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A Comparative Visual Analysis of Gender Construction in Pakistani and Turkish Television Drama Covers

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Abstract
Television drama covers are visual images used to introduce characters and inter-personal relationships to viewers. This qualitative and interpretive study aims to examine the construction of gender in the selected six covers, of which three are from Pakistan (Bashar Momin, Noor Jahan and Ruswai) and the other three are from Turkey (Karadayı, Atiye and Bir Zamanlar Çukurova). Each cover is read through representational, interactive and compositional meaning, using the Visual Grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), and gaze is coded on a participant-by-participant basis. The analysis focuses on representational, interactive, and compositional meanings, with particular attention to character positioning, gaze, posture, visual salience, colour, and framing. The comparison examines how these visual resources contribute to the representation of gendered identities and relationships across the selected cases. Four patterns emerge. First, direct address is the norm, and applies to women and men alike; gaze is not distinctive enough to separate the sexes. Second, gender hierarchy is transmitted largely through composition (placement, scale, level, colour, posture), and can be different from interactive parity: women look back at the viewer, but are seated lower and closer to the torso of the central male figure in Bashar Momin. Third, the two ensemble covers themselves invert, that is a man in the middle in one and an older woman in the other, making it a warning against considering either as representative of a national pattern. Fourth, in the Turkish ensemble, meaning is conceptual and reactional gazes and

symbols (a crumpled paper, a doll, barbed wire, a clock) are used. With six unmatched cases, these are patterns for larger genre-matched studies, not national characteristics.

Keywords: *gender representation, Visual Grammar, promotional visuals, television dramas, visual analysis, Pakistan, Turkey*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Visual media have an important function in how audiences are exposed to and interpret cultural representations. Television drama covers such as posters, platform key art, broadcast promotional graphics) provide an initial visual introduction to a drama and set anticipations for the drama's characters, relationships, and conflicts. Representation is not a representation of reality itself but it is a creation of meaning. According to Hall (1997), the attachment of meaning to culture is made through representation; this provides a foundation for considering how images in the media convey ideas about gender. The semiotic meanings of the covers of Pakistani dramas, focusing on the importance of visual elements in interpreting media representations. Compositional meaning has to do with how information value, salience and framing create a meaningful whole from the elements. Collectively, these metafunctions provide a systematic framework for analysis of the visual construction of gender without giving meanings to individual features.

Gender representation in Pakistani and Turkish television are relevant to derive contextual background. Previous research done on gendered images in advertisements from Pakistan and drama covers (Nasir, 2018), gender representation in Turkish TV series (Arslan et al., 2023; İnceoğlu & Akçalı, 2018). But, the promotional images used in the current study need to be approached in terms of how their visual elements arrange gender. Therefore, in this study, three drama covers from Pakistan (Bashar Momin, Noor Jahan and Ruswai) have been compared with three drama covers of Turkey (Karadayı, Atiye and Bir Zamanlar Çukurova). The comparison takes into account similarities and differences in the way in which they are visually constructed, but also treats the fact that the format of the promotion, the type of film, the premise of the story, and the conventions of the main character of a film might impact the composition of the image. The relationships are analyzed primarily in the context of visual grammar as outlined in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar, which consists of three metafunctions: representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning.

1.2 Problem Statement

Studies on visual representation have focused on gendered meanings in Pakistani TV commercials and drama covers, and on Turkish television, studies of gender in TV series and the content they feature. However, the current research is interested in a comparative study of the selected drama promotional visuals from Pakistan and Turkey within a relative framework of Visual Grammar. Specifically, how representational, interactive, and compositional resources interact in constructing gender through participants' relationship, gaze, posture, relative scale, colour, placement, and framing should be investigated. Another analytical issue is that aggregate features of a visual may be conveying different messages as a group than they are conveying as individual features. For example, looking directly at the viewer does not mean being in a position of authority and positioning in the center doesn't mean being the most important; it can mean it is the way composition is made or the way gendered characters are

composed. The resources can be analyzed in combination, giving a more complex picture of how gender is constructed than analysing some features in isolation.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve following research objectives;

1. To examine the representation, interaction and composition of the gender in the selected six drama covers of Pakistan and Turkey.
2. To recognize the similarities and difference between the Pakistani and the Turkish Drama Covers regarding the visual construction of gender.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by following research questions;

1. How gender is shaped by representational, interactive, and compositional meanings in Pakistani and Turkish drama covers?
2. How do Pakistani and Turkish drama covers visualize gender? What are the similarities and differences in the construction of gender?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The comparison highlights the significance of promotional format in interpreting the visual representation. The study provides a bounded analysis comparing and contrasting similarities and differences between the selected covers from each country. Its results could guide the future studies with larger and more representative samples and more structured comparisons of promotional visuals. The study does not however pretend to define general features of Pakistani or Turkish television or provide any explanation as to the cultural factors of the visual patterns observed. It offers a major contribution to analysis in looking at how representational, interactive and compositional resources are used in conjunction with each other, not as individual indicators of gendered meaning, but in terms of gaze, posture, colour and placement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender Representation in Visual Media

The visual media is a powerful apparatus for the production and dissemination of cultural notions of gender. Masculine and feminine representations do not simply reflect a social relation but can also reproduce, negotiate or challenge the initial social expectation of masculinity or femininity as well as that of authority and appearance, and social roles. Hall (1997) views representation as a process of meaning-making while Goffman (1979) illustrates how visual devices in advertisements can convey culturally-familiar gender differences. Feminist Media Studies also has explored how a visual image can be a reproduction of gendered power dynamics. The concepts of looking and spectatorship in visual culture is discussed by Mulvey (1975) and the relationship between gender, representation and position of women in popular culture is discussed by Kaplan (1983). Building on the analysis of media by feminist scholars, Gill (2007) argues for the need to take into account the different forms in which femininity, sexuality and agency are expressed in the new media landscape of the age. All can show that, despite the different range of the approaches, the meaning of the images is defined through the representational decisions made, not just the inclusion of images of men and women. But representation of gender cannot be merely one of dominant men and subordinate women. Kandiyohi (1988) argues the

need to understand female agency in particular social and cultural setups by using the concept of "patriarchal bargaining". The view warns against seeing every depiction of femininity as signifying passivity or an uncomplicated representation of power in every depiction of masculinity. The connection between gendered identities, cultural expectations and the specific features of an image should therefore be considered in visual analysis.

2.2 Visual Grammar and the Analysis of Meaning

The main analytical approach used to analyze the processes of producing meaning through visual compositions is the one offered Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Reading Images: The Grammar of visual Design. These dimensions provide a structured approach to the analysis of participants represented in an image, their connection with viewers, and the arrangement of visual elements in an image. In the case of gaze, one may imply direct relationships with the viewer, while another may be an indirect gaze presumably urging the viewer to look at the viewer in the photo. Gaze must not, however, be evaluated as an autonomous, or conclusive, sign of gender power. Its value lies in how it's used in conjunction with other visual elements within the composition. The work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2002, 2006) is therefore a basis for systematically analyzing visual meaning, rather than to rely solely on impressionistic interpretations. The three metafunctions in the present study are used as complementary analysis dimensions. Modality is not a separate metafunction or turned into a numerical score, but rather can be considered selectively when visual features add to the realism or credibility of a representation.

2.3 Visual Representation of Gender in Pakistani Media

The study conducted in the area of media in Pakistan has focused on the portrayal of gender role and social expectations through various medium of visual communication. For instance, Nasir et al. (2018) examine the use of gender binaries in Pakistani television commercials and explain the significance of visual and language signs in the process of meaning-making regarding gender. Other studies have focused on the issue of gender representation in Pakistani TV dramas and other media. Ashfaq and Shafiq (2018) explore various depictions of the ‘perfect woman' in Pakistani television dramas and reveal some common differences between ideal and negative female characters. Khan et al. (2018) observe the portrayal of masculinity and femininity in Pakistan's television dramas and the reinforcement of gender hierarchies. These studies are pertinent because they demonstrate the way in which TV stories can reaffirm or challenge culturally-constructed gender expectations. Outside television drama, there are other areas of research that also provide methodological perspectives that are relevant. Ali (2014) for example, analyzed the representation of gender in Pakistani newspapers during the floods of 2010 and whether the visual representations reinforce gendered stereotypes such as the idea of the vulnerable female victim. Likewise, Asghar et al., (2022) investigate the representation of genders on the cover pages of English children's literature in Pakistan by using visual semiotic analysis.

2.4 Representation of Gender in Turkish Television

Inceoğlu (2020) also examines gender representation in the Turkish television in terms of conventional understandings of masculinity, femininity and social roles and considers the television as a significant arena for the representation and reproduction of gender roles. The literature on TV narratives and scenes is at a different level of analysis to that of the present work, which is concerned with the promotional visuals as standalone works. Akçalı and İnceoğlu (2020) also analyze the gender portrayals

in the Turkish television dramas, performing a feminist analysis for selected scenes where meanings may not be fully revealed through general findings of the content analysis. It also illustrates that representations can be studied in other ways than focusing solely on the occurrence or absence of specific types of characters. There is nothing inherent in this kind of comparison which would require the assumption that either media context was internally uniform. Instead, it should look at the chosen cases in regard to their respective visual arrangements as well as interpret the cultural implications with care.

2.5 Research Gap and Justification of the Present Study

Previous studies reviewed that there are three points that can be seen as relevant. First, the process of gender representation provides a means of visual and narrative construction of culturally recognizable forms of masculinity and femininity (Gill 2007, Goffman 1979, Hall 1997). Second, Visual Grammar offers a systematic approach to the analysis of the contribution of representational, interactive, and compositional resources to meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Thirdly, studies on Pakistani and Turkish media have focused on how gender is discussed in TV scripts, advertisements and other visual media but the objects of the studies and their methodological focus have varied.

The present study is justified by addressing specific analytical issue of how gender is constructed through combined action of the representational, interactive and compositional resources in selected TV drama promotional visuals from the Pakistani and Turkish sample. It looks into the six cases of: Bashar Momin, Noor Jahan, Ruswai (PAK) and Karadayı, Atiye, Bir Zamanlar Çukurova (TÜRK). The study does not use gaze or posture or character prominence as discrete elements but assesses the interaction between these features within each composition. This comparison therefore provides an explicitly targeted description of the visual design as a means of establishing gendered relations between selected promotional materials.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive-comparative design to analyze the construction of gender in selected Pakistani and Turkish television drama visuals. A qualitative analysis was appropriate since the study was concerned primarily with the way that visual elements build up meaning and not with measuring the frequency of gender related features or testing statistical relationships (Creswell & Creswell 2009). The analysis was carried out based on the systematic framework for interpretation of meanings of representational, interactive and compositional meanings. Comparative design helped to determine similarities and differences between selected cases while focusing on the visual aspect of each.

3.2 Data Selection and Sampling

The data in this study consisted of six purposively sampled promotional visuals belonging to Pakistani and Turkish television dramas. The Pakistani sample consisted of the serials, i.e. Bashar Momin, Noor Jahan and Ruswai, and the Turkish sample consisted of serials, namely Karadayı, Atiye and Bir Zamanlar Çukurova. Through purposive sampling, cases were selected that provided variation in character arrangement, gender configuration, visual prominence, and character representation in a scene as

individual or collective characters. This variation served as a starting point to consider the construction of gendered meanings through the different compositional arrangements.

3.3 Data Collection and Organization

The data were collected through the purposive selection of six promotional visuals from Pakistani and Turkish television dramas. Three visuals were selected from each national context: *Bashar Momin*, *Noor Jahan*, and *Ruswai* from Pakistan, and *Karadayı*, *Atiye*, and *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova* from Turkey. The visuals were selected according to their relevance to the research objectives, particularly the visibility of gendered characters and the variation in their spatial arrangement, visual prominence, and interpersonal positioning. Each selected image was examined as a distinct visual text, and relevant observations were recorded according to the analytical categories derived from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar. The collected data were then organized for individual analysis and cross-case comparison.

The organization of the data were ensured by six cases that were divided into three comparison groups: the group of male-centred ensembles (Bashar Momin and Karadayı); the group of female-centred ensembles (Noor Jahan and Bir Zamanlar Çukurova); and the group of a solo female-focused ensemble (Ruswai and Atiye). Such pairings served as a convenient, but not necessarily an argument that the paired dramas had identical content or form or were of the same genre. It was decided to limit the number of cases in the sample because of the need for detailed qualitative interpretation, therefore, there are six cases.

3.4 Analytical framework

The Visual Grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) was used as the main analytical tool used in the study. Visual meaning is conceived in three metafunctions: representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning, which are interrelated. Through these dimensions, viewing of characters and their positioning within the visual composition to contribute to the gender construction was explored. The character roles, posture, action, and bodily orientation as well as the relationship between the people depicted was investigated as representational meaning. This dimension enabled the determination of character association to the visual aspects of agency, authority, vulnerability or interpersonal relationships. Interactive meaning was explored with gaze, social distance and angle. These characteristics were considered in terms of their character's interaction with the viewer and the locating of the image's viewer. Not necessarily a sign of dominance or empowerment; direct gaze was evaluated together with other visual characteristics. Information value, salience and framing were examined as factors of compositional meaning. Care was taken in positioning, sizing, foregrounding, contrast in colour, separation and Organisation of the image. Character interpretation of these features to assess attention and prominence relations between characters The Visual Illustration of analytical framework is illustrated in fig 3.1.

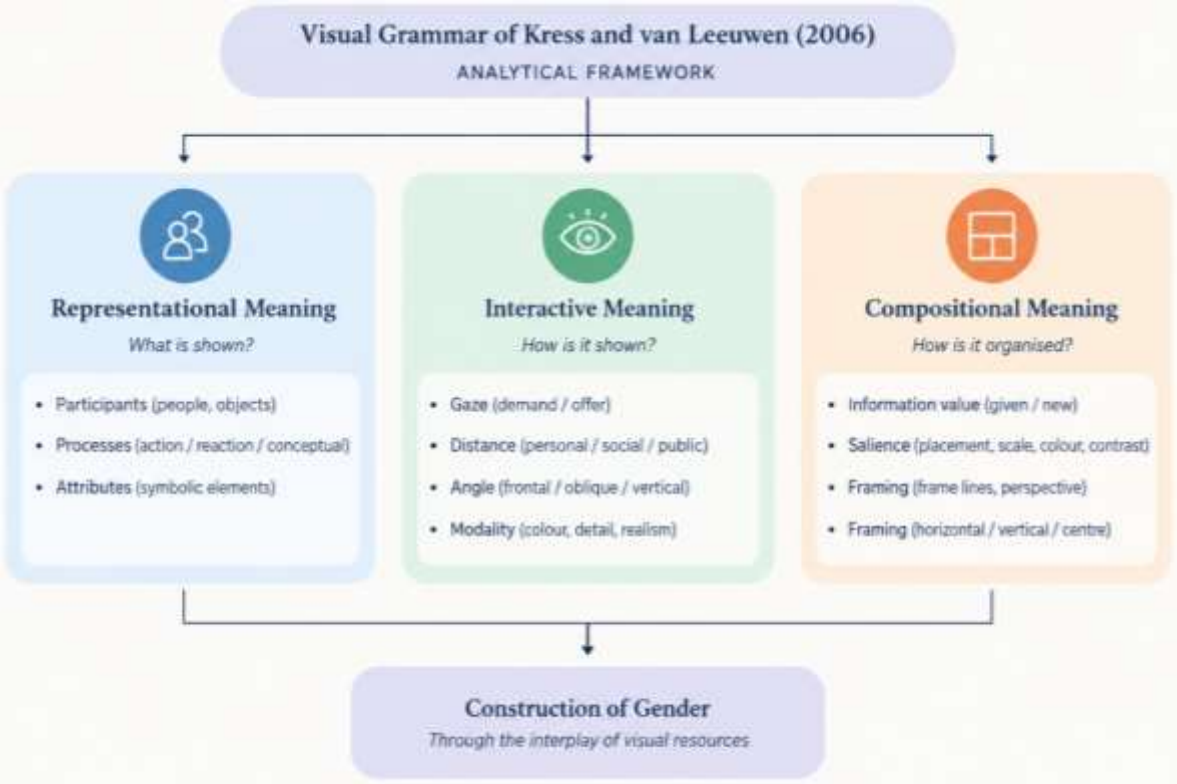

Fig 3.1 *Visual Grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)*

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis was done in three stages. Stage 1 was involved Individual Visual Exam. Every promotional image was analyzed individually to determine the participants represented, gaze direction, body posture, spatial interaction and key compositional elements. Initial observations were conducted and the data were coded using the coding matrix. In stage 2, Interpretation by means of Visual Grammar. Identified features were understood in terms of representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. The relevance of viewer involvement and visual salience to each other was highlighted. Analyses based on what could be seen in the pictures and interpretations made around gender and power were kept open. Stage 3 was involved Cross-case comparison. The results of the individual visuals were analyzed across the three selected pairings and then compared between Pakistani and Turkish cases. Patterns of similarity, differences in prominence of character and how various frameworks of arrangements of the visual elements created gendered relations were all important points of comparison. When drawing inferences about similarities and differences, differences in promotional format and character configuration were taken into account.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Responsible interpretation and academic honesty and transparency have been applied in this research. The chosen promotional images were analyzed for scholarly reasons, with recognition of the original source and providing appropriate citations where available. The analysis prioritized publically presented materials, such as images, and eschewed unsupported inferences of the creators' intentions and of the

identities of the people represented, as well as of the values of the entire national communities. Many interpretations of gender representation were based on the ostensible visual characteristics and the analytical model of the study. Second, the findings were presented within the scope of the purposively selected sample and not generalized to sample of six beyond the scope of the study.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Individual Analysis of Selected Pakistani Drama Covers

4.1.1 Bashar Momin



Figure 4.1. Bashar Momin cover.

Representational meaning: A conceptual, posed shot, seven participants (3 men, 3 women, 1 girl) do not have an action vector, and meaning is determined by arrangement, clothing, and context. The image features a man in a red suit sitting in the middle of a sofa with his hands on his knees, a man in a tuxedo sitting at the left edge of the sofa, and a man in a dark suit standing in the background at the upper right corner of the image. There are three women, one sitting on the sofa on the left and another leaning on the man in the center, a girl is sitting at the lower right, on the floor directly in front of the man in the middle. The interior is dark and luxurious, adding connotations of wealth and exclusiveness. Gender implication: the cover is used to display status. Men are set upright, flanking the group or standing above it; women lean, recline or sit low and close to the central man's body and this position will not by itself be used to suggest passivity, but may be read with the help of Goffman's (1979) interpretation of the ritualization of subordination.

Interactive meaning: All participants (men, women and the girl) face the viewer (demand) at social distance, in front and at eye level. Throughout, expressions are serious and guarded, only the girls more so. The dark and moody color palette and emphasis on contrast create a cinematic and stylized look.

Gender implication: the word gaze does not make any distinction between the genders here. The women face the viewer as do the men; thus, the cover does not simply refer to women under the guise of being "looked at. The women do not face the viewer like the men do, so the cover doesn't simply refer to women as "looked at. The compositional features below, however, carry gender difference, posing the question of whether interactive parity and compositional hierarchy can co-exist.

Compositional meaning: The red skirt of the woman at the left and the red suit of the man in a dark palette are the two elements that have strong saturation, so, combined with the central placement, they make the man highly salient in a Centre Margin structure; the red seal emblem, above the title, repeats the hue. The woman sitting on the ground is at the lowest point of the central axis, directly below him. The title, written in all white serif capitals, is printed below the group, followed by the cast names in a line below, which refer to a man and do not indicate gender. Gender implication: these resources could imply a male-dominated, hierarchical order of position, placing a woman around and below a man; but their direct gaze provides a parity of interaction. Central placement may also be a reflection of the title character convention because the title is for a man only, and can't be used to define a larger social structure based on the image alone.

4.1.2 Noor Jahan



Figure 4.2 Noor Jahan cover

Representational meaning: A conceptual structure consisting of one participant and no action vector depicts a female figure wearing white clothing and holding their hands to her collarbones while wearing a gesture with their extended forearms in front of her chest. The situation is an abstract saturated red field which takes her out of any social setting, and the red henna-like patterning on her hands and faint handprint-like shapes in the background are symbolic attributes. Gender representation: the

concentration is on one woman and her symbolic attribute, which is marked on her outside the picture. Also, Henna is generally linked with marriage and festivity in South Asian imagery, which creates an antagonism that is not addressed by the cover.

Interactive meaning: Viewed from a personal distance, at approximately eye level, from a frontal angle and directly at the viewer (demand), the woman is shown in a disturbing manner. The image is clearly stylised, not naturalistic, due to the saturated red field, the lack of contextual details and contrasting with the white clothing of the woman. These cues enhance the contrast between figure and background, directing the viewer to her expression, clothing and highlighted hands. Gender implication: the look of the direct gaze could be an appeal, and her expression and crossed arms could be an expression of distress or self-protective posture. These are possible readings in the image, and may help determine the narrative meaning of the markings, but cannot do so for the exact meaning.

Compositional meaning: The woman is placed to the left, and the title to the right. The contrast is strong between her white outfit and the red background as well as the fact that she is the only person in the image. The white nastaliq title (which translates as 'disgrace') is repeated on the white of her clothing, against the red field, which means that the visible distress is once again attached to a social condition of shame, but does not specify whose shame. Gender implication: the crossed arms indicate self-enclosure or self-protection, the lone figure, and the high colour contrast foreground, distress. The combination of white and red might be used in multiple ways, but the use of the mark alone cannot be used to determine if it's an injury mark, ritual, or another narrative element. The image thus allows for an interpretation of female vulnerability without that interpretation becoming definitive.

4.1.3 Ruswai



Figure 4. Ruswai cover.

Representational meaning: A conceptual structure consisting of one participant and no action vector depicts a female figure wearing white clothing and holding their hands to her collarbones while wearing

a gesture with their extended forearms in front of her chest. The situation is an abstract saturated red field which takes her out of any social setting, and the red henna-like patterning on her hands and faint handprint-like shapes in the background are symbolic attributes. Gender representation: the concentration is on one woman and her symbolic attribute, which is marked on her outside the picture. Also, Henna is generally linked with marriage and festivity in South Asian imagery, which creates an antagonism that is not addressed by the cover.

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4.2 Individual Analysis of Selected Turkey Drama Covers

4.2.1 Atiye



Figure 4.4 Atiye cover

Representational meaning: Conceptual, symbolic representation of a woman in a dark lace top, her hair lifted up by the wind, standing with arms outstretched and down, and eyes closed, with a long olive skirt. Her arms are outstretched in a diagonal position, suggesting a lack of purpose, and the overall scene is a vast expanse of open terrain with a cloudy sky. Another symbolic element is an emblem in the title. Gender implication: the pose and setting draw attention towards a symbol or inward state instead of towards other participants. This is an evaluation of the visual Organisation, not a description of the character's inner world in the full story.

Interactive meaning: The woman does not make a direct demand gaze with her eyes closed. The image is from far to close personal-social distance and has a frontal view. The camera seems to be just slightly below the figure, but it's hard to tell for sure. The overall composition suggests a sense of depth and depth of field, with a naturalistic approach to the landscape scene but also elements of stylistic in the isolated, posed figure. Gender implication: The suspended gaze and the distancing between the subjects and the other subjects may indicate inwardness, however, they are not an independence nor a power in themselves.

Compositional meaning: The female character is at the center of the vertical axis and is accentuated by being central and by contrasting dark colored dress with lighter sky. Her arms span the frame. There are very few frame lines, so figure and landscape blend; streaming branding and release date are found along the edges. The title is written in thin, widely spread white capitals, and the horizontal line of the

title runs parallel with her horizontally extended arms as the letter is represented by an emblem. Gender implication: outside of visible families, and the suspended gaze, can create female individuality and inwardness. A focus on a self-contained woman might have an affinity with the postfeminist discourses of individual autonomy (tentative parallel to Anglo-American media, Gill, 2007). In Ruswai, meaning is organized around the marking that indicates an external event, in this case it's organized around the figure and the surrounding.

4.5 Karadayı



Figure 4.5. Karadayı cover.

Representational meaning: The space shows a depth layered presentation of narrative and conceptual elements. In the right foreground, there is a man sitting on a leather armchair, facing a bit sideways, holding a crumpled piece of paper. To the left midground, on a terrace behind him, are five individuals standing or sitting: one man in a brown coat, another in a grey waistcoat and trousers, a young woman in a light-blue shirt and jeans, a woman in a striped dress, and an older man wearing a waistcoat, indicating a family group. The man in brown coat, the young woman, the woman with striped dress is all looking at the foreground man, creating reactional vectors that converge on him, creating a phenomenon that is the target of their reaction. In the upper right corner, a woman in a plum-colored suit stands with her arms folded, with a window visible behind her, displaying the silhouettes of an older woman and a child. A doll seems to be lying on a carpet with leaves scattered around.

Interactive meaning: The man in the foreground is holding a piece of crumpled paper in his hand, and he appears to be frowning and looking down at the ground. The two men, one old and one gray, are gazing at the reader whereas the woman at the window is facing away. The man at personal distance, obliquely turned; group at social-to-public distance. The detailed terrace, visibility and low level of colour and key add to the naturalistic look, but the cover still looks like a promotional shot. Gender gaze is

divided, but not just between the genders; the women in the group turn their gaze on the man, but the men in the group turn their gaze towards the man and the viewer. The man's oblique, lowered gaze suggests the dominance suggested by his scale.

Compositional meaning: The man is darkly clad and at a large scale, and is in the foreground, while the family is at a smaller scale on a brighter terrace on the left midground, where it reads as context (the Given side, a tentative reading. Small, but definitely distant, the woman at the window brings together two dimensions of Ideal and New, though an upper-right is an information value that depends on context. The doll and the crumpled paper are symbolic and represent loss or trouble. The title is written in thick black serif capitals on the white frame that is torn at the upper edge, thus closing the lower frame. The family's appearance makes him the center of concern or judgement instead of command. The feminine is not confined to a specific place, but it is present in the group, at the window and in the weak old woman and child, spanning generations. The cover implies that there is something more than the power of the image and more than the power of the gender.

4.6 Bir Zamanlar Çukurova



Figure 7. Bir Zamanlar Çukurova cover.

Representational meaning: It is a conceptual, symbolic collage of four faces an old woman in the upper left corner, a man with a moustache in the upper right, a second man in a flattop hat near the center, and a younger woman in the lower left foreground with glances exchanged between some of them. Barbed wire crosses the picture at the level of the younger woman's face, the man's neck who wears the cap, and the man's torso at the upper right; What looks like a clock face in the lower left and a period wooden house at the upper right are symbolic and circumstantial aspects of a historical setting. Gender implication: the wire extends over the participants regardless of gender, without this implying restriction

as feminine, the wire and the clock frame the group as being restricted by time and conflict, and the older woman is only partially above the wire.

Interactive meaning: The older woman is in close-ups and looks towards the viewer (demand); the younger woman in the foreground looks to the side (offer); the man at the upper right looks down and across the frame (provisional, given the size of the image); the man in the cap looks away to the side. The other three are therefore given glances detached from the viewer, and the older woman speaks directly to the viewer. The latter are at personal distance, and the view is frontal. The warm sepia orange colour tones and artistic approach, combined with the restraining use of colour, produce a stylised presentation. Gender implication: A gaze with a demand connotes confrontation, challenge or address and is not necessarily understood by the gaze itself. It is held by the oldest participant, who has the largest face, it may suggest that the older is more authoritative than the younger and it is opposite to the latter's sideways, wary gaze.

Compositional meaning: The large salience elements are the older woman's face in the top left, and the man in the top right. The younger woman and the man in the cap seem to be part of the lower section of the image, closer to the wire that creates the separation and acts as a framing device. The title is written in gigantic white capital letter, across the lower center of the sheet, over the younger woman and the wire, and a tagline is written underneath (Aşkın değil, hükmün geçtiği topraklar; roughly, 'lands where not love but rule prevails'), which positions the fight as one of dominion instead of romance. Age implication: The larger, older woman has the wire crossing her face higher, and the lower, younger woman has the wire across her face horizontally, which might indicate greater exposure, and the man in the cap is lower, and also has the wire at the horizontal level across his face, age and placement may be as important as gender in these contrasts. These are ideas about the composition rather than the characters' full roles in the narrative.

4.3 Comparative Analysis

The six individual analyses indicate that gendered meaning is constructed through combinations of visual resources rather than through isolated features. The following comparisons examine the selected cases in three paired configurations. These pairings reflect the sampling design and should not be interpreted as representative of the frequency of particular visual patterns in either national television industry.

4.3.1 Male-Centred Ensembles: *Bashar Momin* and *Karadayı*

Both visuals establish a man as the most visually prominent participant, but they organize this prominence differently. In *Bashar Momin*, the man occupies the center, wears the most conspicuous red suit, and is surrounded by women whose positions are lower or closer to his body. All participants face the viewer, so the potential hierarchy is conveyed principally through placement, posture, and colour rather than through exclusive male direct address. His prominence may suggest status, although the title-character convention also offers a plausible explanation. In *Karadayı*, the man is prominent because he occupies the right foreground at a larger scale than the family members behind him. Unlike the central, frontal figure in *Bashar Momin*, he looks down and is the focus of other participants' attention. The crumpled paper, the spatial separation, and the layered arrangement contribute to an impression of tension or burden. Thus, the two visuals share male-centred prominence but differ in its possible

implications: one emphasizes display and status, while the other connects prominence with interpersonal concern and conflict.

4.3.2 Female-Prominent Ensembles: *Noor Jahan* and *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova*

Both visuals give an older woman substantial visual prominence, but they achieve this through different compositional arrangements. In *Noor Jahan*, the woman stands in the central foreground, appears larger than the surrounding participants, and wears pale-pink clothing against darker outfits. All participants face the viewer, so her authority is suggested through the combination of centrality, scale, colour, and posture rather than through gaze alone. In *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova*, the older woman's close-up and direct gaze distinguish her from the other faces, most of which are directed away from the viewer. Her prominence is embedded in a collage divided by barbed wire, which crosses participants of different genders. The title and tagline further frame the image around authority and conflict. Whereas *Noor Jahan* organizes prominence through a layered family portrait, *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova* establishes it through a more fragmented and symbolically divided composition. In neither case should female prominence automatically be equated with unrestricted power; it is a visual relationship whose meaning depends on the image as a whole.

4.3.3 Solitary Female-Centred Compositions: *Ruswai* and *Atiye*

Both visuals isolate a woman from other participants, but their visual resources construct contrasting relationships with the viewer and the setting. In *Ruswai*, the saturated red field, white clothing, symbolic markings, and direct gaze foreground the woman and invite interpretations of distress, appeal, or self-protection. The enclosed posture and strong contrast intensify the figure's visual presence. In *Atiye*, the woman is placed in an expansive landscape, with closed eyes and outstretched arms. These differences show that solitude does not carry a fixed meaning for female representation: it can be associated with vulnerability in one composition and with self-contained presence in another. Since the sample contains no corresponding solitary male figure, the analysis cannot determine whether these visual choices are specific to the representation of women. An integrated summary of comparison is listed below in the table 4.1.

Table 4.1**.** *Paired comparison of Pakistani and Turkish covers*

Pair	Pakistani cover	Turkish cover	Shared resources	Main difference
Male-centred ensemble	Bashar Momin	Karadayı	Man, most salient (scale, position, dark or formal dress); unsmiling	Centred, frontal, red, direct gaze, women placed around and below him vs foreground, oblique, crumpled paper, object of the family's looks, apart
Female-prominent ensemble	Noor Jahan	Bir Zamanlar Çukurova	Older woman most salient; looks towards the viewer; stern	Central in a layered family that all address the viewer vs close-up, the only clear direct address, in a wire-divided collage

Solitary woman	Ruswai	Atiye	One woman; no other participants; symbolic attributes	Demand gaze, enclosure, red field vs closed eyes, open posture, landscape

4.4 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Research Questions

In relation to RQ1, the findings indicate that gender is constructed through the interaction of representational, interactive, and compositional meanings rather than through any single visual feature. Consistent with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar, the six visuals demonstrate that character positioning, posture, gaze, relative size, colour, framing, and symbolic elements work together to organize visual meaning. These resources shape how male and female characters are presented and how their relationships are interpreted within each composition. These findings are consistent with Goffman's (1979) attention to gender display and Lazar's (2005) understanding of gender as ideologically constructed. They support examining power as a relationship produced through the interaction of visual resources rather than as an inherent property of an individual feature. The findings also require a cautious application of scholarship on the male gaze, including Mulvey (1975) and Kaplan (1983), because direct address in a static promotional image is not identical to the cinematic organization of spectatorship. Overall, RQ1 is answered by showing that gender construction in the selected visuals depends on the combined operation of character representation, viewer engagement, and compositional hierarchy.

In relation to RQ2, the comparison reveals both shared visual strategies and differences in how prominence and relationships are organized. This finding is consistent with Hall's (1997) understanding of representation as a process through which meaning is produced rather than simply reflected. It also supports Goffman's (1979) argument that visual arrangements and bodily displays can communicate culturally recognizable gender relations. In *Karadayı*, the foreground man's prominence is complicated by his lowered gaze, the crumpled paper, and the attention directed towards him by other characters. These differences qualify the broader findings of Pakistani television research that has identified the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity (Khan et al., 2018) and the reinforcement of patriarchal gender binaries in television commercials (Nasir et al., 2018). Those studies identify wider representational tendencies, whereas the present analysis demonstrates that visual prominence in individual promotional images does not necessarily communicate uncomplicated authority. The foreground man in *Karadayı*, for example, is visually dominant in scale and placement but is also represented as the focus of others' attention and possible concern.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes by examine the construction of gender in six purposively selected Pakistani and Turkish television drama promotional visuals: *Bashar Momin*, *Noor Jahan*, and *Ruswai* from Pakistan, and *Karadayı*, *Atiye*, and *Bir Zamanlar Çukurova* from Turkey. Using a qualitative, descriptive-comparative design, the study applied Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar to analyze representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. Particular attention was given to character positioning, gaze, posture, visual salience, colour, and framing. The findings indicate that gendered meanings emerge through the combined use of these visual resources rather than through any single

feature. A key finding is that interactive engagement and compositional prominence are not necessarily equivalent to visual power: direct gaze may establish a connection with the viewer without guaranteeing compositional dominance, while a prominent character may also appear isolated or burdened. Although the selected Pakistani and Turkish visuals share several visual strategies, they differ in how these strategies are arranged and the meanings they suggest. The findings therefore emphasize the importance of interpreting gender representation within the specific visual context of each promotional image rather than assuming uniform patterns across the two national contexts.

The study has several limitations. First, the sample consists of only six purposively selected promotional visuals, which limits the range of gender representations examined and does not support generalizations about the Pakistani or Turkish television industries as a whole. Second, the selected visuals differ in promotional format and narrative premise, which may influence their compositional arrangements and complicate direct comparison. Third, the sample does not include a solitary male-centred composition, limiting the balance of the visual configurations available for comparison. Finally, the study focuses on promotional visuals rather than complete television episodes. It therefore cannot establish whether the gender meanings suggested by these images are sustained, challenged, or transformed throughout the dramas' narratives.

The study has implications for visual discourse analysis, gender representation research, and media literacy. Theoretically, it demonstrates the value of applying the three metafunctions of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar together to examine how gendered meanings are constructed through the interaction of visual resources. In particular, the distinction between interactive engagement and compositional prominence offers a useful analytical perspective for avoiding interpretations based solely on gaze or character visibility. Methodologically, the study illustrates how a structured visual framework can support comparisons between promotional materials from different cultural contexts while preserving attention to the specific features of each image. These implications concern the analytical value of the approach and the selected cases; they do not establish broader national patterns or audience effects.

Future research could extend this study by analysing a larger and more systematically balanced corpus of Pakistani and Turkish television promotional visuals. Including a wider range of genres, character configurations, and promotional formats would allow researchers to examine whether the patterns identified here recur across different materials. Further studies could also include solitary male-centred compositions to provide a more balanced comparison of gendered visual arrangements. A longitudinal approach comparing promotional visuals with selected scenes from the corresponding dramas could investigate whether meanings suggested by promotional images are maintained or revised within the narratives. In addition, researchers could combine Visual Grammar with audience interviews or reception studies to explore how viewers interpret gender, authority, vulnerability, and prominence in promotional imagery.

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