

Role of mass media in Pakistan in promoting Health Ageing

[Faizan Rasool 2020]

Hypothesis

The media is negatively affecting the perceptions of old people via negative stereotypes, stories, misery porn and general disingenuous attitude about the value of old age folk.

Abstract

We examine editorials, TV dramas and movies to observe the perceptions that media has of Old people (60+ years of age). Additionally, we check for the frequency of coverage of old age related problems (gerontological) covered in the said media. While it is clear that in the context of Pakistan that the elderly is resected in the culture, it is not so clear in the economic side of things. So far, we have found that the elderly is used as a prop to push the plot forward, rather than as their own people.

In many advertisements, several harmful tropes are used; burdens, sources of wisdom (while actually powerless), 'parent' role, and elderly-as-a-plot point.

These kinds of harmful stereotypes have proliferated media for the past few decades and don't seem to be going away anytime soon.

The problem is that there is now a tilt for tv to not show non-favoured groups. Such groups include minorities, old people and politically 'irrelevant' people. Old people in particular are almost always considered to be the 'invisible' problem; they exist in small but significant populations, require attention but they are attended so poorly that it seems they'd much rather be forgotten.

For example, a popular adage for old people in terms of economic help is that they are 'not asking for much'. While on the surface this appears to be a sentiment of humility and even frugality, in truth, it is used to justify minimal health and monetary compensations dealt out to the elderly folk.

Economics of Old Age Perception

A very common trope and role of the elderly is to be stand-ins for money, wisdom and/or plot, with sometimes a little bit of ableism and "elderly are burdens" bigotry mixed in.

This one dimensional and cynical use of old people is on par with the perceived notion that they are burdens, or at least unwelcome but begrudging ones. The 'burden' perception comes from the fact that they are primarily an economic one.

One issue that stands out economically is one of pensions. Pakistan has been a country of historically poor coverage of employment and unemployment benefits, rendering pensions magnitude And coverage crucial to continued survival.

The problem here is that there is the pension system is not exactly the fairest there is. A lot of the coverage is focused on the government servants. Therefore, economic issues of the old aged folk are a very near and dear problem that has persisted in society for decades.

It seems pertinent to mention now that culturally, the elderly has a great and revered place in the structure of society. They Are seen as guides in terms of wisdom, knowledge, tradition and religion.

However, despite this, a troubling trend emerges of economic destitution and neglect; this major issue is reflected in the constant push for better pension, unemployment and health coverage.

This begs the question: why is it that the elderly, while culturally so respected and relevant, so economically irrelevant?

The answer is that there are prevailing primary economic stereotypes that don't value old people at the basic economic level.

The following stereotypes are unearthed with a review of media, expert opinions etc,

1. The burden
2. The father//mother role
3. The wise parents
4. Desperate old people
5. 'funny' grandparents
6. Money frauds
7. Family parasite monarch/patriarch
8. Con grandpa/ma

The above is non-exhaustive list; we also found that there is a huge problem of AGEISM in media and marketing.

Ageism and the problem of intentional malicious policymaking

Ageism lends to the idea that those that are older are, simply put, inferior to the younger people. This shows itself via several versions as showcased below.

Personal ageism – ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices on the part of individuals that are biased against persons or groups based on their age.

Institutional ageism – missions, rules, and practices that discriminate against individuals and/or groups because of their older age. **Intentional ageism** – ideas, attitudes, rules or practices that are carried out with the knowledge that they are biased against persons or groups based on their older age. This category includes practices that take advantage of the vulnerabilities of older persons.

Unintentional (or inadvertent) ageism – ideas, attitudes, rules or practices that are carried out without the perpetrator's awareness that they are biased against persons or groups based on their older age. All four types of ageism can be found in the media and marketing today.

This leads to policymaking and decisions that adversely affect the populations that are negatively perceived.

In the case of old people, the effect is that their resources are limited and opportunities are lessened for a better life. The institutional ageism is showcased via more personal feelings of people, viewing old people as burdens and waste of resources that could be spent elsewhere. The dependence problem in this very personal dimension causes institutional anti-old people rules, such as lack of accessibility options and unhelpful systems of 'help', as well as limiting resources for those in difficulty often via a very low ceiling or via bureaucratic red tape.

Ageism also affects the policymakers choice of social protection in the long term. In particular, as mentioned, the idea of old people needing 'less resources than others' is a direct result of

Health Ageing: What it is and why is it important?

Evolving Concepts of Health Ageing in comparison and contrast to the stereotypes such as Ageism, Older Persons as victims, older persons, particularly women, as self-effacing members of the household making sacrifices for the family by compromising on their own needs for the family, older persons as burden, older persons with diminishing value for the society, needed only occasionally, instrumentalizing older persons in the process, class based older person stereotypes etc.

WHO defines Healthy ageing as the following¹: *"the process of developing and maintaining the **functional ability** that enables **wellbeing** in older age"*

Furthermore, WHO emphasizes that the following needs must be met:

- basic needs;
- personal agency
- mobility
- relationships
- to contribute to society

As one can see, the problem here is that in the modern system, some needs are not being met at all.

The health of older folk is sometimes so poor that they are not able to be functional and mobile. Additionally, due to the historically low coverage of the pension system in Pakistan, the basic needs of old age people are not met.

This lack of healthy ageing presents a unique problem in the case of Pakistan; what should be the priority?

Should the basic needs be met first, or agency? The answer most popular among policymakers is basic needs. The pension system is in need of an overhaul and its coverage should be extended.

Subjective wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing is highly dependent on the concepts, priorities, circumstances and past experiences of the subjects under study. This forces an interpretation only within a dynamic context. Indeed, a

¹ <https://www.who.int/ageing/healthy-ageing/en/#:~:text=Healthy%20Ageing%20and%20functional%20ability,they%20have%20reason%20to%20value.>

prefabricated policy pre-determined in its design philosophy, conceptual understanding and implementation will fail to satisfy all satisfaction criteria (per subjective wellbeing).

Therefore, to provide meaningful insights to policymaking, the studies must be done at the individual level within contexts, so that both individual information and contextual situations provide better results and understanding of needs and requirements.

This approach could be a focus on a more person-centered level via information of what aspects the elderly hold important and vital to their overall wellbeing. This effort would help in better resource allocations to pension systems, assisted living, old people homes and even hospitals, ultimately improving overall health and wellbeing (subjectively and objectively).

There are still problems however: There is its lack of quantitative measurement. It is, after all, subjective. No two people can have the same subjective wellbeing as their backgrounds etc would differ. Far too many parameters to account for which makes proxies nigh impossible.

The main point of subjective wellbeing is to measure wellbeing qualitatively at a given level of care. Increases or decreases will change the assessment. It is also unrealistic to expect subjective wellbeing to improve if circumstances deteriorate and/or the care being given is wholly inadequate.

All in all, subjective well being is a measure of personal feeling of care, rather than any solid quantitative conclusion drawn for the effectiveness of care in and of itself.

The Power of mass media

Together they form the key informers/shapers of the public opinion, watched by the legislatures, judiciary and bureaucracy to help improve the lot of older persons in Pakistan. [Examples of media power outcome]

The media psychology defines mass media influence as effect on actions, manner and en-masse individual and audience opinion-making.

Negative mass media influence can have dire consequences, leading people to crime, violence, mental and physical illness and (in some cases) disorders etc. with severe outcomes. Mobs have been formed on mere rumours, which has led to lynching and property destruction. Children killing people by using guns, or due to some occult stuff (like the case of the Slenderman girl murder²) due to negative influence if mass media.

Does this mean the Mass Media only Influence Audiences Negatively?

Mass media isn't inherently bad; it is the manner in which it is used, however, that is the most important. Positive perceptions are key to mass movements in this day and age. Positive media influence does exist, such as the way people come together during disasters, mass movements such as Black Lives Matter in America, and general community efforts for good outcomes (e.g. food distribution in Vietnam during the Covid 19 lockdown).

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slender_Man_stabbing

Quiz based games, educational programs, travel bloggers, food competitions, sports etc. all engender positivity and happy reactions from people. Mass media can and does have positive effects such as increasing literacy, awareness, news and information about important events, sicknesses and warnings.

The Covid19 lockdown has successfully demonstrated that the Advertisement captured the need for public service messages, warnings and instructions for life during this plague pandemic.

Mass media is spread direct and indirect sources, and everyone comes across a different array of these information bites within media sources- and it goes to show the clearly overt influence of media in society. These all can overall be negative and positive; such is the importance of ythis is that during sensitive events, mass media is banned to prevent confusion and rash decision due to incomplete/lack of information.

How does mass media create impact?

Mass media uses archetypes, stereotypes, events, personalities, criminal activities, heroic acts and other features of human lives to create perceptions and feelings about certain groups of people. For negative use, the negative events are overdone to the point of sensationalism in order to put off the viewer, causing them to view that group negatively. Latinos in America have been known to join gangs, but the media portrays them as trigger-happy non-English cursing violent criminals. Similarly, Black folk in America are shown to be violent, uncouth, and dumb, unable to think for the greater community, and needing to be controlled.

The above examples are rather extreme but the same principal applies- by constantly negative message and forcing viewer to create negative associations, a group is vilified and this is the key to getting anti-group policy through. A racist policy will need the sway of the general public in order to pass the vote.

Old people in Media

Old people in media are often the victims of this; as discussed earlier, there is the general conception of old people as both a burden and a parasite, to the point that policies in place for them are, at best, inadequate, and at worst, missing entirely, leading to misery and in the case of health, death due to lack of medical coverage.

Old people are not shown positively in media, and therefore, mass media needs to do more to show them positively. In particular, the idea of ageing as a good thing- healthy ageing- needs to take root and spread.

Is mass media using its power and efficacy in promoting health ageing in Pakistan?

Analysis: [Why is it happening; what kind of harm is it doing; what would happen if it continues like this? Need to engage with the Serial Writers and the Advertisers]

Failures of old age are often shown via harmful caricatures, tropes and stereotypes in society. This is a direct failure for policymakers too, who have put out policies that, while well-meaning, inadver

Most of these stereotypes ae caricatural manifestations of ageing and could be seen as concretizing the failure of Heath ageing. Some of these character types may exist in the society but reinforcing these stereotypes through media as naturally occurring can occlude the process which leads to these caricatural

personifications of the older persons. In reality, a large number of the older persons can age well, if the media shows that the processes which result in healthy or unhealthy ageing are man-made and the individuals, families and communities can improve these processes, if they were better aware of these processes. If the question of Old Age Neglect and Old Age Violence and older persons job dynamics are given more air space and are treated with sensitivity, the care gap of the older persons created by the poor support of the government [financial protection, health protection and rights protection] and dwindling solidarity/social network support [family, associative life, mosque] would significantly reduce, increasing the old age well-being in Pakistan. You can use the example of TV Serials promoting emancipation of women to prove your point. A lot of thought goes behind the characters which are related in such a way that they continue managing better the process of becoming confident, independent women towards the end of the serial. Health Ageing is not taken up in the same vein as if it was not that important.

Section: Older Persons in Commercials [Treatment of old age and analysis, whether it was helpful in promoting Health Ageing in the country or otherwise]

The problem with commercials is that they are product, not people focused. Therefore, their use of groups of people is often very cynical. This is often the case with small and minority groups. One of these significant groups is of old people.

Section: Salience or otherwise of Old Age policy issues in the print media. [Treatment of old age and analysis, whether it was helpful in promoting Health Ageing in the country or otherwise]

Conclusion:

We need to do more research for the policy- period. Policy is supposed to be done with proper research, but often it feels like the media has created, perhaps inadvertently, stereotypes and tropes so harmful that they give reality to absurd assumptions about old age. This lack of focus on what it actually means to age healthily, to age gracefully where all the needs are met, means that the idea of ageing itself is up for debate. It is shown negatively, as if ageing itself is a loser's prize.

A better overall understanding of healthy ageing would help advertisers, writers, and producers do better with how they characterize and project the old people as a group. Furthermore, the better understanding of healthy ageing would help with the economics of old age- the links of poverty, GDP and old age benefits and pensions would make much more holistic sense (unlike now, where there is little sense and most of the stuff is assumed).

Healthwise, healthy ageing as an understood concept would help in mobilizing the necessary health resources. The bad health is one of the prime reasons why ageing is so difficult is general. Also, the lack of treatment and incidence of psychological disorders and stress induced NCDs. If the social protection is enhanced, it would positively impact all the three channels

Another dimension of this issue is that in many cases, despite the poverty the results/impacts mentioned above are not strongly present if the individual concerned has stronger social networks, including the

religious bonding and beliefs. Therefore, the literature says, while talking about the Old Age Well Being, both the subjective feelings of well being and objective conditions which lower the well being should be considered. In other words 'worry' and poverty do not automatically decrease the well being. In this regard, another issue becomes important/relevant i.e., the linkage of poverty with community solidarity. Does an increase in poverty results in decrease in social support? Here the role of philanthropy becomes important. Charity is a certain kind of solidarity. In-kind social support in the case of Older Persons plays a very important part. A better working between the state responsibility, social support and philanthropy [which is a kind of income support] can produce better results. The Media, projecting the social reality, can become that evidence, which demonstrates that it is the absence of the social support, which is emerging as a key factor in lowering down the Old Age Well Being. In popular imagination, our society is now caring less of others, a phenomenon, if true, hits the Older Persons disproportionately. There are two aspects to this: a] what are the implications of this increasing phenomenon and how to address these implications and b] why is it happening and how to slow it down? A related assertion is that this phenomenon is more prevalent in cities than in rural areas. Mass media provides its own answers to these questions, which could be influenced by the hunches/biases or half-baked ideas of the authors. This is directly impacting the Health Ageing negatively as your analysis of the Stereotypes has shown. If your evidence points to that direction, you could very well conclude that mass media is a part of the problem when it comes to the care of Older Persons in Pakistan.

Coverage of Old age people in Media: An insight about the depiction of older people in Newspapers, TVCs, Dramas and Movies

Introduction

This section gives a detailed analysis of all Pakistan's mediums in order to analyze how old age people are portrayed. We will be focusing on Newspaper op-eds, TVCs, Dramas and Movies. Each section discusses how and what approach was undertaken to conduct the analyses and the results are then discussed.

Newspaper Op-eds

This section gives an overview of how much coverage and focus is given to elderly people and their issues in the newspapers' editorials and opinions.

In Pakistan, the people over the age of 60 comprise 7% of the total population. But they have always been underrepresented by all forms of media including newspaper editorials. This study aims at having a holistic view about how much and how frequently old people and their issues are being discussed and highlighted in the newspaper Op-eds section, furthermore, how older people of Pakistani society are portrayed and what topics and issues are mostly discussed in newspapers.

To achieve this objective, three newspapers, two English and one Urdu newspapers are taken under consideration. Time under consideration was Jan-March 2020. All section under the Editorial including opinions, editorials and news posts were taken under consideration.

Research Plan

Newspaper Name	No. of Articles each day	Technical Criteria	Content Criteria
Dawn	07	Daily Newspaper	Editorials and Opinions: Article will be selected if it considers older people of or over the age of 60. And considers health (including sickness, ability to function, health promotion) in some way OR social and/or health services, or their retirement issues, pension issues, stereotyping about older people, how they are conceived in the society, their present situation, old homes situation in Pakistan. And anything else which in anyway related to the elderly.
The News	16		
Jang	10		

The portrayals of older people in a country's media can also be influenced by its demographics and the specific details of its healthcare system, its societal behavior and stereotypes which are associated with them.

In Pakistan, only 13% of its total population is a newspaper reader. And each newspaper has on average 7 editorials daily. Our objective is to analyze all these editorials for the period of Jan-Mar 2020 to get the idea about the coverage of topic.

In our society, where most of the population is economically struggling, we find it a common practice that the elder members of the families are being neglected and often considered as an extra burden to the earner. As they can't contribute financially, and in some cases, are physically dependent as well, the older people face harsh, impolite and disrespectful attitudes. In this scenario, media can play a significant role in developing a sense of care and empathy towards the elders that they are not a useless part of society and they are and should be treated equally;

Even in the public places like government offices, hospitals, banks etc. we see several examples where the older people are mistreated and disrespected. So this makes a viable question about media which can play a vital role in highlighting the issues and bringing them in the knowledge of higher authorities. A course correction of societal behavior may be derived through media.

Literature also suggests that older people are mostly neglected by the print media namely in Newspapers³ (Rozanova et al., 2006). However, newspaper portrayals of older people have been identified as more negative than in other media forms: loneliness is often presented as an inseparable part of old age (Uotila et al., 2010) and older people are presented as frail, infirm, and dependent (Fealy et al., 2012) as well as a burden and non-contributors to society (Martin et al., 2009). Thus, older people are portrayed as constituting a weak, passive "fourth age" (Rozanova, 2010; Uotila et al., 2010).

However, older people are still underrepresented in the media in terms of the actual population in different parts of the world (Kessler et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2006; Raman et al., 2008)⁴.

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4176674/>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4176674/>

Situation of Pakistan's Newspapers' Op-Eds

After reviewing the relevant literature and conducting a pilot research of Pakistan's major Newspapers, we can conduct our findings in the below table:

Coverage of old age people in Pakistan's Newspapers' Op-eds Jan – Mar 2020

Newspapers	Total Articles examined (No. of articles*no days in a month)* total No. of months	Relevant Articles found	Type of article	Name of article	Date of publication	Average Frequency of topic repetition during the period under consideration
Dawn	630	01	Editorial	We, the 1.21pc	31 Jan 2020	Nil
The News	1440	08	Newsposts	1. Pensions for widows	February 7, 2020	7 days
				2. Despondent pensioners	February 8, 2020	
				3. EOBI delay	February 13, 2020	
				4. EOBI clarification	February 17, 2020	
				6. Wise decision	February 22, 2020	
				7. Pension raise	March 8, 2020	

				5. Pension issues	March 10, 2020	
				8. Federal insurance	March 27, 2020	
Jang	900	03	Editorial	1.Maa se Maasi tak	19 Feb. 2020	10-20 days
				2.Buzurgon ka khayal rakhen	1 st March 2020	
				3.Babon ko darana band karen	30 th March 2020	
Total articles	≈3000	12				

The above table is a detailed visualization of our pilot research about coverage of older people in newspapers' op-eds. The newspapers under consideration are among those which have one of the highest circulation in the country thus are mostly read by the newspaper readers.

Out of total almost 3000 examined articles, we could only found 12 articles which were relevant to our study topic that is only 12 articles were discussing old age people or their related issues. However, the topics under discussion were not very widely scoped. The relevant articles which were found, mostly talked about the pension issues.

Dawn covered the topic only once during the consideration period. The article talked about the issues faced by the pensioners aged 75+ and how EOBI neglects their concerns.

8 news posts were found from The News. Most of them also talked about the EOBI and pension issues. The frequency of news posts was considerate but they only highlighted one issue.

Jang published 3 articles which talked about the elderly and their concerns. One editorial named "Maa se Maasi Tak" talked about how some people treat their old parents consider them a burden for them. Other article named " Buzurgon Ka Khayal Rakhen" talked about the legislation regarding old age people in Pakistan and constitution of a Commission which will enforce the laws regarding violation and discrimination about the elderly. The other article named "Baabon ko Darana band kren" was a general discussion about how much people are discussing the vulnerability of elderly towards Covid-19.

None of the editorials however, discussed and highlighted the stereotyping and ageism related to the old age people. Their major concerns regarding health, social issues, economic issues, discriminatory and disrespectful family and societal behaviors.

Newspaper is one of the handiest medium used by the masses for awareness. Its Op-eds can play an imminent role in creating an awareness regarding the stereotypes and issues and concerns of older people. Yet, it is evident that there is underrepresentation of the topic and out of 3000, only 12 editorials talked about them.

TV Commercials/Ads

TVC or television commercial is a form of advertisement that is done through television and it is one of the major and widely used form of advertising a product, service or an idea. The amount of time given to each

television advertisement varies from company to company and product or product. So different channels allocate different timings to telecast these advertisements.

Advertisement is not only a great form to reach wider audience but it also is a great place to make competitors well aware of the company's presence in the market.

The world's first television commercial was aired for the Bulova Watch Company. The ad was only ten seconds long, cost between \$4 and \$9 to create, and was seen by about 4,000 people in New York (Mertes, 2020). With only 1% of U.S. homes having a TV set at the time, the Bulova ad didn't necessarily mean anything big for sales. Still, close to 4,000 people saw the commercial, and it completely revolutionized both television and advertising. Other businesses like Procter & Gamble, General Mills, and Sun Oil Company (who eventually became Mobil) soon followed suit. From there, there was no going back. Our favourite shows were going to be interrupted by commercials for the rest of time. (Mertes, 2020)

In UK, the first TV ad broadcast went on air on ITV on September 22, 1955, advertising Gibbs SR toothpaste. In Asia, the first TV ad broadcast appeared on Nippon Television in Tokyo on August 28, 1953, advertising Seikosha (subsequently Seiko); it also displayed a clock with the current time.

Analysis of Pakistan's Commercials

In order to have an insight about how commercial advertisements portray older people, we have analyzed 15 Pakistani ads. The time period under consideration was from Jun- August 2020. From the selected sample of ads, those ads were collected which showed any old age person or any content that is related to older people. . The advertisements includes those of Unilever, Kia Sportage, Sunridge foods, Ufone, Dettol, diamond Supreme form, Ahmed foods, state life, EFU life insurance, Ubl Insurance and Engro Pakistan limited.

TV Commercials broadcasted on Pakistan's channels and their coverage of old age people (June-Aug 20)

Company Name	Product/ ad description	Total No. of People	Total No. of Old age people	Gender	Total time of ad (Min:sec.)	Screen timing for elderly (In Seconds)	Image
Unilever	Following the SOPs related to Covid-19	50+	3	Males=2 Females= 1	1:49	05	Concerned and informed citizens taking care for Covid-19 SOPs.
Kia Sportage	New Car Model	02	01	Male	00:39	15	A friendly father
Kia Sport age Ad	Independence Day TVC by Sportage Kia Motors 2020	02	01	Female	00:25	10	Kind and positive old lady
Sunridge	Honoring the good people	8-10	02	Male	1:09	15	Typical retired old persons

	of Pakistan in Covid context						
Ufone Ad	Ufone Jashn e Azadi TVC 2020	50+	01	Male	1:00	05	A patriotic and religious person
Dettol Ad	Independence Day Song 2020	50+	01	Male	3:00	05	A street vendor who is taking care for Covid - 19 SOPs.
Diamond Supreme Form Ad	Diamond Supreme Foam Pakistan Independence Day TVC 2020	50+	01		2:59	01	A working labor
Ahmed foods Ad	Azaadi Mubbarak TVC 2020	15-20	02	Male=01 Female=01	2:26	02	A loving couple having their own time together.
Easy Paisa	Jashn e Azadi TVC by The Bionic Films 2020	50+	05	Male	1:42	05	Enjoying cricket altogether
State Life Insurance Ad	Life Insurance	5-6	01	Female	2:39	10	An old lady undergoing her medical treatment with her son by her side.
Jubilee Life Ad	Hum Insurance Nibhatay Hain TVC – Health	8-10	02	Males	00:24	10	Unconditionally loving father
EFU Life Ad	Life Insurance	01	01	Female	00:18	16	A caring mother who opted for insurance for her son
UBL Insurers Limited Ad	(Mobile Insurance via UBL Digital App)	6-8	01	Male	00:43	01	A concerned old person
Engro Pakistan Limited Ad	Food and fertilizers	50+	03	Male	00:41	02	Hardworking farmers

Mughal Steel	Earth quake resistant steel bars	10	03	Male= 2 Female=1	1:07	50	Self-relied old age couple
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The table above shows a detailed picture of how old age people are covered in TV commercials. Although almost all the commercials portrayed a positive image and no significant stereotyping was associated with the older people, yet there was immense underrepresentation of the older people. On average, the ads under consideration lasted for about 1.21 minutes, and in this time, almost 16 seconds roughly, were given to the older people. This shows that the elderly are never the priority for TVCs. This is because of the obvious fact that the media only wants to show the young and lively as this is their selling point.

But, in order to have an equal media representation of old age people on all the platforms, it is crucial to increase the screen timing and higher inclusion of older people in TVCs. This will not only give the older people their due share to have an equal representation and also highlight their issues and concerns in a more powerful and impactful way.

After TVCs, the next section discusses the situation of Pakistan's dramas regarding the representation of old age people.

Pakistan's Dramas

This section discusses how Pakistan's dramas portray old age people. Main focus will be on older characters, their characterization, their screen presence, stereotyping them and their overall representation in the drama genre. For our baseline analysis, we have taken two Pakistani dramas namely Alif and Sheher e zaat.

ALIF

Alif is a drama written by reknown Pakistani veteran writer Umera Ahmed. Directed by Haseeb Hasan. The drama is based on the idea of how a human finds Allah. The drama explains the journey of a person named Momin who is extremely into the worldly affairs having no idea about the journey towards Allah. Our focus character for this drama is Momin's grandfather who is a calligrapher by profession and a person who is extremely close to Allah and Momin's mentor and guider in his journey towards Allah.

The drama shows that Momin is a highly acclaimed and successful director and thinks himself as the king of the industry who can make or break any artist. He conceives his success in this and considers he has everything a man could ask for. His Grandfather, however is not impressed by his success at all. He thinks that Momin is totally involved into worldly affairs and this is not the success one should be looking for. He tries to make him understand that he should start exploring the path that leads towards Allah. But Momin at this point is unable to understand.

The drama's supporting characters are portrayed in a well manner where all the incidents involving Momin let him think about his grandfather's teachings. With time, he starts understanding what his grandfather was trying to make him realize.

Grandfather's character in this drama is a great example of how old age people should be portrayed in the media. There was no stereotyping attached with the character and no visual ageism was depicted

throughout. The character was strong enough to have his own individualization and an impactful personality which eventually led the main character to mend his ways.

To conclude that we can say we that most of the data analyzed showed that old age people are given less coverage than youth. There are no dramas in which old character is a main character. "Alif" is one of the kind of drama that shows the character of old person who is a calligrapher is closer to religion and is spiritual. He was kind, concerned and was still working doing both teaching and household chores at very old age. He maybe above 70 but he was still doing his work showing he was ailing a bit but still tried to work so he won't feel alone. He used to live alone in Turkey and he earned from his skill.

SHEHER E ZAAT

Sheher e Zaat is a drama based on a girl named Falak played by Mahira Khan. She is a modern day girl having an ignorant and go Getty behaviour and is more into materialist aspects of life. The most prominent supporting character of the drama is of Falak's Nani played by veteran actress Samina Peerzada. Nani is a pious and religious woman who is quite close to Allah and has a totally different perspective about life as compared to modern day Falak. Nani's character is a perfect visualization of how our society's elders are and how they are respected but are never listened to and are not considered important in decision making. Nani is always giving life lessons to her granddaughter Falak and blames her daughter for not correctly bringing up her daughter.

Falak is a self-obsessed and proud girl who is very much into herself. She is studying arts and sculpture making and considers this as her passion. Her Nani tells her that this is a Shirk and she must do something else. Nani's character is quite knowledgeable and she can foresee where her granddaughter is heading. So she is quite worried about her and constantly tries to make her understand so that she may mend her ways.

The concept of sculpture making and worshipping the idols has been beautifully crafted in the drama. Nani warns Falak that she must leave this field because sculpture making is prohibited in Islam. She beautifully explains how humans at first create sculptures and then start worshipping these idols and how these sculptures delves humans into self-love which is harmful.

When Falak experiences a rejection from the man whom she has loved the most, that is the turning point of the drama. She realises that despite having all the materialistic luxuries in her life, she still lacks something in her life. She comes to know that life is not about fulfilling her wildest dreams and wants but finding Allah and obeying Him.

Nani's role has been portrayed in a very positive way such that she is always there giving life lessons to both her daughter and granddaughter. The modern day parents of Falak consider Nani as lady with old perceptions and thinks her as a misfit in today's modern life exactly how our society believes about them. But their knowledge and teachings are eventually for betterment, as highlighted in the drama.

Another important aspect that was highlighted in drama is the aspect of religion and closeness to Allah. Nani's character was shown to be very close to Allah as compared to the present generations who were not bothered by this at all. This shows a stereotype about elderly people that only they are closer to Allah. For this specific drama, this scenario works but in general, we just can't generalize and associate this religion aspect to elderly only.

Drama also highlights the importance of parents' role in upbringing a child and their carelessness may destroy a child's life. Falak's character is shown to be a mishandled child who never listens to anyone and has her own say in every matter. This spontaneous attitude of her lets her experience the worst in her life. Had her parents given her values and teachings just like Nani did, her life would have been completely changed.

We can sum up our discussion with the point that old age people and their teachings are in reality ignored by most in our society. They are considered orthodox and out dated and are not taken seriously. The drama professionally demonstrates how Nani's teaching were ignored and eventually the girl suffered.

Such positive characterization and high screen presence of elderly is hardly seen in Pakistani dramas. There are a few examples where we see strong characters written for elderly people. Sheher e Zaat is one of those examples where the elderly are portrayed as a significant individual who has her own identity and has an impactful personality which constantly tries to protect and teach her daughter and granddaughter.

Pakistan's Movies

This section discusses the situation and portrayal of older people in Pakistan's movies. Movies are comparatively shorter and more brief compared to dramas, so here our only focus was how much screen presence and strong characterization is given to the older people and are depicted exactly the way the reality is? Movies under consideration are Punjab nahi jaun gi and Cake.

Punjab Nahin Jaun Gi

Punjab nahi jaun gi is a movie based on strong relations between two families who are family friends since very long. One landlord family belongs to Faisalabad Punjab having rich Punjabi and desi culture where education is still not given the due importance and most of the members are not very educated. The other family belongs to Karachi with much more modern outlook and more educated and open minded outlook. Both families have strong bonding up to the level that neither of them rejects others' opinions.

The reason for taking this movie under analysis is that the movie portrays strong characterization and imminent screen presence of old age people throughout. Both families have one grandparent namely dada ji and bebo ji who are the most respectable and most important members of the family.

The characters have powerful individuality and influencing roles where they are the final decision makers of the family. Their grandchildren are so close to them because of the love and affection they have for each other.

Unlike most of the dramas and movies, where old age people are neither given much screen presence nor significant roles, this movie is a good landmark in this regard to highlight how elderly should be treated. Media in this way can significantly present and build a positive image of how the society should treat their elders and what respect and importance they deserve.

In today's society where media is the most influential medium in the society, its pertinent to present the old age people in this positive way so that the representation of the old age people may significantly be improved in an impactful way.

CAKE-The Movie

Cake is a comedy-drama movie that revolves around a family. This movie is a perfect blend of love, argue, anger, despair and bounding within a family. The family consists of two parents and their three children. Two of them are daughters and one son. The son is the eldest and he is settled abroad with his family. The younger daughter also lives aboard. The middle daughter lives with her parents and took care of their health and needs. When their father fell ill, his younger daughter moves back to Pakistan after realizing that not only her father needs her but there are some other family things she has to take care of.

Main extract: This is one of the kind of Pakistani movie that features sensitive male, protagonist females and religious minorities. The storyline is quite different from a typical Pakistani movie. Both daughters named Zara and Zareen in the movie are shown as educated and independent women who took care of their parents and there seems to be less involvement of them in romantic or marital relationships. Their parents seem to be a quite healthy and happily married couple.

Most of the movie content in Pakistan either address the national issue or have a love story. There is little or no importance given to family and the issues within a family in Pakistani cinema. This 2018 movie focuses on the importance of family and what can be the problems in a family. As this movie is based on a family story and children taking care of their parents at old age. Both of the ailing parents are living under the care of their middle daughter. There happens to be a medical emergency, the ailing health of the father who brought one of his daughter from abroad. He was admitted in hospital due to his heart condition. The family decided to celebrate the golden jubilee anniversary at their family house that is located in interior Sindh.

There are several scenes that are pictured only on the old couple. Most of their scenes are combined. There are more scenes of the old man. There is a scene when both of them are arguing over that one of them snorts a lot and they cannot sleep peacefully at night. Both of them were arguing in a friendly mood showing that they both have a good understanding and healthy married relationship. One of the scene is where he gets sick and is admitted to the hospital and after his return to home, he found out that his both daughters and wife are there for him. They helped him recovered. The wife is also old, she often gets sick. There are happy scenes as well and the intense tension between family. Both of the parents sit together for a quite long time starrng at the wall that have all the framed pictures of their best memories. Both of the daughters were happily playing cards with their parents and the father and his daughter wins and the mother lost the game as she was busy mostly in talking and concentrating less on the game. The mother was arguing in a fun way with her elder daughter to get married before it is too late but she said that is never going to happen. In another scene, the mother gets severely ill, she is kind of in state of coma. Their son also comes with his wife and son from abroad. The father is devastated at the health condition of his wife and it seemed as if he is also angry at his son. The father announced that he will still celebrate their golden jubilee at their family home in Sindh. They shifted the mother in ambulance and the father takes the wig of his wife with him. During this trip, the children got in argument with each other. The middle sister was angry at are siblings because she got tired of taking care of her parents and she did not like the rising issues within the family after the arrival of her siblings. The ceremony was held as usual, the father gave the huge speech how he and his wife decided their place of burial so there children can at least visit them once every year. There were intense scenes as the scene proceeds with old pictures of the couples and their children. Another issues arises and the younger daughter found that she was sent abroad by the family so they can settle the car accident done by her and to protect her by any means.

The several scenes shows how a family struggles throughout the life. There are scenes were both of the parents shared the memories and achievements of their lives and their children. They sent their children

abroad for higher education and career, but they were also devastated by the distance between them. This movie shows that parents try to save their children from as much troubles as possible, they try to provide them with all the best facilities in life and they get old by the time their children establish their career. They do not need the money of their children but what they need the most is their attention and their time.

The movie that we perform content analysis on was “Cake”. Cake movie showed the family bonding and problems in a different way. In this movie, both parents are shown dependent on the children, not because they need money and stuff but because they were ailing and they needed the time and attention of the children. One of the major problem that was encountered during this research shows that old age people require time and attention from their families. Due to certain conditions like children living abroad or are busy in making a living does not give them the time and attention they need. Old people in Pakistan in media are majorly shown as kind and concerned about their families but their children or grandchildren usually put them aside, they do not provide them with the time and attention they need.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this whole section was to analyze all Pakistani mediums to have an idea about how are old people portrayed by them. We analyzed Pakistan’s newspapers’ Op-eds, TVCs, Dramas and Movies. Time period for newspaper op-eds was Jan- Mar 20 and Jun-Aug 20 for TVCs. For dramas, we took one drama Alif from 2020 and Sheher e zaat from. The reason for taking these two dramas for our analysis was that both these dramas were completely different from the usual dramas shown on Pakistan’s channels. Both of them had strong old age characters with solid characterization and individuality. But such dramas are rarely seen. Similarly, the movies taken for analysis also has strong old age characters which helped us analyze what is actually done and what is lacking while portraying old age people in the media.

Newspapers’ op-eds showed a limited coverage of older people during the period under consideration. Out of 3000 articles examined, we could only find 12 articles which in any way talked about the old age people and their issues.

For TVCs’, limited screen timing for the old age people was observed. Out of on average 1 minute duration, mere 10-15 seconds were given to older people. Thus showing an underrepresentation of the elderly.

Most of the dramas and movies don’t have enough screen presence and strong supporting old age characters. The movies chosen for this analysis were carefully chosen to highlight the fact that these movies showed older people in a much positive and strong way and that’s how they should be portrayed.

Over all, we can conclude that although not much stereotyping is portrayed in the given sample of all the mediums, yet high level of underrepresentation is observed and very little screen timing is given to them. Similarly, the issues and concerns are not even touched in almost all of the mediums analyzed.

By 2050, 40% of the population would belong to old age, in order to have equal representation, media must play its role by highlighting the old age people and their concerns in a powerful way. As Media is the most impactful source in creating awareness and mindsets of society, it must use its powerful to portray older people in a way that lets society change its behavior and mentality towards them.

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