



Unraveling the Generational Shifts in terms of Power and Changing Values in Pakistani Drama Noor Jahan: A Critical Study

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: January 20, 2025 Revised: February 19, 2025 Accepted: February 21, 2025 Available Online: February 23, 2025	<i>The present study attempts to analyze the generational shifts in the Pakistani drama Noor Jahan, aired on ARY Digital in May 2024. The primary objective of this study is to highlight the way familial power dynamics are being showcased in the particular drama under this investigation along with the secondary objective to reveal how the values and belief systems of two different generations get into clash with each other. Fairclough's (1994) three-dimensional model has been employed as the framework of this study. The findings revealed a constant tension between these two generations raising a question on the stability of the existing power hierarchies on a broader level. The results further throw light on the powerful role of electronic media in terms of shaping and challenging the perception of generational power dynamics and cultural transitions in the context of contemporary Pakistani society.</i>
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Introduction

In any society, generational shifts and power dynamics both aspects are an integral part of understanding the evolution of human interactions and cultural transformation. In the same way, in every society, the concept of Power and values seems to be embedded within its social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. Power in its several manifestations, can be perceived as institutional, ideological, and interpersonal as something dynamic in nature that evolves with generational changes in order to address broader societal trends like globalization, technological

advancement, and socio-political disruption (Fairclough, 1994). While, generational shifts can be perceived as the changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of individuals that distinguish them from one cohort to another. Historical and social experiences that individuals go through shaping them in their formative years resulting in their values and worldviews. Older generations hold power because of having economic stability, control over certain institutions, and the vast experiences they get in their lives. Comparatively, younger generations of the current age, seem to challenge and resist these power dynamics through technological influences and their potential to mobilize certain social movements such as 'black lives matter' and 'Me Too' that illustrate how this group takes leverage of these platforms to resist these traditional thought patterns to bring a systemic change and get accountability (Naeem et Al, 2023).

On the other hand, values can be understood as ideals or belief systems that an individual or a group of individuals hold and are considered very essential to determine what is desirable what is acceptable, and not acceptable to them. Values are also dynamic and are the outcomes of the experiences of generations, historical contexts, and power dynamics. However, in the present scenario, globalization and technological advancement have intensified the process of generational shifts by giving individuals a deep insight into the power and the way it is being used. These power dynamics can also be observed evolving within family settings, where the younger generation has become conscious in terms of prioritizing individual agency over traditional familial obligations (Ahmed and Shafiq, 2020).

Hence, getting an understanding of these generational shifts is mandatory, especially in those contexts that observe a rapid political and cultural transition such as Pakistan where the generational gap seems to be more amplified for some reasons like gender dynamics, media proliferation, and urbanization. So, the critical examination of these shifts helps to uncover the changing nature of societal power and values.

To seek this understanding, it becomes crucial to see and analyze the language of both generations as more than a medium of instruction because power is always tied to knowledge and knowledge is always produced through language. Language successfully plays its role in shaping perception and influencing the behavior of people to get a certain change or convey an agency. Foucault, (1972). Being a contextualized phenomenon, language has introduced the concept of critical discourse analysis. It can be perceived as the theoretical framework or methodological approach to analyze the use of language in a particular context in which it is made for certain purposes (Dijk, 1993).

Based on the above discussion, the present study is focused on critically analyzing the generational shifts occurring in the context of the particular Pakistani drama *Noor Jahan* that aired on the platform ARY Digital in 2024.

The story revolves around an upper-class matriarch named Noor Jahan and her three sons and four daughters-in-law. She belongs to a lower caste background and gets rejected by her upper caste in-laws. This rejection develops several inferiority complexes in her personality and with an intention to overcome those complexes, she makes her persona the most independent, authoritative, and conventional lady who always wants to cling to the traditional values and their imposition on others. She is very possessive towards her sons (Hunaid, Safeer, and Murad) and makes every decision of their lives on her own. The sons are also Mom's boys and blindly obey her except the second son Safeer, who takes a stand against her mother when she forcefully convinces him to get married to the daughter of their former employee. He gets married to that girl but later on leaves her to make a secret marriage with Maha, the girl whom he loves a lot but could not bring into his life earlier just because she disapproved of love marriage. The same is the case with her daughters-in-law Maha, Safina, Noor Bano, and Sumbul who first endured all her unjust deeds but gradually

started their voices and questioned her words and deeds to set themselves free from these conventional constraints.

Statement of the Problem

Most Pakistani dramas seem to reflect societal norms, values, and cultural transformation, Noor Jahan is also one such drama where a conflict can be observed between the two generations. So, the researcher wants to execute this investigation to explore how familial Power dynamics seem to be shifted from one generation to another and how changing Values are being represented in Pakistani electronic media reflecting societal changes on a broader level.

Significance of the study

The study has been significant in several aspects. First, it provides a deep insight into the phenomenon of how Pakistani dramas reflect and shape the belief systems of the masses. Secondly, it throws light on ongoing cultural transitions, especially in terms of family dynamics and individual agency in the context of Pakistan. Thirdly, the study highlights the evolving role of women in digital media, offering a careful look into the changing gender dynamics.

Research Objectives

- 1.To analyze the ways generational power dynamics are being portrayed in the drama serial Noor Jahan.
- 2.To reveal how generational tensions in this drama in terms of familial power dynamics and values mirror the actual transitions in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. In what ways generational power dynamics are being portrayed in the drama serial Noor Jahan?
2. How do the generational tensions in this drama in terms of familial power dynamics and values mirror the actual transitions in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Saeed et al. (2028) examined the discourse practices made by the past and present generations in a play. The study was qualitative and Fairclough's (1994) three-dimensional model was employed by the researcher as the framework of the study. The main objective of the study has been to analyze the text at both micro and macro levels. The findings revealed a continuous drift between the relationship of both generations because of the values and beliefs they had. The results further suggested that harmony in both contexts familial and societal can be obtained by paying equal attention and respect to each generation.

Setiawan et al. (2024). Explored the family dynamics through the lens of discourse practices in a movie. The particular research was designed on the qualitative paradigm along with Fairclough's (1994) notion of critical discourse analysis. Hence, the objective of this research was to reveal the impact of economic pressure on the family dynamics of the characters. The results showcased the negative impact of economic pressure that influenced the familial relationships badly.

Soltanian et al. (2023) conducted qualitative research with the aim of examining the power dynamics in the context of joint families. The population was comprised of married couples among which a particular sample of twelve couples was chosen by making the use of purposive sampling.

The structured interview method was applied by the researcher to collect the required data. The findings revealed the concept of power in the context of family can be perceived as multidimensional whose negative impact can lead the roots of the family system to chaos and vice versa.

Naeem et al. (2023) examined the generational shifts in the context of the prevailing family systems by employing the Islamic concept of family structure. The study was quantitative in nature. However, the framework of this study was comprised of Fairclough's (1994) concept of critical discourse analysis. Hence, the results of this study help to understand the continuous tension and solidarity within the boundaries of advanced societies. The findings also highlight the role of Islam in the development and improvement of familial structures in contemporary Pakistani society.

The studies discussed above have successfully shown that no one has explored this particular drama yet this makes this study unique and more authentic.

Research Methodology

The study is based on a qualitative method. The qualitative method can be defined as a flexible approach to Inquiry that allows researchers to go for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Kumar, 2014). Fairclough's (1980) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis is going to be applied as the framework of this study. Hence, the source is comprised of a Pakistani drama *Noor Jahan*, meanwhile, a particular sample of scenes from all episodes has been selected through purposive sampling. However, the data has been analyzed by employing the descriptive method.

Analysis

The analysis of the data has been done by employing Fairclough's (1994) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. So, accordingly, the analysis has been divided into three following sub-sections.

The dialogue structure of this particular drama seems to make use of three types of sentences that are respectively assertive, imperative, and interrogative. Noor Jahan, the one who represents the older generation, frequently makes the use of two types, imperative and declarative with an intention to maintain the power structure and to convey and confirm her authority. The claim mentioned above becomes evident when the audience sees her uttering such dialogues; “serve dinner”, “, you should have told me”, and “I went and took a proposal”. The use of such a dialogue structure indicates her intention to conform to her authority. On the other hand, somewhere, she also makes the use of interrogative sentences to get others to realize the fact that how they are dependent on her in every aspect of their life even though they cannot select their life partners without having her consent. In the same way, complex sentence structure can also be observed in her speech that reinforces her wisdom, experiences, and the rationale behind the values, beliefs, and decisions she makes. Some other language features have also been observed in her speech such as cultural proverbs and similes and metaphors such as “Wife is **like** a clothing”, I have chosen strong and sturdy life partners for you”, weak moods often break, poverty makes a very strong mold”.

The line mentioned above not only becomes evidence of the use of ‘simile’ but also reveals the patriarchal belief that a woman is always considered an inferior creature, but the situation becomes more pathetic when a woman herself utters these words for another woman.

On the other hand, her sons and daughters-in-law who can be perceived as the representatives of the younger generation use simple sentences to express their disagreement towards their mother's rigid thought patterns and values reflecting a continuous shift to emphasize the need for less hierarchical and individual patterns and values. Meanwhile, they seem to use interrogative sentences to challenge and seek explanations for the traditional practices she does to run their lives in her way.

Apart from this, possessive pronouns have also been frequently used by both generations such as 'my son', 'my mother-in-law', and 'my rights'. The use of such words reflects their will to win over another, especially in Noor Jahan's case.

Noor Jahan's relationship with her second son Safeer reflects the generational conflict and power struggle where the older generation is determined to maintain her authority and control over the lives of her children and on the other side, the younger generation seems to exhibit individual autonomy by resisting his voice against the rigid patterns of his mother.

"Mother has already realized that I am not interested in this marriage. I need to clarify to her that if she keeps pressurizing me, I will say no to the cleric"

However, the mother is also not ready to withdraw her rights and continues her efforts to get him married to the daughter of her former employer whom she selected for his son only for her submissive nature. She does not realize that it is her son's fundamental right to marry the girl whom he loves.

"I am Noor Jahan Ikhtiar Shah and Safeer is my son. He cannot even take a step against my will"

The same conflict seems to arise between Noor Jahan and her daughters-in-law whom she does not allow to make any decision regarding the household deeds without taking her permission. Even they are not allowed to hire a house help only because of the rigid values of their mother-in-law.

"It is prohibited to mention slaves here. We have to do everything ourselves. I cook whatever Mom decides. We have to decide the menu beforehand"

These words are uttered by Safina, the eldest daughter-in-law of Begum Noor Jahan Ikhtiar Shah. Her practice of rigid patriarchal values does not end here. It can also be observed at the time when she comes to know about Safina's pregnancy and expresses her wish to have a grandson instead of a granddaughter. Her views about daughters reflect the patriarchal expectations that see boys as the carriers of the family legacy and financial stability as compared to girls are seen just as a burden in terms of their marriage and a permanent source of vulnerability to their parents.

"We only have sons in our family, not daughters. I will also have a grandson, not a granddaughter"

On the other hand, Safina who stands as the representative of the younger generation raises her voice when she observes her mother-in-law's discriminative thoughts. She says to her husband these words about her expected baby;

"A child is a child whether it is a boy or a girl. When a child is born, parents see it as a child irrespective of its gender. They do love it with all their hearts"

Her words reflect not only the drift between two generations but also an indication of a shift in terms of familial values and ideologies.

This generational shift can also be strongly observed through the voice of Maha, the girl whom initially Safeer wants to marry and later on secretly marries her against the consent of his mother.

“Why are you so scared of your mother for the little things? Safeer, mother is mother. Children can talk to their mother without any hesitation”

Another prime example of generational shifts can also be seen through the cover of Noor Bano, the youngest daughter-in-law of Ikhtiar Shah’s family with her father when she observes him being rude with Noor Jahan at her visit to their home.

“I am talking to you as you talk to others. Whatever I am learning from you, I am giving it back to you. You know Dad your ego has made you lonely?”

She says these words to her father under the influence of Noor Jahan who decides to turn her against her own father just to take the revenge of past family clashes.

On the macro level, it is to say that the storyline of this particular drama revolves around a constant conflict that arises between the two generations and their values and ideologies. The former generation seems to stick with the traditional gender roles and values to sustain their power dynamics within the boundaries of familial relationships. Meanwhile, the younger generation questions this conventional authority and typical family roles. The drama also seems to mirror the enforcement of cultural norms and values indicating the fact that how these values can stifle the individuals’ growth and freedom of life.

Secondly, the narrative of this drama is an actual attempt to reflect and contribute to the existing transformation of values in the context of Pakistani society as this particular drama has been observed to showcase a sense of the decline of patriarchal authority being exercised by Begum Noor Jahan Ishtiaq in terms of her children (younger generation) asserting their rights. They started questioning to traditional norms, values, and beliefs their mother practices, it is a conscious attempt to reflect the way women in contemporary Pakistani society seem to challenge societal expectations to ensure equal rights for themselves through different platforms. Me Too movement is a prime example of this.

Thirdly, certain traditional values such as obedience and self-sacrifice have been redefined in familial relationships in the context of this drama in the way Begum Noor Jahan Ishtiaq created a constant tension between two generations by adhering to cultural roots rather than embracing a modern way of life.

Fourthly, the shift that has been showcased in terms of values can be linked to the existing situation of globalization, urbanization, and easy access to education. These all factors collectively empower the younger generation to protect their rights within the boundaries of society and family as well.

Findings & Discussion

The study has been based on two research questions. The first question was in what ways familial power dynamics are being portrayed in the Pakistani drama *Noor Jahan*. To respond to this question, the study revealed that in this particular drama, all concept of authority and power is associated with Begum Noor Jahan who represented the older generation. She can be perceived as a follower of traditional norms and values and a rigid patriarchal mindset where there is no place for individual autonomy and freedom and this rigidity turns all her children against her. The second question has been how the generational tensions in this drama mirror the actual transitions

in Pakistan. The study responded to this question in the way that a few years back and even still on some TV channels, Pakistani dramas seem to be focused on showcasing woman characters being submissive and doing household chores without having any acknowledgment from their families. However, in this drama, a shift can be observed in terms of women's roles as an assertive and independent figure to resist conventional constraints. Further, the particular drama under this investigation also mirrors the transitions in Pakistani society in the way that within time joint family system is going to be diminishing as a result of those clashes that have arisen between these two generations where neither the older generation is ready to withdraw her rights back nor the younger generation seems willing to compromise on their freedom and autonomy. This thing has weakened the roots of the joint family system and replaced it with a separate family system.

Future Implications

1. This study leaves the ground for future researchers to reinvestigate the findings of this particular research.
2. They can examine the familial power dynamics of another Pakistani drama by employing the same framework.

Conclusion

The conduction of this particular study has been a conscious attempt made by the researchers to show the multiple sides of a narrative as this drama does not only depict certain generational shifts in terms of familial power dynamics and values but also seems to actively engage with having an intention to influence the societal discourse in certain ways. Its textual components, discursive techniques, and reflection of societal expectations and practices underscore the evolving dynamics of Pakistani society by making it a rich text for applying the lenses of critical discourse analysis.

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