lawyer, and engineer, and also mention of educational degrees (BA, MA) were coded.

c. Stereotypical personality traits (masculinity and femininity)

Presence of masculine traits included descriptors such as 'ambitious', 'accomplished', 'successful', 'talented', 'smart', 'intelligent', 'reputable', 'respectable', and 'aristocratic' as qualities announced or sought. Femininity was a code for the presence or absence of feminine

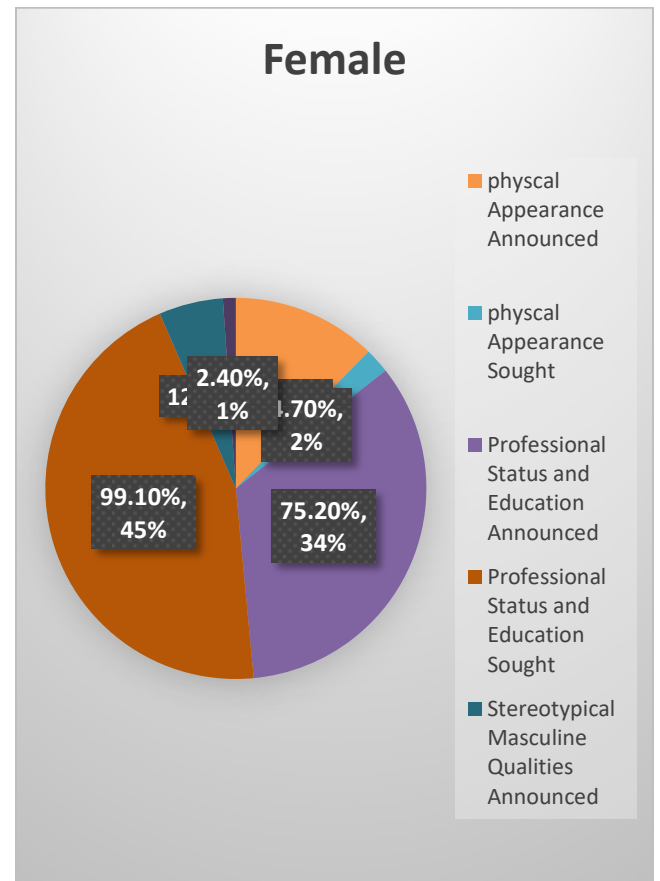
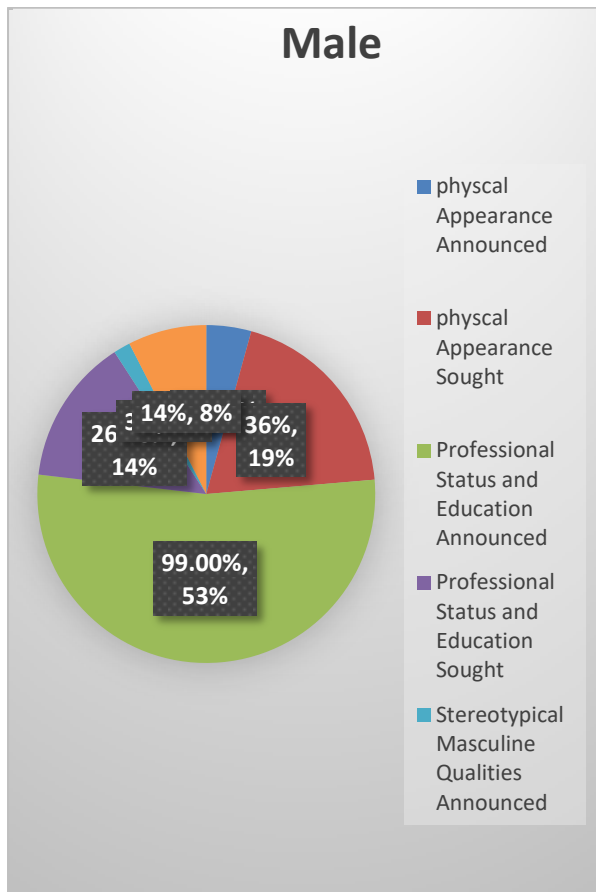
qualities in announced or sought traits. Descriptors such as 'caring', 'kind', 'charming', 'loving', 'amiable', 'home-loving', 'cheerful', 'innocent', 'devout', and 'cultured' were included as indications of the presence of feminine qualities. When no mention of such indicators appeared in ads, they were marked as absent.

4. Data Presentation and Data Analysis

The presented study seeks to analyze the self-representation practices of advertisers in the matrimonial ads in terms of their adherence to stereotypical gender traits. Furthermore, the study also attempts to find out the changing trends in such representation concerning the change in the socio-cultural scenario in Pakistani society. The analysis of the selected data exhibits certain traits predominantly mentioned by the advertisers' for their potential mates. These traits have been categorized under the following headings for the ease of analysis.

- a) Physical attractiveness
- b) Financial Status (Occupation and Education)
- c) Stereotypical personality traits (masculinity and femininity)

These desired attributes serve as variables in the present study. An analysis of these attributes not only throws light on the way gender identity is constructed by self and other representations but also on the changing trends of the society in the wake of globalization and media exposure. The study sets out to explore the desired attributes in the potential mates in the matrimonial ads and hence to view the phenomenon of fluctuation in the identity construction of the agents if any. Given below is the detailed presentation of the data analyzed, followed by discussion in an attempt to find answers to the research questions. The table below presents an overall analysis of the data analyzed in the following section.



a. Physical Traits (Beauty, Skin Color, Height)

The data analyzed in the four Sunday issues of the respective newspapers (The Daily Dawn and the Daily Jang) revealed the desirable attributes related to physical characteristics. Since the overwhelming advertisements especially from the advertisers desired these traits in their potential mates hence these characteristics have been summed up under one category i.e. 'physical traits'. With respect to physical attractiveness, the results showed that ads by men (36.0%) were significantly more likely than ads by women (4.7%) to expect physically attractive spouses. And the ads by women (27%) were more likely than ads by men (8%) to announce physical attractiveness.

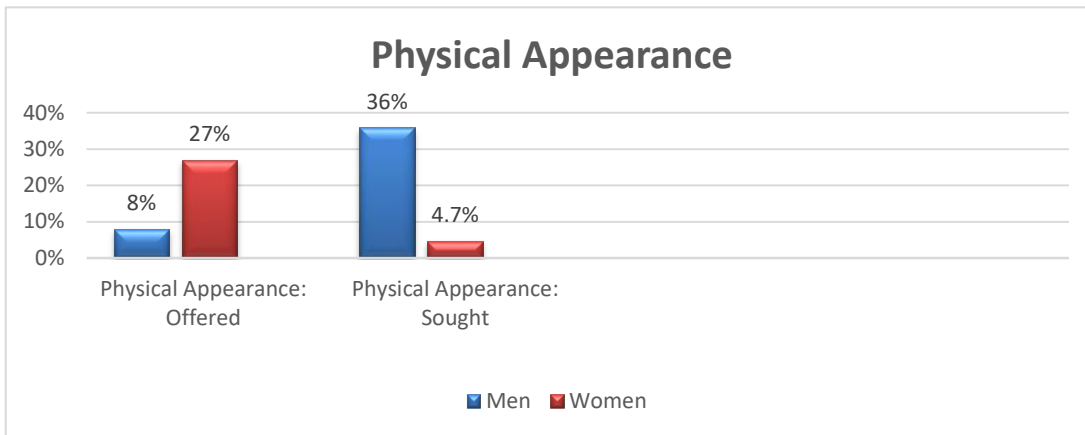


Figure No2

Physical beauty includes fair complexion, slimness and good height. In desired physical traits men are vocal and there is an insistence on the women being beautiful. There are degrees of fairness expressed in the selected data. The adjectives used include "beautiful, very beautiful, pretty, fair, slim, and smart." There is a sharp contrast between male and female advertisers' preferences of attributes in the prospective mates. Male advertisers place foremost importance on physical beauty and height. About 36% of male advertisers have required women to be beautiful, slim, smart and tall. While on the other hand, there are only 4.7% percent female advertisers who require the would-be groom to be handsome. However, in the category of declared attributes, 27% of female advertisers have expressed they are pretty, beautiful and smart. Height is an important part of the personality, and 38.6% of female advertisers have declared their height. In the declared attributes, 27% of females have declared themselves "beautiful, slim and smart, tall, very pretty". Most of the females (66%) are tall or have good height averaged 5.2'-5.4', which is considered a good height in Pakistan since the vast majority of female advertisers are not assertive in demanding the same physical standard from expected males so it can be inferred that female beauty is highlighted as a commodity or product to add worth and value of their proposal for some rich and well-settled family.

b) Financial Status: Qualifications and Profession/Occupation:

The second desirable trait found in the data focuses on gender polarization in occupational preferences and education. The data shows strong support from the indication of ads by men as (99%) ads were more likely than ads by women (75.2%) to announce a professional status outside the home. Ads by

women (99.1%), on the contrary, were much more likely than those by men (26.1%) to mention professional achievements sought in a mate.

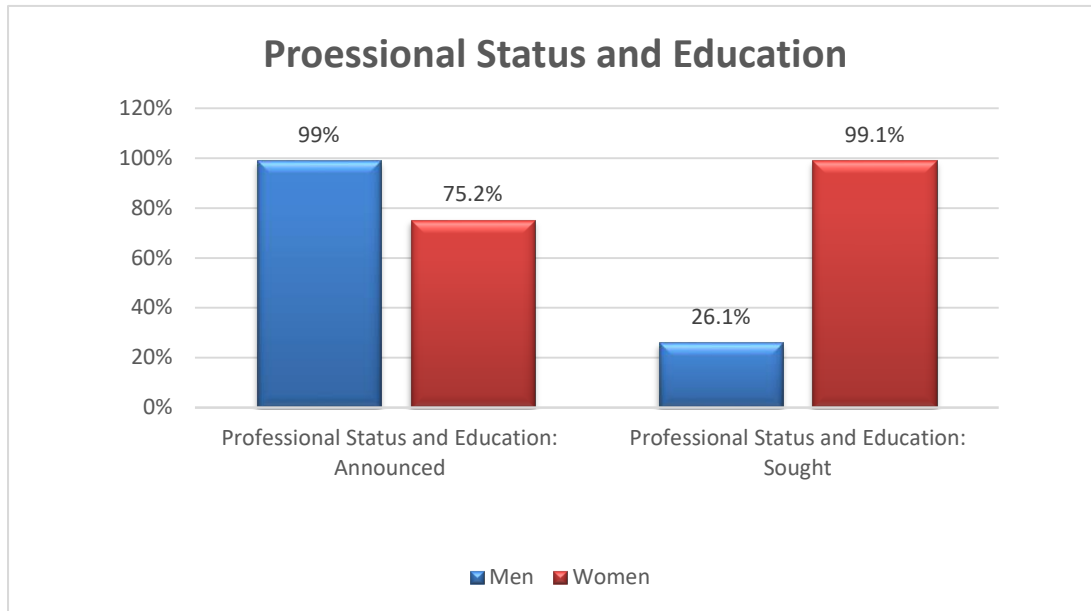


Figure No3

Education is an important variable. 79% of female advertisers have higher education and hold professional degrees such as MBBS, M.Sc., Engineering etc. Most of the female advertisers are doctors, engineers, lecturers or bankers. Majority of the educated professionally settled females have demanded a match with the same educational qualification or job status. However, some of the Advertisers have generally mentioned that the required groom must be, 'well settled, educated and having some good job'.

Almost all of the male advertiser (100%) have mentioned their education or/ job status. This higher percentage reflects the significance of being well settled economically in order to get married. The well-settled doctors, engineers, and lecturers require the same qualification in females as well. Some of the advertisers have mentioned the names of the universities from where they have completed their last degrees. Such universities include GIK, NUST, FAST, LUMS, Beacon house. All these institutions serve the educational needs of the elite class. So the purpose of mentioning these universities is to indicate their social status and expect the females to have the same background.

It throws light on the class segregation and class consciousness of the people in the Pakistani society. This analysis also reveals the changing mindset and orientation of the people. Women with higher education and job are preferred. The working women are preferred choice since they have the potential to help in augmenting the family income. Thus education and job status are one of the important criteria of the selection for the mate.

c. Feminine and Masculine Qualities:

This category focuses on gender differences in feminine and masculine qualities preferences in the potential mates for matrimonial alliance. Ads by women (12%) were significantly more likely than ads by men (3%) to announce their stereotypical feminine qualities. Similarly, as hypothesized, ads by men (14.0%) were significantly more likely than ads by women (2.4%) to seek spouses with traditional feminine traits.

On the contrary, the ads placed by males are not found to be more likely than by those of women to announce stereotypical masculine qualities. Surprisingly, results show that ads by men (8.1%) were significantly more likely than ads by women (2.1%) to seek stereotypical masculine qualities in their potential spouses.

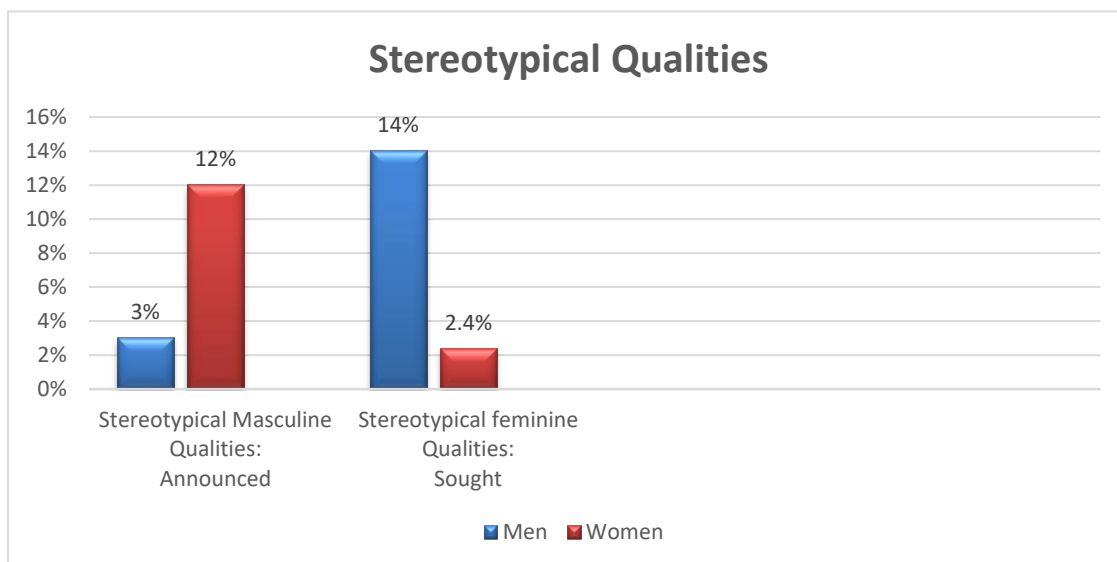


Figure No4

Intelligence and character are the most important human attributes which are essential in bringing in matrimonial bliss and a successful and lasting marriage alliance. However, ironically these attributes are given least importance both by the male and the female advertisers. In the declared character attributes, only 9.5% of females expressed having good character and only 2% of females are presented as having intelligence. At the same time, only 8% of male advertisers prefer their would-be spouses to have good character. In comparison, none (0%) of the male advertisers deem intelligence of any worth for women or essential for the success of their marriage alliance. Thus there is the least emphasis on the attributes related to character and moral values. The whole focus of the advertisers is on physical attributes and material aspects.

5. Discussion

The present study sets out to explore the matrimonial advertisement published in print media in Pakistan from three perspectives. The first research question sought to find out the desirable traits in potential mates as expressed by the advertisers as well as the self-representation in terms of those traits. The study found the physical attractiveness as the most desired trait to be found in the potential mate on men's side. Female advertisers announce this trait and desire education and career in potential male partners. These findings reinforce the stereotypical built of Pakistani mindset and society. This orientation of the Pakistani society is evident from the focus and insistence of the majority of the advertisers on physical beauty. In the required attributes by male advertisers, only 6% require that there would be spouse should have a good character.

The mention of explicit physical attractiveness is a conscious expression of their desire. It conveys the implicit message that only the females fulfilling these criteria should contact. The male proclivities for physical attractiveness are evident from the lexical choices such as: "beautiful, very beautiful, pretty, fair, slim, and smart." The 36% males demand and 26% of women exhibit physical attractiveness explicitly. The results of the study exhibit a marked difference between males and female advertisers' spousal role expectations related to desirable personality traits. The desired role expectations are more in line with the prevalent stereotypes of females being an epitome of care, kindness, docility, compassion and domestic. The

male advertisers require caring, kind and family-oriented girls. The female advertisers though the majority of them are highly educated and professional, require their prospective mated equally qualified and well employed. Hence their expected partner role requirement is that of a breadwinner and ensuring economic security.

The male advertisers require girls who are highly educated and employed. This tendency towards masculinity as a desirable trait in females by men suggests a move towards the bridging of gender polarization. Both males and females describe themselves using masculine words and seek these qualities in their spouses. The data analysis reveals the absence of the idealized version of males either in self-representation or in gender role expectations, however. However, the desirability of both masculine and feminine traits is expected of idealized women. These findings corroborate prior research on global, hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1995).

The second research question explored the adherence to typical gender roles in terms of spousal preference for the marital alliance. The data analyzed reveal that though the majority of the advertisers represent and also seek stereotypical qualities associated with femininity and masculinity in society. The majority of female advertisers seek a groom who is the breadwinner and could offer financial security however the changing trends in the norms of society are visible in terms of choice of would be bride who should be stereotypically physically attractive and also highly educated.

Another changing trend is a great number of female advertisers who are highly educated and require a groom with equal qualification. One of the ads in the Daily Dawn requires 'traditional girl with modern ideas' or 'beautiful educated conservative woman 'Another advertiser seeks 'domestic working lady'. It reveals the tendencies that require women to be "super girls" excelling in both domains, i.e. domestic and economic. These high expectations are sure to stress women and add to gender polarization

Education and occupational or job status is the foremost consideration in marital alliance. It is evident from the fact that 100% males and 99% of females have declared their qualification and job status. The comparison of male and female required attributes in the prospective mate reveals their different

orientation. Educated males require females having the same qualification. In contrast, the educated females are just contented on finding the mate who is well settled and is having some job or business.

The overall results of the present study suggest that beauty and femininity are desirable traits for women and serve a criterion of their eligibility for the marital alliance. It reflects the kinds of ideals and stereotypes mirrored and reproduced in the mainstream media projections of females presenting them as superwomen juggling both with domestic and career roles. On the other hand, men need to be financially stable and career-oriented in order to be desired partners in matrimony. To sum up, the persistence of gendered lenses both in self-presentations and spousal expectations in this study is a reminder that androcentrism, gender, polarization, and biological essentialism continue to be at the core of individual identity and sexuality in middle-class Pakistani households.

6. Conclusion

The present study seeks to analyze the self-representation of advertisers in the matrimonial ads in terms of their adherence to stereotypical gender traits and identity construction. Furthermore, the study also attempts to find out the changing trends in such representation concerning the change in the socio-cultural scenario in Pakistani society.

The self-representation as well as that of the prospective spouse on men's side reflects a preference for physical attractiveness 36% males and 26% females demand and announce physical beauty respectively. Although the majority of men also require their spouses to be highly educated. From the perspective of female advertisers, there is an indication of their qualification as an important facet of identity construction. Seventy-nine per cent (79%) female advertisers announced their education. They required their would-be groom to be equally qualified and employed.

The other desirable attribute includes masculinity in women as the men want their potential mate to be educated and working. The preference for educated and employed girls shows the changing trend in society. However, at the same time, the girls are required to be equipped with domestic skills hence an idealized figure. On the other hand, the female advertisers emphasize on education and employment of the prospective mate.

Hence the study shows a stereotypical gender role expectation from the advertisers. The self-representation also adheres to the stereotypical gender traits as evident in the data analysis and discussion section. The purposeful framing of the matrimonial advertisements reflects and mirrors stereotypical gender norms values prevalent in society. However, at the same time, these ads serve as spaces where these values are reproduced and negotiated.

The changing socio-cultural landscape in Pakistan due to growing job opportunities and a consumption-driven lifestyle is also a harbinger of change in gender role expectation as evident of spouse preference with education and job as expressed by the majority of male advertisers. However, the advertisers also show a preference for women with the qualities of a domestic caregiver while also having a masculine agency as a working wife which reflects the tension in contradictory role expectations individually and on the societal level at large.

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