

REPRESENTATION AND RESISTANCE: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY PAKISTANI CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines portrayal of women in Pakistani cinema nowadays and the depiction of resistance to patriarchal oppression. Four movies *Khuda kay liye*, *Bol*, *Verna* and *Dukhtar* were selected to investigate development of gender roles develop, the women's marginalization representation, and dimensions of resistance within social and cultural restriction through film narratives and dialogues. The main objective of this study is to examine how some Pakistani films negotiated morality, honor, and power while challenging pervasive patriarchal norms. This study utilizes qualitative theme analysis with an emphasis on dialogue-based film analysis and grounded in feminist film theory, framing theory, and violence theory. Collectively these theoretical frameworks provide a lens for understanding gendered representations, narrative framing, and the depiction of structural and symbolic violence against women. The findings underscore a change towards stories that emphasize women's voices and struggles while replacing submissive female depictions in Pakistani cinema. However, this resistance is often limited and presented within socially acceptable limits, which reflects the persistence of patriarchal control.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Pakistani Cinema, Feminist Film Theory, Violence against Women, Media and Gender

Introduction

In last few decades, Pakistani cinema has shifted its focus from entertainment to social issues; especially how it represents gender, power and inequality. This change is a reflection of a larger cultural shift in Pakistan, including a rise in public discussion about patriarchy, social resistance and women oppression through different media platforms. Contemporary filmmakers like Shoaib Mansoor and Afia Nathaniel use cinema as a storytelling tool to address limiting, break silence around systemic abuse, and create a new representation of women

([Sadiq et al., 2025](#)). These growing images reflect a clear shift from earlier eras when female characters were limited to submissive, decorative, or domestic roles in accordance social expectations ([Nizami, 2023](#)).

After partition in 1947, Pakistan's cinema industry started film production from Lahore with limited resources including nine cinema screens for movie screening ([Nawaz & Roshan, 2024](#)). Since its beginning, Pakistani cinema producers and directors have used this medium to showcase social and cultural issues. They have

produced hundreds of remarkable films on social, political, and religious issues ([Sohail et al., 2020](#)). The early 60s to early 1980s era are considered as the golden period of Pakistani cinema, with an average of 80 films were made yearly. After this, a gradual decline of film industry was observed; the researchers highlighted the various reasons including the implementation of strict regulations and censorship under the then Government of General Zia-ul-Haq, consequently reduced creativity and production of movies ([Nawaz & Roshan, 2024](#)). The themes have also changed over the time, the industry which started with family-oriented romantic stories gradually shifted to the violent “ghandasa” culture ([Zhou & Iftikhar 2024](#)). Syed Noor’s film *Bulandi* brought a fresh air and new life to the dying film industry however it was observed that women were still underrepresented and objectified ([Saleem et al. 2020](#)), hence promoted negative preconceptions and failed to show the real life of Pakistani women ([Yousaf et al. 2017](#)). Cinema is not just entertainment; it is a language of culture that helps societies negotiate meaning, as [Hall \(2020\)](#) claimed that representation is a basic process that impacts how people understand identity, power and social interaction. In Pakistani cinema, the use of movie dialogue, story development, and character journeys play a key role in perception building on the concept of gender and empowerment. Multiple recent studies have highlighted that repeated media portrayals strongly affect audience perceptions of gender roles, normalize violence, and shape understandings of women’s independence ([Mehmood 2020](#)). During this transition period from *Bulandi* to *Chorian* the Punjabi classic movie presented a soft and powerful cultural and gender representation in beautifully weaved story and cinematography. This give space to movies that presented the gender and power in a very bold and standout themes, include four significant movies *Khuda Kay Liye*, *Bol*, *Verna* and *Dukhtar*. Each movie uses story telling technique that combines the women suffering, their resistance and explain their resilience in a unique way that defines women in a new light that was never seen before. ([Yousaf et al. 2017](#)).

Khuda kay liye investigates religious dogmatism and the control of women independency in both local and international environment. *Bol* exposes patriarchal family structures and the violent consequences of honor-based beliefs. *Verna* challenges state authorities and the systemic silence on sexual abuse and *Dukhtar* shows the mother’s opposition to tribal traditions and forced marriage. Collectively, these films highlighted how modern Pakistani cinema is shifting toward stories in which women question, challenge, and resist systemic oppression ([Saleem et al. 2020](#)).

In this context, the current research investigates how the 4 movies dialogue, themes, and character representations show women oppression and resistance. The focus of dialogue plays an important role, as movie discussions frequently contain hidden ideological clues, emotional framing, and story power that reflect basic social concepts. This research attempts to understand how movie stories create resistance as a lived, emotional, and political act by studying conversations thematically. This research aims to contribute to existing scholarly discussions on gender representation in Pakistani media, an aspect where previous research has shown both improvement and remaining issues in the literature. The importance of this study arises from the gap in recent academic studies that investigate women’s resistance in Pakistani movies through a dialogue-based thematic approach. While many studies have investigated women’s overall representation in movies and dramas, very few analyzed resistance as a storytelling technique or focused on how dialogue shapes gendered interpretation. By addressing this gap, this study provides contemporary, culturally relevant knowledge of how Pakistani movies create female power. It also helps media scholars, filmmakers, and policymakers who want to understand how cinema shapes public views on gender inequality, violence, and empowerment. This study identified cinema as an important social power. Pakistani cinema’s storytelling not only reflects social issues but also affects the discussion about women’s independence, resistance, and rights.

The movies selected highlighted that representation is more than just visibility; it is about whose voice is heard, whose trauma is acknowledged, and whose resistance becomes a story of change. This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how movies can challenge the patriarchal system and help redefine gender norms in modern Pakistan.

Literature Review

Women and Cinema

Global film studies consistently show that women are underrepresented, stereotyped, or presented through male-focused stories, especially in major sectors such as Hollywood and Bollywood ([Singh & Singh 2025](#); [Yadav & Jha 2023](#); [Khoo et al., 2022](#); [Ramkissoon, 2009](#)). Studies show that even with the rise in “strong female lead” women’s stories are still filtered through patriarchal views and postfeminism that covertly supports male domination ([Sadiq et al., 2025](#)). Global trends also provide a greater context ([Rosenberg 2016](#)) for investigating how Pakistani movies maintain similar structural inequalities, which are frequently shaped by cultural norms, organizational biases, and ideological dominance. Modern Pakistani cinema is shifting in theme, with gender representation, patriarchal criticism, and story resistance becoming more visible ([Sadiq et al., 2025](#)). Scholars have claimed that these changes are inconsistent and frequently symbolic rather than conceptual, but they reflect a larger discussion on gender justice, digital activism, and women’s visibility in public spaces ([Verma & Ansari 2024](#); [Sohail et al., 2020](#)). The revival of Pakistani cinema shows improvement, but many representational trends still draw from basic social norms, especially regarding honor, obedience, and the idealized feminine ([Nizami, 2023](#)).

Underrepresentation of Women in Cinema

A significant amount of recent literature has examined how women are still underrepresented in mainstream media because of their limited roles such as mothers, victims, or moral supporter ([Shahzadi et al. 2023](#); [Khadilkar 2022](#); [Sadia et al. 2022](#)). Additionally, the independence of women is frequently limited by patriarchal

boundaries built within production cultures, even though women play a key role in storytelling plots ([Murtza et al., 2023](#); [Yousaf et al. 2017](#)). The issue of gendered underrepresentation is a reflection of a larger systematic structure that limits experiences of women and is dominated by symbolic, emotional, and physical violence ([Tariq & Husnain, 2025](#)). The patriarchal concept of male leadership is frequently repeated in films ([Topaz et al., 2022](#); [Kiani, 2023](#)) and defend male dominance in the name of honor, or loyalty to family maintain patriarchal authority ([Mansoor & Khalid, 2024](#)). Even in contemporary cinema, women characters are commonly revolve around the danger of male violence and positioned them inside the systems of monitoring and fear cycles; reflecting real social issues hence making feminist film criticism more significant ([Tariq & Husnain, 2025](#); [Shah & Sahito 2023](#)).

Shifts in Pakistan’s Cinema Industry

The literature highlighted that contemporary Pakistani movies has shifted from traditional portrayal of oppressed women to strong female characters focused on resistance especially in movies that deal with systemic injustice, forced marriages, and domestic abuse ([Sadiq et al., 2025](#); [Nizami, 2023](#)). Researchers have also discovered that these movies provide an alternative perspective that questions social beliefs, allowing female characters to express issues and show their independence ([Mansoor & Khalid, 2024](#)). This shift is reflected in women-centered stories like those found in *Khuda key liye*, *Bol*, *Verna*, and *Duktar*, which include characters which challenge patriarchal traditions, challenge religious misunderstandings and regain control over decision-making ([Saleem et al., 2020](#)). The “feminist turn” in Pakistan’s creative fields, where women’s storylines are starting to take the lead, is also reflected in this cinema trend ([Sadiq et al., 2025](#)).

Storytelling techniques of resistance movies

Few studies have specifically examined how dialogues, story framing, and character speech as techniques of storytelling create gendered significance in Pakistani cinema with increasing

focus on women's experiences ([Illo 2025](#); [Noor et al., 2024](#)). According to [Yousaf et al. 2017](#), media discourse is a major factor in strengthening or weakening patriarchal beliefs. However, scholars note that dialogue-based research is still uncommon, especially those that focus on how speech patterns, emotional expression, and story positioning are used to create women's resistance ([Mansoor & Khalid, 2024](#)). Additionally [Mulvey \(2013\)](#) also highlighted the fact that significance is created not just through the visual but also through language choices that represent cultural power dynamics. This shows a significant methodological gap and a lack of theme and dialogue-level analysis in Pakistani film studies.

Research question

1. How do dialogues and scenes in selected Pakistani films portray women's oppression?
2. What themes of patriarchy, silencing, and gendered violence emerge from these films?
3. How do these films represent women's resistance against patriarchal structures?
4. How do cinematic portrayals align with feminist media theory and framing theory?

Theoretical framework

This research uses Feminist film theory, Framing Theory and Violence Theory to find out how contemporary Pakistani cinema represents women oppression and resistance.

Feminist Film Theory

Feminist film theory provides the bases how films represented a woman in oppressive framework ([Wilk 2024](#)). The theory argues that film stories mostly represent women as passive, silent and unimportant to male dominating plots (; [Mulvey 2013](#)). At the same time feminist film theory highlights that how cinema can work as a place of resistance where female reject stereotype and challenge dominated gender norms ([Mulvey & Rogers 2025](#)). This study uses Feminist Film Theory to explore how Khuda Ke Liye, Bol, Verna and Dukhtar challenge and reinforced gendered power system, particularly through character independence, physical freedom, and resistance. Analysing women's oppression on

screen through a feminist view reveals how cinema contributes to changing cultural norms around gender roles and justice since movies are a storytelling medium that reflects social reality ([Zashikhina 2022](#)). Pakistani film scholar also highlights that contemporary movies are increasingly using feminist themes to challenge traditional beliefs ([Sadiq et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, film feminist film theory is directly matches to the purpose of this research, to understand cinema a place of oppression as well as space of resistance for Pakistani women.

Framing Theory

Framing theory explains how media choices, highlights, and organizes specific aspect of reality to shape audience perception ([Entman, 1993](#)). In movie stories framing works through dialogues, camera angles, story development, and focused attention on theme like Honor, shame, patriarchy, and resistance ([Lankhuizen 2025](#)). Pakistani cinema especially modern revival movies, intentionally frame women as either as victim, activist for change, or symbol of collective of suffering ([Sadiq et al., 2025](#)). This research using framing theory to explore how the four selected movies frame women's experience of violence, forced marriages, rape, domestic abuse and identity suppression within larger social, cultural and religion context ([Nwachukwu & Affen 2022](#)). Filmmakers' effects audience empathy and moral judgments through examining dialogues and setting reveals injustice ([Giesenhausen et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, framing theory is important in understanding cinematic storytelling attract audience, provides meaning, and present women struggles as social issues rather than personal tragedies.

Cultivation Theory

Gerbner's cultivation studies, explains how repeated representation of violence shaped audience opinion about danger, social norms and power dynamics ([Gerbner 1998](#)). By analyzing how symbolic violence either normalize or faces systemic inequalities, recent studies expand the theory to movies, earlier considering its relevance to television ([Shah & Sahito 2023](#); [Gerbner et al. 2002](#)). Gendered based violence is frequently

showing in Pakistani cinema as a cultural norm that is established in social structure, such as Honor killing, early marriage, physical assault and domestic abuse. In order to understand how movies use violence as a storytelling tool to reveal patriarchal power, for example Dukhtar use the fear of forced marriage to expose cultural gendered inequalities, while Verna portrays sexual assaults as a misuse of political power. These movies use violence to question social norms rather than glorifying it, which make Gerbner's approach to relevant for analyzing how symbolic violence effects both audience opinion and the emotional storytelling journey ([Akhtar & Rasul, 2025](#)). This theory also supports understanding how repeated image of violence create awareness of Pakistani women's daily situation, connecting social consciousness and cinematic representation ([Scharrer et al., 2022](#)).

Methodology

For this study the researchers employed purposive sampling and selected movies that explicitly challenged patriarchal norms and highlighted the oppression of women ([Shah & Sahito, 2023](#)). Qualitative thematic analysis was utilized to investigate the representation of women's oppression and resistance through dialogues, character interaction, and story scene in four selected movies, Khuda Kay liye (2007), Bol (2011), Verna (2017) and Dukhtar (2014). These movies are frequently cited in substantial number of research studies on gender and cinematic representation ([Sadiq et al., 2025](#)), hence making them significant resource for analyzing the ongoing pattern of patriarchal portrayal and women resistance. The analysis focuses on dialogue-based coding, where specific sentences, recurring expressions, and major conversations are treated as primary data. Following [Braun and Clarke \(2023; 2022\)](#)

Six-step thematic analysis approach involves:

- (1) Familiarization with film scripts and scenes,
- (2) Generating initial codes from dialogues,
- (3) Identifying patterns related to patriarchy, violence, silencing, and agency,

- (4) Reviewing themes,
- (5) Defining and naming themes, and
- (6) Linking the themes to feminist media theory.

Details at the scene level, tone, and character reactions will also be explored to understand how oppression operates within the visual and textual story telling structures of each movie. To ensure the research credibility, codes and themes were reviewed twice at different intervals and thematic consistency was tested against existing feminist cinema literature published within the last five years. The analytical focus of this study was on dialogue, characterization enabled the researchers to identify how cinematic storytelling normalized, challenges or resist injustice. Moreover, this study is not focused to generalize conclusions on Pakistani cinema; instead, it is an attempt to understand how the selected movies depicted women's identities and presentation of conflicts within the socio-cultural context.

Thematic Dialogue analysis of selected movies

Khuda Kay Liye

The movie focuses on forced marriage, religious abuse, patriarchal dominance, and a woman's fight for independence in a male-dominated household. This film has used the building story through presenting an argument and providing counter argument, using this story telling patterns of build the story to challenge and address the established societal norms and patriarchal dominance. The dialogues are also used in a smooth flow to present the forced Marriage and decline of importance of female consent dialogue such as "Meri beti ki izzat ka faisla main karunga." (*I will decide regarding the honor of my daughter*). This indicated how family honour is used to justify control over women's decisions, making female consent meaningless. Counter dialogues such as "Yeh meri zindagi hai, mujhe majboor nahi kiya ja sakta." (*This is my life and nobody can force me to do anything against my free will*) reflecting character's rejection to patriarchal standards establishing Women's resistance. Hence this film include arguments, counter arguments to register Women resistance,

judicial acknowledgment of Women's rights and social change dialogues to acknowledge their rights and struggle against the societal norms. This movie is an effort to reject the prevailing social cultural narrative of considering women as powerless, confused, having zero decision power, and not taking women's consent when deciding her fate. The dialogues in this movies are crafted in a way that negate social opposition by showing systemic support for women consent and independence

Bol (2011)

Bol portrays a patriarchal, authoritarian home where the father's ethical and religious power is used to oppress women showing resistance of the lead character Zainab whose public protest voiced the silence of oppression. This movie produced, directed and written by Shoaib Mansoor again used arguments and counter arguments for the story telling of this movie. Dialogues highlighting the prevailing male dominance in keeping women silent and submissive to their decisions such as the character Hakim Sahab's dialogues to establish the definition of honor and disrespect with dialogues "*Aurat ki zubaan uski haya hoti hai, Woh bigarti hai, jo bolti hai (Women's silence is reflection of her modesty, she losses when she speaks)*". This reflected the basis of patriarchy can be found in this conversation: women's silence is seen as honor. According to research, Pakistani media frequently normalizes obedient and submissive roles for women ([Shahzadi, 2023](#)). This reflects culturally accepted policing of female conversations.

Similarly, the dialogues of resistance by Zainab to counter the argument establishing silence as women's honor, *Agar bolna gunaah hai, toh main gunahgar hi theek,*" (*If voicing on your rights is a sin, then I prefer to be a sinner*). At this point, resistance overcomes fear. Zainab represents feminist resistance by reframing communication as empowerment rather than shame. The change is consistent with feminist cinema claims that patriarchal power is challenged by women's verbal empowerment ([Saleem et al., 2020](#)) Additionally this movie highlighted the patriarchal control over women's life through Hakim Sahib's dialogue where he told his daughter that,

"Tumhari zindagi ka faisla mein karunga." (*I will take decisions related to your life*). The systematic loss of female independence is represented by this single line. It relates to the dominant cultural story that normalizes patriarchal dominance over female agency. The discussion emphasizes institutionalized control, which is consistent with research that demonstrates patriarchal decision-making as the source of gendered oppression ([Yousaf et al. 2017](#)) Again the same has been rejected by the character Zainab her dialogue "*Main bol rahi hoon, kyun ke chup rehne se zindagi barbaad hoti hai.*" (*I am voicing, since silence destroys life*). Her last act of disobedience connects voice to justice and survival. It's her resistance to the prevailing norms and culture of dominance and exploitation. This movie highlighted the significance of voicing for your rights clearly can save you from adverse consequence of being silent and submissive to decisions having potential to damage you. In feminist cinema theory, "voice" is framed as freedom, where communication turns into resistance ([Mansoor & Khalid, 2024](#)).

Verna (2017)

Verna highlights social injustices that maintain male dominance as well as sexual assault. The legal, political, and societal systems that silence survivors are shown through lead character Sara's conversations such as "*insaaf hasil karna padta hai, jab insaaf milta nahin*" (*You have to struggle for justice when it is denied*). This reflected systemic flaws in judicial systems. Also established that Women frequently face systemic barriers in gendered violence, which is consistent with feminist arguments. This statement depicted continues struggle and hardships of women to get justice. This movie depicted the struggle between power, politics and justice which is evident from the dialogue of the character of Governor's son "*Koi mujhe haath bhi nahi laga sakta.*" (*No one has the power to even touch me*). This statement represents the power of social elites and highlights how authoritative position can protect criminals It not only promotes individual behavior but also systematic patriarchy. The systematic injustice also reflected in lead characters Sara's conversation with the policeman

while registering her protest against the treatment of women as sexual assault victim, "Aap logon ko sirf report chahiye hoti hai, insaaf nahin." (You only need reports instead of justice). This is a clear criticism of societal indifference which draws attention to the bureaucratic decline of women's rights and state failure. Similar media portrayals of judicial systems that maintain inequality have been identified in literature (Nizami, 2023). Feminist theories that see women as active actors challenging power systems are consistent with this last statement "Mein darney wali nahi." (I am not who get scared) It portrays resistance as transformational rather than reactive.

Dukhtar (2014)

Dukhtar is a story of women resistance, courage and rejection of the prevailing patriarchal oppression, forced child marriages, and violence. The main character of Allah Rakhi mother of ten-year-old girl child, fled with her daughter to protect her from child marriage promised by the father of the child in settlement for peace. Allah Rakhi, the mother: questioned this settlement and rejected sacrificing her daughter to resolve conflicts and resist the pressure "Main apni beti ki qurbani nahi karne doongi." (I don't let you sacrifice my daughter to resolve your issues). The storytelling again challenges the patriarchal dominance over women lives through counter arguments, such as in response to the dialogue of tribal leader Daulat Khan: "Larki ki zindagi us ke baap ki amanat hai (Girl's life is pledged to his father) Allah Rakhi told her daughter that they are running away because our lives are ours (Hum bhag rahey hein kyun k hamari Zindagi hamari hey)." These dialogues reflected patriarchal ownership of women where they viewed them as something that may be negotiated. According to Shahzadi et al., (2023), literature confirms the repetition of such characters in Pakistani media to represent rural patriarchy. In response to this dialogue this movie presented strong resistance of women who ignored life threatening consequence of standing up for their rights. The strong statement of independence that represents women taking responsibility for their own lives, is the example of such resistance, which is necessary for feminist

representation Following feminist perspectives on slow structural transformation, freedom is a process rather than a single moment.

The thematic dialogue analysis of selected movies is aligned with the theoretical framework designed for this study. It examines the ways it challenges the already prevailing gendered misrepresentations. The stories framed the resistance of women and also attempted to cultivate that women are not weak, they have voice and are independent to select what is right for them

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of dialogue, character development, and story frameworks in Khuda Kay Liye, Bol, Verna, and Dukhtar: revealed a consistent pattern that modern Pakistani film equally exposes women's oppression and create new areas of resistance. The data set is classified into four related themes that used to find the logical answers of the research questions

RQ1 Gender Oppression in Story Conflicts: That remains

The main tensions in all four movies stems from firmly established patriarchal control, justified through family, cultural standards, and religious interpretations. The daily oppression that many Pakistani women experienced is reflected in Bol, where Hakim's authoritarian control over the home and the monitoring of women depicted domestic patriarchy and becomes both the site and instrument of violence. Similarly, Khuda Kay Liye highlighted the psychological and social consequences of male-dominated decision-making through Mary's forced marriage and consequent social dishonor which is framed as societal pressure. Male characters frequently define violence as morality or protection in dialogues defined under the terms "control," "obedience," and "Honor." This is consistent with Nizami (2023) observation that even contemporary films storytelling on conflicts can be influenced by patriarchal power. As a result, these movies reflect the gender inequality that exists in the real world and has been well

documented in research literature available on Pakistani films.

RQ2. The Politics of Representation, Voice, and Silence

The selected films presented a conflict and confusion between speaking up and remaining silent; more specifically in the portrayal of female characters. For example, the little girl's silence during forced marriage talks in *Dukhtar* represents systemic silence, supporting [Shahzadi et al./ \(2023\)](#) claim that Pakistani media frequently restricting women's verbal power. However, a notable change has been observed while analyzing communication patterns that the women's speech has been evolved and framed as a form of rebellious weapon and resistance. For example, Sara from *Verna* publicly challenged political authority, whereas Zainab in *Bol* frequently challenged the moral authority. The verbal resistance indicators highlighted by [Noor \(2024\)](#) on the rise of progressive gender storylines in Pakistani films exactly connected with these types of situations. Consequently, these films showcased the complex representations where voice becomes a cinematic strategy for maintaining control while silence symbolizes surrender.

RQ3. Transforming Female Action: From Victims to Resistance Heroes

The transformation of women from passive victims to active actors is the analysis's most significant theme emerged from the thematic analysis of dialogues of all selected movies. This transition is aligned with the study of [Saleem et al., \(2020\)](#) which highlighted that contemporary films emphasized women as story protagonists, contrasting the previous history of Pakistani film narratives where heroines were relegated to supporting parts. In *Verna*, Sara's character's personality embodies self-defense; strategic resistance; and counter-narrative. By rejecting to remain silent and reclaiming justice outside of organizational limitations, she not challenges the gendered violence but also modified film narrative. Similarly, Mary in *Khuda Kay Liye* resisted the prevailing social, cultural and tribal

interpretation through logical and legal arguments. Overall, the selected films challenged many prevailing social and cultural gendered representation and myths and addressed the issues of honor, silencing women voice in curtain of different customs. Additionally, these movies framed the significance of women voice and their resistance to such prevailing misconceptions in a very impressive and effective manner.

RQ4. Partial Empowerment and Structural Restrictions

Although resistance against oppression is evident, the findings also highlighted a substantial gap towards accomplishment of complete empowerment. Women's independence is still framed within established patriarchal or governmental frameworks, even when they resist those. For example, Sara's success in *Verna* occurs outside of the judicial system, indicated institutional failure, while Zainab's strong disagreement leads to tragedy in *Bol*. This aligned with [Nizami \(2023\)](#) who also observed that while the contemporary films questions patriarchy; are often limited by cultural and financial models of film industry. As framing theory suggested that media texts present limited freedom often shaped by social norms, this research identified that women resistance is also often framed within acceptable social and moral limitations. Consequently, empowerment appears to be conditional in Pakistani cinema highlighting both progression and ongoing limitations. The results are consistent with the theoretical foundations of the study, connecting Feminist film theory, framing and cultivation framework that successfully builds the narrative of women's resilience and resistance against the prevailing societal, cultural norms and values. Additionally, these movies are taken as an attempt to cultivate a certain level of acceptance and normalization of women's voices and their right to say no to those customs and values that may limit their freedom of expression, independence, and quest for justice. Hence, these findings explain how movies create moral, cultural, and political frames that influence how viewers perceive women's roles in real world.

When taken as a whole, the results highlighted how Pakistani cinema provides a cultural platform for the representation, opposition, and occasionally transformation of oppression.

Conclusion

This research investigated how women's oppression is portrayed in modern Pakistani cinema and how some films, Khuda Kay Liye, Bol, Verna, and Dukhtar, create stories of both oppression and resistance. The research's theme and dialogue-based analysis revealed that by highlighting women lived experiences and mentioning the structural gender-based injustice, Pakistani filmmakers are progressively challenging the prevailing concept of patriarchy. The selected movies indicated female characters that actively negotiate power, resist violence, and challenge the prevailing social norms; in contrast to past film industry traditions that often-portrayed women as passive, mute, or secondary figures. This is consistent with the feminist film theory which highlighted the significance of women in reclaiming the right position and autonomy that is required. Further to this study also revealed that the selected films carefully challenge the prevailing patriarchal frames by providing alternate narratives of resistance. Also positioned those alternative frames in ways to shape public opinion and enable them to understand gender inequality as a systemic problem established in familial, cultural, and social structures rather than as individual events. This is also supported by framing theory and cultivation theory that the depiction of resistance against the emotional, structural and physical violence and injustice in movies gradually normalize the everyday struggle faced by Pakistani women.

Overall, this study underscore that contemporary Pakistani cinema is playing an important part in shaping public opinion on gender by providing giving alternate narrative of resistance. Though the gap is still present, the production of such films indicated an increasing dedication to representing women as independent individuals whose sufferings and strengths reflect broader social transformations. These transition cinematic narrative building formats indicate that

movies are still a powerful tool for social change, gender awareness, and cultural transformation.

Limitations

The limitations of this study stem from its narrow focus on four films: Dukhtar, Bol, Verna, and Khuda Kay Liye. Although these are significant movies, they are not representative to the full diversity of contemporary Pakistani cinema industry. Also, it is pertinent to mention that the analysis is mainly focused on thematic and dialogue-based interpretation, hence excluding factors including audience reaction, production limitations and the directors' perspective. Additionally, it lacks the intersectional categories including class, ethnicity, sect, and rural-urban differences that could provide a deeper awareness of women's oppression. Further to this, the study utilizes qualitative analysis, which may introduce researchers' subjectivity even with cross-verification with the existing literature. Finally, a more thorough comparison with other South Asian film industries is limited due to the paucity of recent scholarly research on Pakistani cinema.

Recommendations

1. The analysis underscores that Pakistani cinema has to adopt a more intentional and consistent approach to represent women beyond victimization and patriarchal oppression.
2. Inclusion of more women participation as script writers, editors, and creative leads in the production process.
3. Film boards and regulatory organizations should support films that emphasize women's independence, professional identities, and decision-making positions instead of recurring stories of suffering in order to promote content diversity.
4. To ensure that representations of social problems like gender violence, mobility limitations, and family systems are accurate but not harmful, future productions should invest in research-based storytelling. This should include intersectional analysis, audiences' feedback studies, and comparisons with regional sectors like Bangladesh, Iran, and India should all be included in the research. National film education

curriculum must support gender-sensitive media training to ensure that future filmmakers are prepared to create more diverse, accountable, and empowering stories.

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