

## **Taboos in Geo Television Prime Time Dramas: A Social Perspective**

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### ***Abstract***

*This research work was aimed to find out the social taboos in the prime time dramas aired on Geo Television. The study aimed that do dramas of prime time Geo broadcast contain the social taboo elements, and if they exist then what kinds of elements of social taboos elements exist. The next aim was that which one social taboo overall exists greater than rest of all social taboos shown. It was also analyzed that which solitary prime time drama contains maximum social taboos at overall with respect to all other dramas. The frequency of social taboos in prime time Geo TV dramas was examined as well. The dramas shown during the prime time at Geo TV were taken as population in the research. A total of sixty-one episodes of nine dramas of March and April were chosen in the sample. The method of content analysis was applied in the research process. Overall eight kinds of social taboo; nudity, violence, racism, extramarital relations, drug abuse, disrespectful attitude, divorce, and obscene language were found. The incidence of 'nudity' was found highest of all. The research showed that drama serial 'Ishq Ebadat' had greater number of social taboo contents with respect to all drama taken in sample. The frequency level of certain social taboos in a variety of taken primetime dramas was monitored as well. The peak occurrence of obscene language in drama Ye Zindagi Hai, Jahez, and Amma Aur Gulnaz, were recorded. The nudity was found in drama serial Jannat Se Nikaali Hoi Aurrat, Dil Tu Bhattkay Ga, Annie Ki Aayegi Baraat, Hazaron Saal, and Ishq Ebadat. The highest occurrence of violence in GEO TV drama Ek Nazar Meri Taraf was found.*

**Keywords:** *Geo Television, Electronic Media, Prime Time, Drama, Social Taboo, Society*

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## **Introduction**

### **Audience and Media**

Public utilization of media got amplified since inception of a variety of news and drama channels. In the recent era media audience got numerous choices. It has been a natural aim of the media with diverse kind of their contents. Mass-media since decades has been a major source of learning of behaviors, social and ethical principles to live life. Patterns of thought, action and respond depend upon the behaviors as well as the principles learnt through the media. We reside in the world where media generated its influence upon the audiences. Television media has been found appealing the society and public more than other kinds of it. The television has gained its importance as the only source of information which shares the messages effectively by using the images in its contents. With the passage of time human beings learnt various patterns to spend their lives. They adapted rituals which were introduced through mediated communication of the media.

### **Prime Time Television Dramas: Geo TV**

Many outlets of electronic media in Pakistan found at the level of puberty and not mature enough to decide that what could be valuable for the society. Many contents of the television media in Pakistan do not synchronize with local cultural norms and values. Such contents became frequent in TV prime time dramas. Geo television was established in the month of May 2002 and is the subsidiary of Independent Media Corporation. Test transmission was started on 14 August 2002 and regular in October 2002.

### **Taboos in Social Perspective as Social Taboos**

Social taboos would be read as strong social prohibitions which relate to any human activity area or custom in social setup that is prohibited based on religious beliefs, moral judgment, or the scientific consensus. The whole family could not assemble together for watching dramas which contain contents of social taboo. Ultimately, a taboo in other words would be a social taboo. It could not be allowed to practice in any society. All contents that cross the moral and ethical values of a social setting i.e. nudity, extra-marital relations, violence, gender discrimination, racism, disrespectful attitude, drug abuse could be considered as social taboos. Anything done against moral judgment, scientific consensus or religious beliefs would also be taken as social taboos.

### **Literature Review**

Alberto Chong and Eliana La Ferrara (2010) conducted a research to dig out the relationship of television and divorce. The study was based on the cultivation effects of the televised contents on the divorce ratio in Brazil. A strong relationship was found among the audience of the smaller areas where the signals were found reaching to the higher population. Amy I. Nathanson and others (2002) did a research to find out the occurrence of the violence with the perspective of televised contents. The study was followed by the random sampling technique and 23 cable and broadcast channels were selected as the population. The authors examined the violent behavior among the viewers who were exposed to the televised contents twice to thrice. The violent contents were found in the prime time transmissions of some specified channels. Most problematic genre was resulted in the case of cable and broadcast but main problematic genre in

the case of reality channels. Barbara K. Kaye and Barry S. Sapolsky (2009) used content analysis and composite weeks to reach out the rate of offensive language in prime time televised contents. It was further added that almost ninety percent contents were having at least one profanity element. Graber (1990) found that visuals had played a vital role in recalling of televised contents among the audience. The author examined trust and stereotypical forms as less effective. Cristel Russell and Dale Russell (2009) planned a study to dig out the occurrence of alcohol in the televised contents. A sample of eight weeks were chosen whereas, eighteen prime time programs for analysis. The study carried out the coexistence of the alcohol messages but the ways they presented were different. The negative verbal messages were found tied within plot. Furthermore, there was found a relationship between the positive messages and subtle visuals. It was further added that the televised programs had become a vital source of information regarding drinking. Phil A. Silva and others (1994) carried out a research work to find out the relationship between the exposure to the televised contents and consuming of alcohol being at eighteen years old and recalling the televised messages at the age of thirteen to fifteen years. The study pattern was longitudinal and conducted in Dunedin, New Zealand. The following categories were established to find out the recalling by the respondent as, portrayal of alcohol in entertainment, the moderation communications about alcohol and commercial advertising of alcohol. The results clarified the more positive relationship between the exposure to televised contents and recalling the advertisements about alcohol among the men than women. James R. De Foe and Warren Breed 1981 analyzed prime time programs of the television to observe of drinking process portraying. The programs of two types were focused. One hour drama and situational comedies were comprised in the sample. Top 15 situation comedies along with top 15 dramas from the sample of five weeks had been taken in sample from year 1976 till 1977. In this content analysis the airtime comprising 150 hours of broadcast was monitored. They found the characters drinking alcohol, discussing alcohol and further more at various instances found drinking in television programs. The conclusion was that the alcohol consuming education was being given besides showing only the usage of alcohol in the television.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do Geo TV primetime dramas contain socially tabooed contents?
2. Which diverse kinds of social taboos are broken in Geo television primetime dramas?
3. What is occurrence frequency of socially taboo contents in Geo TV primetime dramas?
4. Which socially tabooed content is occurring more than all of other kinds?
5. Which Geo TV prime time drama contains more socially tabooed contents than all other its dramas?

### **Conceptual and theoretical framework**

Critical discourse analysis is always surrounded by the complexity of the processes whereas qualitative in nature. Many approaches of the critical analysis has widened its scope theoretically meanwhile more complexity. This research work is focused on the critical discourse analysis to gain a noticeable vision of a cultural phenomenon. This research is carried out by following the approach of Laclau and Moufe's (1985) that is most suitable theoretical framework

for exploring and explaining text for the whole discourses entrenched in ideologies. This theory is principally derived from Foucault's elucidation and interpretation of the macro semantic system.

## **Methodology**

### **Prime Time Dramas**

The researchers selected the time because majority of the viewer in the country exposed to the television dramas. Due to the said factor the researchers investigated the prime time dramas to find out the existent social taboos and occurrence frequency in the selected dramas.

### **Data Collection**

At first step a thorough schedule comprising broadcast of primetime dramas was prepared. After that, a time consuming process of downloading 61 episodes from 09 primetime dramas of Geo television channel was carried out. Internet was used as resource to the download all drama episodes. The entire 61 episodes of 9 dramas were watched purposefully and comprehensively in content analysis process by researcher for analyzing contents for social taboos. Every coming scene in drama episodes under observation was considered a standard for observing the contents of social taboo.

### **Unit of Analysis**

Obscene Language, Nudity, Disrespectful Attitude, Violence, Drug Abuse, Racism, Divorce, Extra-Material Relation and Abortion were taken as unit of analysis in the research.

### **Coding Sheet**

Coding sheet for the current study was developed as;

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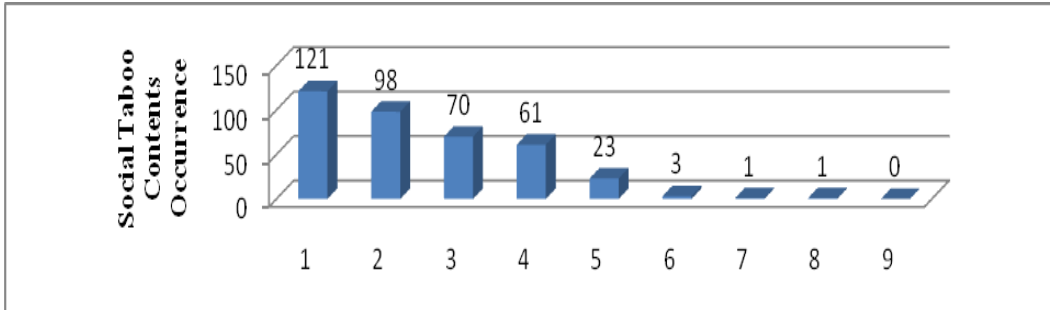
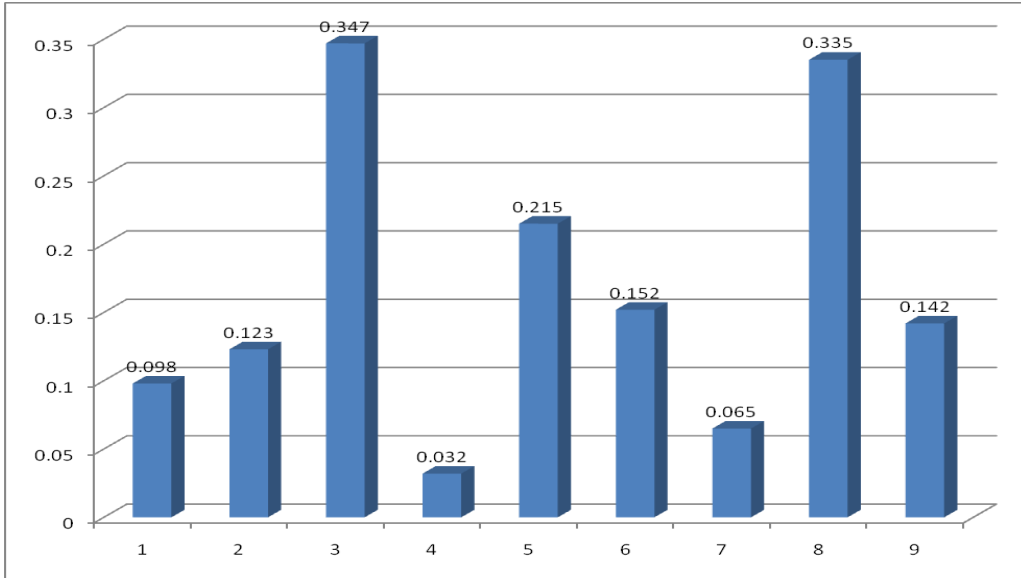
<b>S.No</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Drama</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Social Taboo</b>
Serial Number	Exact date	Name of Drama	Exposed Time	Repetition of social taboo	Name of Social taboo

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### **Inter-Rater Reliability**

For the inter-rate reliability Cohen's kappa was used between two raters. Cohen's kappa statistic measures inter rater reliability (sometimes called interobserver agreement). Interrater reliability, or precision, happens when your data raters (or collectors) give the same score to the same data item. The value resulted (k=85%) which considered near perfect agreement as per given metrics (0.81 – 0.99 = near perfect agreement).

## Results



## Discussions and Conclusions

Considering the main theme of this research work, it was concluded that the social taboos were included in the Geo TV prime time dramas. The results of this study explored that there were

eight social taboos included in the Geo televised contents namely nudity, violence, racism, obscene language, drug abuse, divorce, extramarital relations, and disrespectful attitude. The study was also focused on the frequency of the contents having social taboos. It was further highlighted that the drama “Ishq Ebadat” had more social taboos than the others with highest frequency as 2.88 minutes. Keeping an eye on the pattern of Pakistani society, their customs are based on the overall Islamic values. There are different concepts of the social taboos in the country when we make a general comparison between Pakistan and other non-Muslim countries. The authors of this study kept in mind the societal social taboos while content analysis of the televised contents. The Islamic teachings clearly indicate that the entire body of a woman except face and hands fall in the criteria of nudity if exposed. As the Quran says; in Sura-e-Al Nur that tell believing women that they should lower their gazes and remain modest and they should draw veils over the bosoms. Further Holy Quran says that the daughters, women and the wives of the believers should draw their cloaks round to close them when they go out and it will be much better for the sake that they are not molested. In many cases, the amount of the clothes varies by social and functional considerations. There can be observed in the world that the amount of the clothing might be socially adequate while more clothes might be necessary in any part of the world. The Islamic teachings emphasize the ‘hijab’ for the women. The all kinds of the women dresses like jeans with bear legs under knees, back and bear belly while in Sarhi or visibility of braw under thin dress, the slight visibility of cleavage, the female wearing tight shirt which depicts the breasts, male wearing no clothes on upper body parts, and shower taking scene both by female and male are prohibited and falls under the umbrella of the nudity. The results have increased the societal concerns as the element of nudity has remained major part of the televised contents. The frequency rate of the nudity among all the social taboos have rated highest as 121 times. The concept of racism is also prohibited in the Islamic teachings and the Holy Quran declares the mankind as a nation. Some of the authors have also argued about the positivity of the death of race consciousness among the Muslims. It was further added that the modern world should be focused on the propagation of the Islamic virtues (Professor A.J. Toynbee, 1948). The racism is overall unfair treatment of the people living together. The expanded phenomenon of racism has contributed discriminations and racial based ideologies. The racism is also focused on the differentiation between the people having some specified abilities and capabilities and, the people who have not making them inferior or the superior. Elizabeth Monk and others (2010) examined the prime time televised contents in special reference to the racism where they found the white actors as dominants. Travis L. Dixon (2008) stated while studying the concept of racism that the blacks were overrepresented as violent people and criminals. This research work has resulted the racism at lowest possible rate. World Health Organization (2002) defined the violence as an international power along with the physical force for threatening the other people or groups. The Islamic teachings also forbid the violence in any aspect. Holy Quran emphasizes and ensures the safety of every individual. It is clarified that killing of one innocent life is similar like killing entire mankind... and saving one’s life is similar to saving entire mankind. The above mentioned lines clearly highlight the importance of spreading peace and avoiding violence. Stacey Flynn and others (2004) resulted that the violent televised contents contained the 66% murders with firearm. This research work ranked the violence at third

from highest after nudity and obscene language. Islam also forbids the gambling and wine and emphasizes it as the great sin and less profit. Gary M. Connolly and others (1994) has resulted the association between the recalling of the alcohol among the viewers as portrayed in media advertisements and then drinking at their age of eighteen. Cristel Antonia Russell and Dale W. Russell (2009) argued the televised contents about alcohol as the source of drinking. P. P. Aitken and others (1988) found that the drinking habits among the teenagers were reinforced by the televised contents about the alcohol. The televised contents about alcohol were found major source in drinking habits according to Warren Breed and James R. De Foe (1981). It was further added that alterations of mood, feelings and consciousness fell in the criteria of the drug abuse beside many other restrictions. Non therapeutic effects also fulfill the criteria of the drug abuse. A few drugs which commonly abused are alcohol, amphetamines, marijuana, barbiturates, anabolic steroids, cocaine, opium alkaloids, cigarette, and nicotine. This research has found the contents of drug abuse as a social taboo in prime time Geo television dramas. The Muslim societies can easily be observed as rejecting the obscene language as it is clearly prohibited in the Islamic teachings. Obscene language also includes the attitude and the words including sentences which do not depict the accepted standards. The foul speech, swearing, dirty words, strong language, cursing, bad words, bad language, vulgar, adult, or the insulting language are included in the obscene language. Barbara K. Kaye and Barry S. Sapolsky (2009) did a research to examine the existence of the obscene language elements in prime time contents of cable televised programs. The authors resulted ten objectionable words in every hour that highlighted the sensitivity of matter. This study found the obscene language as second highest followed by the nudity. Disrespectful attitude with the parents, elders or anyone else is treated prohibited in the Muslim society and the same has been taught by the Islam. Most influential is, Holy Quran says that one must be obedient to his or her parents. If anyone of parents or both reach to the old age in somebody's life, he/she should not say them any singular disrespectful word and shout at them. The discourteous, hateful and impolite attitude towards the others is also defined as the said term. This research work has resulted the disrespectful attitude at fourth highest. All the societies in general and the Muslim societies in specific do not allow the extra marital relations and even, these types of relations are being discouraged. The many types of the extra marital status are the outside marriage relationships where the unlawful romantic or the sexual relationships, passionate attachments, or any other romantic friendship takes place. This study found this social taboo in the prime time televised contents of Geo TV (table.3). Islam strictly prohibits the divorce but permits with major restrictions. The mother-in-law, sister of husband or the any other family member of husband or wife impose pressure on the individual to take or give the divorce, were found major elements in the content analysis. The analysis examined the greater ratio of the divorce as well. The divorce is defined as the legal termination of marriage by any court or any else competent body. Occasionally the spouse is enforced to give or take divorce. In some instances it is found that husband and the wife mutually make a decision to break life partnership in legal way. Eliana La Ferrara and Alberto Chong (2009) dig out the divorce ratio among the viewers of the televised contents. The authors concluded that there was positive association between the divorce and

exposure to the televised contents. This social taboo has also been taken place in this research work.

### **Recommendations**

1. This study is useful in understanding, eliminating and controlling the social taboo contents from forthcoming dramas to convey the productive and healthy entertainment for the audience.
2. It will help in improving the entertainment content that would be watch able in the entire family sitting.
3. The family can be reunited through providing social taboos free entertainment through prime time dramas.



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