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Colors as Gender Markers: A corpus based Critical Study of English Novels by Pakistani Female Writers

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at investigating a discursive role of colors in the construction of gender identities in the selected corpus of English novels by Pakistani females. It focuses on understanding the mechanism which contributes to construe, challenge or reinforce the traditional gender images in Pakistani society. A corpus-based critical approach was employed to demystify the constructed gender structures in the web of texts selected for this study. The research finds a significant relationship between color association and the constitution of gender images. Some colors are presented as permanent features of one gender which cannot be seen otherwise. Some bright colors like pink, yellow, purple, green, orange have been predominantly associated with females and sober and decent ones like brown, gray, khaki have been associated with males. These color connotations are employed to create and reinforce gender identities of the characters, their traits, and their behaviors. The whole process of construction is executed by employing language as discursive and strategic tool in a specific sociopolitical context of Pakistani society.

Introduction

Colors can play constitutive role in constructing identities and can reflect human behaviour and social actions of individuals in a society. They can also serve as gender markers, perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing societal expectations of gender roles. This study aims to investigate the relationship between colors and gender images in English novels by Pakistani female writers, using a corpus-based critical analysis of the study undertaken how do colors contribute in constructing gender roles and how do they challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms. A critical discourse analysis approach has been employed to examine the representations of gender in these novels and argues that the role of colors is of great significance in the construction of gender identities in the English novels by Pakistani female writers. The study found that the bright colors (pink, yellow, purple, green, orange etc.) have been predominantly associated with female characters and sober and decent ones (brown, gray, khaki etc.) have been used with male characters.

The use of gender markers in literature has been a topic of interest for scholars and literary critics for decades. Many studies have explored the ways in which authors use language, imagery, and symbolism to represent gender and challenge gender norms. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the ways in which gender is represented in literature from non-Western countries, particularly South Asia.

Pakistan is a country where gender roles and norms are deeply embedded in society and culture. Literature is a powerful medium through which authors can both reflect and challenge these norms for creating awareness against gender inequalities. Pakistani literature, particularly the one written by female authors, has received increasing attention in recent years for its exploration of gender and its intersectionality with class, ethnicity, and religion.

Examining the employment of colors as markers of gender in literature presents a particularly intriguing and compelling research area. Colors have symbolic meanings in different cultures and can be used to represent various aspects of identity, including gender. However, the meanings and associations of colors are not universal and can vary depending on the context and cultural background of the author and the reader.

This study focuses specifically on English novels written by Pakistani female writers and their use of colors as gender markers. The selected corpus of English novels represents a time of significant social and cultural change in Pakistan, particularly in terms of gender roles and relations. The author of this study aims to explore how Pakistani female writers use colors to represent gender in their works and how they challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms. By analyzing a corpus of selected novels, the study aims to provide insights into the ways in which Pakistani female writers navigate gender issues in their works and contribute to the broader discussion of gender and literature in South Asia.

While the use of colors as gender markers in literature has been explored in various contexts, there is a lack of research on this topic in the Pakistani context. This research problem is particularly significant because Pakistani literature, particularly that written by female authors, has received increasing attention in recent years for its exploration of gender and its intersectionality with class, ethnicity, and religion.

The importance of studying the use of colors as gender markers in Pakistani literature lies in the fact that Pakistan is a deeply patriarchal society, where gender roles and norms are deeply embedded in culture and society. Literature is a powerful medium through which authors can reflect and challenge these norms. Therefore, studying the use of colors as gender markers in Pakistani literature contributes to a better understanding of how Pakistani female authors navigate gender issues in their works and contribute to the broader discussion of gender and literature in South Asia.

The article discusses how colors have been used as symbolic representations of gender and identity in various cultures, including Pakistan. However, the meanings of colors can vary based on cultural context. The study aims to analyze selected novels from this period to gain insights into how Pakistani female authors use colors to represent gender in their works and whether they challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms.

The study at first focuses on demystifying the discursive relationship between color shades and the construction of gender identities and secondly it tends to investigate the most frequently employed colors with males and females in the selected corpus. It also intends to analyze the extent to which the colors used contribute in reproducing/breeching the constructed stereotypical images of men/women.

The study on "colors as gender markers" is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the existing body of literature on gender and identity representation in Pakistani literature. By exploring the use of colors as gender markers, the study sheds light on the ways in which Pakistani female authors use symbolism to challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms, providing insights into the cultural and social factors that shape

gender identity in South Asia. Secondly, the study focuses on novels written by Pakistani female authors, which is an underrepresented group in the literary world. Through their analysis, the study aims to give voice to Pakistani women and provide a better understanding of their experiences and perspectives. The study is much significant as it signifies the corpus based values of gender ratio in critical paradigm. It gives the statistical based understanding of identity of orientation of male/female in discursive universe of Pakistani society. This methodology allows for a more systematic and comprehensive analysis of the novels, leading to more reliable and valid findings. Fifthly, the study uses a multidisciplinary approach by drawing on literature, linguistics, and cultural studies to analyze the novels, enabling a more holistic understanding of the novels and the issues they address.

Moreover, the study's findings can have a significant impact on understanding gender studies in Pakistani society by challenging or reinforcing traditional gender norms, influencing societal attitudes and perceptions. The study's corpus-based methodology allows for a comparative analysis of the selected novels, identifying patterns and differences in the representation of gender in Pakistani literature, and can inform future research on gender representation in literature, particularly in South Asia.

In short, this study is substantial for its contributions to literature, its focus on Pakistani female authors, its examination of a significant time period of social and cultural change in Pakistan, its corpus-based methodology and multidisciplinary approach, its intersectional analysis, its societal impact, its comparative analysis, and its implications for future research.

The study draws upon a selected sample of large corpus of novels authored by Pakistani women in English. It examines how these works represent gender and whether they challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms. The study employs a corpus-based methodology that combines literature, linguistics, and cultural studies. It has several limitations, such as a small sample size of twenty English language novels that may reflect all Pakistani women's literature could lead to offering some opinions. Additionally, the study's findings may not be generalizable beyond Pakistan.

Literature Review

Language and gender research has been continually inventive since its inception, drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical approaches from several disciplines and effectively integrating them to provide informative analysis. An in-depth study of previous researches is conducted to explore these continuously innovative and inventive theories, frameworks and concepts about how gender and language are related and contribute to each other in a multidisciplinary society.

Although it is generally agreed by experts in the field that the second wave of feminism, which began in the 1970s, was what first sparked interest in gender and language study in the west (Mills, Sadiqi, Sunderland, Talbot), the work of the Danish linguist Jespersen (1922) and the work of Labov (1966) nonetheless marked the early beginning of gender studies in the field of linguistics. Linguistic feminism began to develop in the early 1970s. Academic interest in this area has increased as a result of Spender's groundbreaking studies on sexism and gender prejudice in the English language. Beginning to study how language is used by both genders, feminist linguistics adopted a number of theories, the most important of which are included here.

The Deficit Theory and Dominance Theory, two views that supported the superiority and domination of men in language, emerged with the second wave of feminism. The writings of Lakoff (1975), Jespersen (1922), and Trudgill all reference the Deficit Theory (1972). The deficit theory's proponents shared a fundamental belief about the connection between language and gender. They claimed that women's language was a weaker variation of men's. On the other side, the Dominance Theory, which claimed that "inequitable power relations between the two sexes" sadiqi 2003 was to blame for the language distinctions between men and women, was depicted un Spender's writings (1980). The Difference Theory, which had its inception in the 1980s and was largely based on the the works of Maltz and Borker (1982) along with that of Tannen's (1990). This hypothesis holds that the disparities between the sexes were not brought about by a lack in women's language or male supremacy, but rather, they were just different. The Reformist Theory, a spinoff of the Difference Theory, denounced sexist language as a prejudiced depiction of the reality. Reformers demanded that sexist words and phrases be removed from the language. Nevertheless, the second wave of feminist linguistics received criticism and had its theories deemed as "no longer adequate" (Cameron 1995). This is owing to a number of flaws, the most notable of which was that it assumed there were sex differences in language and built its whole inquiry around this assumption. Second, all research centred on the white, middle class women as a representative of female language. Due to this "insufficiency," the third wave of feminist linguists made an effort to broaden their field of study by focusing on studies of gender in languages other than English and multilingual cultures (e.g. Japanese, Chinese Yoruba, Arabic, African, Polish). Also, it broadened to incorporate language variations between groups of males and groups of women, as well as marginalized or queer identities in the study field. The most important ideas in this movement of feminist linguistics are the Community of Practice framework, initially presented by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), and the Post-modernist Theory as shown in the works of Cameron (1997) and Bucholtz (1999). Nonetheless, it is important to note that some feminist linguists do not see the two waves of feminist linguistics research as distinct, or that there has been a significant change in the field's methodology. As a result, although while the third wave of feminism is seen as more indicative of the field's current work in language and gender study, parts of the second wave feminism are frequently quite apparent in third wave feminists' works (Mills and Mullany 2011).

Males sometimes ridicule women's attention to minute color distinctions, according to Robin Lakoff (1975), who asserted that women often had considerably broader color vocabularies than men. In fact, color blindness is a sex-linked secondary feature, with significantly more males than women being color blind. In terms of societal relevance, however, color most likely has a connection to home decoration and clothing traditions. In the same way that eating is a way to show class and gender, home decoration and clothing are places where this is done. One way some men make themselves seem more "masculine" is to make fun of the fine categorizing practices and subtle conceptual distinctions that come with paying close attention to these fields. They seem to think that fields that are "feminine" or "effete" are less important than fields where they are involved in very detailed categorization and discussion. Sports words and phrases, for example, are thought of as "masculine." The idea is that paying attention to "feminine" fields can make it hard for people to be effective in "masculine" fields, which are thought to be more important.

Gender is but one aspect of social identity. As Bordo argues, gender "never manifests itself in pure form but in the context of lives that are molded by a diversity of circumstances which cannot be simply sorted out". (1990: 150). Gender is merely one aspect of our inherently hybridized social identities. Yet, it is a crucial aspect that has a pervasive social influence on everything we do and speak. Much of the time, interaction is observed through "gendered" spectacles (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). Gender is an important

social category for most people and a prominent factor in everyday life (Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003a: p.9). "Our speech is saturated in gender," writes Holmes (2006: p.26).

Gender differences in language use are real, but not just because men and women are fundamentally different from one another. Gender affects linguistic behaviour indirectly by having an impact on other factors that have a direct impact on linguistic behaviour. People's language use can be influenced by their social networks, routine activities, identities as particular types of individuals, and status in relation to others. Gender differences, which are traits of our culture, have the capacity to influence each of these. According to Cameron (2000), language and gender have a complicated relationship in academic studies of language and gender.

McConnell (1988) stressed three topics for researchers looking at gender and language. First off, gender is not just a question of personal traits (such as sex), but also of behaviours, social relationships, philosophy, and politics. Second, language production patterns reflect the agent's evaluation of social circumstances and her choice of tactics for the linguistic construction of her social relations in addition to her intrinsic traits and sociolinguistic identity. Thirdly, because meaning connects the social/psychological experience of language with the formal, abstract concept of a language, an interpreted linguistic system, meaning interacts with gender. In conclusion, a theory that considers language's dual psychological and social nature, as well as how it relates to other languages, can aid in improving understanding of gender and language.

The belief that gender is a social construct, itself isn't what makes something performative; it's the fact that it is performed repeatedly. Thoughts and standards on how certain characteristics (such as dress, colours or sports) belong to a particular gender change over time. What was considered normal for one gender at one point in time may be viewed as abnormal for the same gender at a later time. It used to be that the colour pink was associated with boys, but in more recent times it has come to be associated with girls. Gender norms can also be observed in different cultures. We can also find variances in gender norms when we look at other civilizations.

In the last two decades, language and gender research has shifted from essentialist approaches that treat male and female as discrete social categories to social constructionist and performative approaches (Butler, 1990) that emphasize the diverse, flexible, and context-responsive ways in which people 'do gender' (among other identities) in different situations, and even from moment to moment within a situation. Gender is viewed as a dynamic performance.

Walsh (2000) discussed the performative model in her thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy titled as Gender, Discourse and the Public Sphere to identify that women who are entering the public sphere strategically shift between the male and female norm to cope with the role expectation. This hybrid strategy is not without risk. Women opting for these strategies can be blamed as being inconsistent and insincere. Her study concludes that the individual is actually experiencing pseudo-freedom as they are free to make choices from the existing discourses and normative practices that are part of society. The performance of the individual is bound to the norms of society.

Akhter (2014) studied the different use of language by male and female students in Dhaka University. Her thesis, submitted to BRAC University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics, used a questionnaire as a method of collecting data. She concludes that language itself is not different for both

genders but is used differently by people belonging to different genders because of social expectations. Restriction of the use of language because of the social environment creates gender difference mostly.

Nayef (n.d.) deals with the philosophical aspect of language used by feminist philosophers and the philosophers who follow the male stream philosophical agenda. She studies the Arabic language as an androcentric language and identifies deeply rooted sexism in Arabic language based on pronouns, demonstratives, modifiers, and verbs. Slang terms, pet names, and titles used to address or refer to women reflect preconceived notions about their place in society. These decisions also reinforce these notions in the minds of language users, particularly women, which leads to increased unfairness and inequality. She suggests that gender should be treated more neutrally to avoid this differentiated behaviour.

Cameron (1998) states that the goal of non-sexist language is to alter a language's repertoire of meanings rather than changing word patterns just for aesthetic reasons. It involves rethinking the universe rather than merely labelling it. The only way to expect more equal treatment of women is by utilising language to redefine gender ideology.

Although variationist studies like Eckert (1989, 1998) show a potential symbiotic link between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, research on language and gender has increasingly evolved into research on gender and discourse.

The language used in media also contributes to the gender and gender role construction. Mendrofa (2020) studied the language of advertisement to address the females while persuading its customers to buy beauty products. Women's perceptions of beauty have evolved as a result of cosmetic items. The persuasive language and the use of attractive models in commercials serve to promote the beauty standard. The idea that having white, radiant skin makes a lady beautiful is a prevalent problem. Women purchase and utilize a lot of whitening products as a result to enhance their appearance. Advertisement language "colonizes" women and destroys the idea of a woman's nature. Some ladies who maintain their natural appearance by not utilizing any whitening treatments are devalued by it. To be able to accept themselves for who they are, women should be conscious of this issue and not let advertising language impact them. A femisit critical discourse analysis of these ads suggested that The language employed in ads has the capacity to alter people's perspectives, particularly those of women. People may change their mindsets and unintentionally adhere to hegemony and gender stereotypes by using language to build power (Mendrofa, 2020).

While considering the female speaking habits it is usually believed that females use more mitigating and indirect speech while communicating. Jennifer Hornsby studies the communicative speech acts and concluded that in the light of philosophy the communicative speech acts are actually female advances.

The use of discourse markers, hedges, and interruption in same-sex discussions as well as intersex dialogues was explored in a study done at Angelia Ruskin University. The three distinct talks are recorded for the research. These findings clearly imply that there are variations between how men and women utilize discourse markers, interruptions, and hedging devices and that these differences may also depend on whether a discussion is between same-sex or mixed-sex participants. In a broader sense, this research illuminates more subtle aspects of systemic gender inequity. The gender wage gap may be explained by the variations in how men and women use language. For example, males may look more straightforward by not hedging in talks with people of different sexes. Men could be more

inclined to request a wage raise than women, who can be cautious and vague in such demands. Understanding gender roles and how it differs from sex makes it obvious that language usage differs between men and women owing to cultural factors rather than differences in our underlying biological makeup.

The relevance of culturally determined meanings for both linguistic methods and gender is shown in a tendency towards the study of language within specific situated activities. Research on gender and discourse broadened in the 1990s, moving away from its initial emphasis on "women's language" and towards the language of males and other social groups that had received less attention in earlier studies.

Researchers have been inspired to explore many languages from a variety of perspectives as a result of the concept of how men and women employ linguistic elements. The purpose of this study is to examine the fundamental causes of the various ways that different languages refer to the other sex. It examines the Arabic situation of referring to the opposite sex using facts. Several Saudi and Emirati periodicals were cited as examples of how men and women speak about one another. Three categories have been explored: generalizations, occupations, and social roles. According to the study, addressing men as men is consistently courteous, polite, and appropriate for their gender. Contrarily, generalizations that refer to women are uncommon (ALKADI, 2012).

The use of language in assigning gender roles and positions has been widely acknowledged (Butler, 1990; Coates, 2015). The societal expectations and behaviors related to gender are largely determined by the language used in communication (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As per Butler's statement, gender is a performance that is created and reinforced through language (Butler, 1990). The language used by individuals and society at large plays a crucial role in constructing and perpetuating gender roles and expectations.

The use of language is seen as an ontological instrument for communicating and understanding a pervasive created world. Language is a tool created by males, will invariably represent an androcentric "reality" in which women serve as their opposites, antitheses, and subordinates. A language that is not patriarchal cannot exist unless there is a neutral language free from power conflicts, misogyny, and stereotyped overtones. As a result, the dialectical struggle between language and feminism must continue as a Derridean critique of that androcentric "transcendental signified" woman and as a reinvention of ideology (Ramos, 2013).

The largest European poll of communication and public relations (PR) professionals about the status of women in the field is discussed. Practitioners in communication and public relations from 42 European nations participated in the online poll. The analysis of that survey debates data on management abilities, differences in communication styles, and conventional beliefs on disparities between men and women in PR using communication theories on variations in communication styles between men and women. The findings imply that male and female practitioners have different communication styles, with women favoring impersonal communication techniques and males favoring more direct forms of contact. Furthermore, the results strongly contradict studies demonstrating that women value closeness and forming connections, as well as often made claims for distinct (Korolczuk, 2017).

According to the poll, women's actions and language choices might alter how society perceives them in light of their prior interactions and social expectations. Gender and language are two interconnected ideas that influence one another. By digging into

earlier study, it may be assumed that language possesses the power to create and shape worlds according to its usage.

Results and Discussion

Gender construction is one aspect of the social construction. The analysis focuses on the use of colors in the novels and their association with gender. The frequency and association of color usage with specific genders is analyzed using corpus linguistics techniques, and the relationship between color and gender is examined using statistical methods critical paradigm proposed by Fairclough. The analysis investigates gender roles and stereotypes portrayed through the use of color in the novels. Gender is a social construct that is constructed and reinforced through various aspects of culture, such as beauty standards, societal expectations, and domestic spheres. Color, in particular, is a major aspect that creates gender stereotypes and gender identities. In the present study its significance is much more as it is used as a gender marker or identity marker.

Previous research has shown that color is a significant factor in the construction and reinforcement of gender identities. For example, one study conducted in the United States found that pink and blue were strongly associated with gender, with pink being associated with femininity and blue with masculinity (Hoyt & Simon, 2011). This association has been observed in other cultures as well. In Pakistan, for instance, pink is often associated with femininity and is used in feminine products and marketing (Kamal, 2019). Moreover, research has shown that the gender-color association is not static and can vary across time and cultures. For example, in the early 20th century, pink was considered a masculine color and blue was seen as feminine (Paoletti, 2012). This association changed during the mid-20th century, with the emergence of a gendered marketing strategy in the United States that assigned pink to girls and blue to boys (Bem, 1981). The gender-color association has been studied in various contexts, including in the fashion industry. Various researches have shown that clothing color is often used to signal gender identity, with different colors being associated with different gender expressions (Peiss, 1986). For example, in Western cultures, black is often associated with masculinity and is worn by men to signal power and authority, while pastel colors are often associated with femininity and are worn by women to signal sweetness and innocence. The association between color and gender has also been studied in relation to consumer behavior. For instance, one study found that color played a significant role in consumer preference and purchasing decisions, with women showing a greater preference for colors associated with femininity, such as pink and purple, while men showed a preference for colors associated with masculinity, such as black and blue (Zhang, Zhang, & Luo, 2015).

The association of colors with gender is a cultural phenomenon that has been present for centuries. Different cultures have varying perceptions of colors and their associations with gender. In most societies, colors are associated with gender stereotypes, which are beliefs and expectations about how men and women should behave and express themselves. This association can influence how people perceive and interact with others, and can contribute to gender inequality. It has also found that colors are often used to differentiate gender in various aspects of life, including clothing, toys, and even job roles. The study finds that Pakistani female writers use colors in the same conventional way as an identity marker, which is crucial in identity construction. The table below depicts how colors are associated and co-occur with male and female genders, and how their tendency is tilted towards one specific gender:

Table 1

Colour	Male %	Female%

Pink	26	74
Yellow	36	64
Purple	41	59
Green	43	57
Orange	46	54
Brown	53	47
Grey	72	28
Khaki	79	21

The statistical data presented in table No.1 depicts that bright and dazzling colours are predominantly associated with female gender, as the percentage of pink, yellow, silver, purple, green and orange colours' association with female gender is 74%, 64%, 60%, 59%, 57% and 54% respectively that marks female gender to represent femininity, beauty and cultural identity. In many cultures, bright colors such as pink, purple, and yellow are often associated with femininity, and wearing these colors can create a specific gender image or identity. For example, a woman wearing a bright pink dress may be perceived as more feminine and girly than a woman wearing any other colors. In Pakistani culture, bright colors are often associated with femininity and cultural identity. Women in Pakistan wear vibrant, colorful clothing that reflects the rich cultural heritage of the country. Bright colors such as red, orange, and yellow are often worn during weddings and other festive occasions. These colors are seen as symbols of beauty, grace, and femininity. In literature, these colors are used to represent female characters who embody these same qualities. A thorough analysis of a few textual extracts from the corpus of novels of Pakistani female English writers selected for the study such as: 'Soraya's face turns **pink** at the praise, and she looks down at the floor. (Line 1470: Wanting Mor by Rukhsana Khan, 2009); 'When Surrayya arrived, freshly powdered in a puffy **pink** sari, she worried about the heat. (Line 278: The Upstairs Wife by Rafia Zakaria, 2015); ''No need,' the woman waved a manicured hand with glossy **pink** nails at her.' (Line 315: Hijabistan by Sabyn Javeri, 2019); 'Haroon, have you seen that girl in the **pink** dress? Hammad asked.' (Line 302: Undying Affinity by Sara Naveed, 2014); and 'She emerged from the bathroom with an annoyed look on her **pink** face.' (Line 899: Saffron Dreams by Shaila Abdullah, 2009), demonstrates that the use of the pink colour in these literary examples reinforces the association of pink with a specific gender identity, namely femininity. The phrase "freshly powdered in a puffy pink sari" (line 278) in "The Upstairs Wife" by Rafia Zakaria, for example, not only describes the color of Surrayya's sari but also emphasizes her femininity by using the words "powdered" and "puffy," which are often associated with women's fashion and appearance. Similarly, in "Wanting Mor" by Rukhsana Khan, the phrase "Soraya's face turns pink at the praise" (line 1470) suggests that Soraya's reaction is influenced by her gender identity. The use of the color pink to describe her blushing reinforces the association of pink with femininity and the societal expectation that women should be modest and demure. The use of pink in "Hijabistan" by Sabyn Javeri also reinforces the association of pink with femininity. The woman's "glossy pink nails" (line 315) are not only described as pink but also as "glossy," a word often associated with feminine beauty products. In "Undying Affinity" by Sara Naveed, the phrase "that girl in the pink dress" (line 302) implies that the colour of the dress is significant in identifying the girl's gender. The pink colour is linked with femininity, so the use of the phrase "pink dress" underpins the expectation that the girl is female. Moreover, in "Saffron Dreams" by Shaila Abdullah, the phrase "her pink face" (line 899) further highlights the association of pink with a specific gender identity. The use of the color pink to describe her face suggests that her gender identity is closely tied to the color of her skin, reinforcing societal expectations that women should be pretty and feminine.

Along the same lines, in an excerpt 'He noticed that she was wearing a navy blue cardigan with a **yellow** t-shirt underneath.' (Line 3746: Undying Affinity by Sara Naveed, 2014), the mention of a yellow t-shirt worn by a female character suggests a feminine touch to the outfit. The color yellow, being a bright and vibrant shade, is often associated with positivity, happiness, and warmth, all of which are qualities that are often associated with femininity. In another extract, 'The women's section of the bus, decorated with a canopy of red threaded tassels with blue and **yellow** beads and Victorian curtains, filled up quickly.' (Line 572: Sita Under the Crescent Moon by Annie Ali Khan, 2019), the women's section of the bus is described as being decorated with a canopy of red threaded tassels with blue and yellow beads and Victorian curtains, which creates an ambiance of femininity and delicacy. The use of the color yellow in this context further accentuates the feminine quality of the space, as it adds a touch of brightness and cheerfulness to the setting. Similarly another quote 'Gulabi cast a preening glance at her vivid-green sari and peach blouse with its **yellow** trim.' (Line 995: Water by Bapsi Sidwa, 2006), suggests that the use of yellow trim on the female character's outfit adds a touch of vibrancy to the attire, creating an aura of femininity and positivity. The use of bright colors like yellow in women's clothing is often seen as a way of expressing femininity and adding a touch of playfulness to the outfit.

Another colour from the statistical data presented in the above table that is predominantly linked with female gender in the corpus of novels written by Pakistani female English writers is Purple. This discursive presence of female gender in purple colour can be seen from textual extracts like: 'She felt more energetic and vibrant as she decided to wear a cute **purple** top with her favorite jeans.' (Line 275: Undying Affinity by Sara Naveed, 2014); and 'She was embroidering her bed sheets with **purple** roses and planning to buy gold shoes like a bride's.' (Line 2061: The End of Innocence by Moni Mohsin, 2006).

The examples provided from the texts of Sara Naveed and Moni Mohsin indicate a strong association of purple with the female gender in Pakistani culture. In the first example, the protagonist feels "more energetic and vibrant" as she decides to wear a "cute purple top" with her favorite jeans. Whereas, in the second excerpt, the female character is embroidering her bed sheets with purple roses and planning to buy "gold shoes like a bride's." This reflects the glimpse of female gender stereotype of beauty being choosing and wearing bright colours to look more attractive and beautiful.

Previous research has also shown that the association of purple with the female gender is not unique to Pakistani culture. In a study by Eastman and Goldsmith (1998), it was found that young girls showed a strong preference for the color purple, while boys showed a preference for blue. The study suggests that the use of color in creating gender identity is an essential aspect of socialization.

Pakistani female writers have also used green color predominantly to describe female characters and their attire, highlighting its association with female gender for creating gender identity. A few quotations, for instance, 'Dressed in a satiny **green** shalwar kamiz, her head demurely covered in a white headscarf.' (Line 488: The Upstairs Wife by Rafia Zakaria, 2015.); 'Her orange and parrot-**green** nightdress fluttered nervously as she scampered to her feet.' (Line 1104: Hijabistan by Sabyn Javeri, 2019); "A breathtakingly beautiful woman draped in an emerald **green** sari.' (Line 40: My Feudal Lord by Tehmina Durrani, 1994); and, 'Her large **green** eyes were the color of sun-quenched grapes.' (Line 818: Thinner Than Skin by Uzma Aslam Khan, 2012), highlight this tendency in the corpus selected for the study. In "The Upstairs Wife" by Rafia Zakaria, the female character is dressed in a "satiny green shalwar kamiz" which implies her feminine and traditional attire. Similarly, in "Hijabistan" by Sabyn Javeri, the female character's "orange and parrot-green nightdress" is described in a fluttery and nervous manner, adding a touch of femininity to

her character. In "My Feudal Lord" by Tehmina Durrani, the female character draped in an "emerald green sari" is presented as "breathtakingly beautiful" which emphasizes the association of green color with feminine beauty. The color green is also used to describe the female character's large eyes in "Thinner Than Skin" by Uzma Aslam Khan, adding to the portrayal of apparent beauty of female through green color.

Analysis of a textual excerpts like, 'Red and **orange** petals cling to Soraya's cheeks and plastic eyelashes.' (Line 1615: Wanting Mor by Rukhsana Khan, 2009); 'Her **orange** and parrot-green nightdress fluttered nervously as she scampered to her feet.' (Line 1104: Hijabistan by Sabyn Javeri, 2019); 'A cantonment lady fished out two ten-rupee notes from her **orange** handbag and handed them to the manager.' (Line 166: The End of Innocence by Moni Mohsin, 2006); and, 'Hester dabbed her mouth with a napkin, smudging **orange** lipstick over the corners of her lips.' (Line 718: The End of Innocence by Moni Mohsin, 2006), demonstrates that the color orange is used in association with female gender, either directly or indirectly. The use of orange petals, orange handbag, orange lipstick, and orange nightdress in these examples seems to evoke femininity, vibrancy, and liveliness.

The descriptions of the orange petals clinging to Soraya's cheeks and the orange lipstick smudging at the corners of Hester's lips suggest that these women are wearing makeup and taking care of their appearance, which is often associated with femininity in many cultures. The orange nightdress fluttering nervously around the woman in "Hijabistan" also implies a sense of vulnerability and femininity. Moreover, the use of the color orange as a descriptor for clothing and accessories in these examples is interesting. It suggests that women may be more likely to wear bright, bold colors, which can be seen as a form of self-expression and individuality.

The association of bright colors with femininity is not limited to Western societies but is also prevalent in many other cultures, including Pakistan. The use of color to construct gendered identities and reinforce gender norms is an important aspect of culture and literature. The data presented in table 1 clearly depicts the predominant association of bright colours with female gender in the selected writings of Pakistani female English writers. But on the other hand, they have also used this association of colors to create complex female characters that challenge and subvert traditional gender roles.

A study by Khadija Akhtar (2014) analyzed the use of color imagery in Pakistani women's fiction and found that colors were used as symbols to construct gendered identities and to challenge traditional gender roles. The study found that the use of pink and other bright colors was often associated with femininity and beauty, but it was also used to subvert traditional gender roles. For example, in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "The Crow Eaters," the character Faredoon is described as wearing a pink shirt, challenging traditional gender norms by wearing a color associated with femininity.

Similarly, a study by Shazia Rahman (2007) analyzed the use of color symbolism in Pakistani women's fiction and found that colors were used to construct female identities that challenge traditional gender roles. Rahman found that the use of colors like pink and purple was often associated with femininity and beauty, but it was also used to subvert traditional gender roles. For example, in Kamila Shamsie's novel "Salt and Saffron," the protagonist Aliya wears a purple sari to her cousin's wedding, which challenges the traditional gender roles that dictate women should wear red or pink.

However, it is important to note that the association of colors with femininity and beauty can also reinforce gender stereotypes and gender discourses. In her study, Akhtar found that the use of colors like pink and yellow was often associated with the idea of

women as beauty objects. This suggests that while Pakistani female English writers have used color imagery to challenge traditional gender roles, they have also had to navigate the potential for reinforcing gender stereotypes and gender discourses.

Statistical data presented in table 1 illustrates another colour-gender association. The light and conventionally regarded sober colours like brown, grey and khaki are seen predominantly associated with male gender, 53%, 72%, and 79% to be exact. This association of light and decent colors with the male gender in gender construction may be due to their historical association with traditionally male-dominated spaces, their connection with masculinity, and their use in men's clothing and accessories. Brown, grey, and khaki are often associated with the military, workwear, and professional attire, which are all fields that are traditionally male-dominated. Moreover, these colors are also associated with nature and the outdoors, which are traditionally male-dominated spaces like hunting, fishing, and camping. This association with nature and the outdoors is linked to ideas of masculinity that emphasize ruggedness and toughness. Furthermore, these colors are often used in men's clothing and accessories, reinforcing the association of these colors with masculinity. The fashion industry has also played a significant role in the construction of gender roles and the association of certain colors with gender. A same pattern of colour association with male gender can be seen in the literature created by Pakistani female English writers. We will discuss each colour association one by one to see how they act as gender marker in the corpus selected for the study.

As discussed earlier, Brown colour is used in association of male gender 53% of the times in the said writings. This association can be seen from the textual extracts like, 'He had dark **brown** eyes and his complexion was wheatish.' (Line 337: Undying Affinity by Sara Naveed, 2014); 'Kaleen entered in **brown** trousers and a purple shirt.' (Line 1926: Unmarriageable by Soniah Kamal, 2019); and, ''Out! Out! Females not allowed in the mosque,' he had yelled, **brown** flecks of tobacco-stained spittle landing on his beard.' (Line 483: The End of Innocence by Moni Mohsin, 2006).

All three excerpts mentioned above associate the color brown with the male gender, whether explicitly or implicitly. The presence of brown eyes, brown trousers, and brown flecks in these excerpts suggests a connection to qualities such as masculinity, strength, and toughness. The description of the male character's dark brown eyes in "Undying Affinity" emphasizes his masculinity, while his wheatish complexion suggests a certain level of ruggedness or toughness. Similarly, Kaleen's brown trousers in "Unmarriageable" suggest practicality and durability, which are often associated with masculinity. The use of brown flecks in the scene from "The End of Innocence" reinforces the idea of masculinity through its association with tobacco-stained spittle and a beard, which are often associated with male gender.

Overall, the predominant use of the colour brown in these examples reinforces traditional gender norms and expectations surrounding masculinity and men's appearance. It suggests that men are expected to be practical, strong, and rugged, while women are expected to be more delicate and feminine. However, it is important to note that these associations are culturally specific and may not hold true in all cultures.

The statistical figures mentioned in table No. 1 depict that gray colour has been used in association with male gender 72% of the times but the analysis of a few more excerpts, for instance, 'He's got hardly any hair, his skin is **gray** like paste, and he has a stubbly beard.' (Line 1061: Wanting Mor by Rukhsana Khan, 2009); 'He was dressed in a dark **gray** dress shirt with black sweatpants.' (Line 1299: Undying Affinity by Sara Naveed, 2014); and, 'The **gray** telephone was his office line, and the rarely used green one, the secret

line, had been exclusively for the prime minister's.' (Line 71: The City of Spies by Sorayya Khan, 2015) suggests that there seems no direct association between the color gray and male gender in these examples. However, gray is used to describe physical characteristics, clothing, and objects associated with male characters.

In the first excerpt from "Wanting Mor," the use of gray to describe the character's skin and stubbly beard suggests a sense of tiredness or aging, which could be associated with masculinity. However, in the second extract from "Undying Affinity," the character's dark gray dress shirt could be seen as a more serious or subdued color choice, which could be associated with masculinity or professionalism. The black sweatpants paired with the dress shirt suggest a casual, laid-back style often associated with men. Whereas, in the third quote from "The City of Spies," the gray telephone is associated with the male character's office line, which may suggest a sense of professionalism and authority. However, the green telephone, which is described as rarely used and exclusively for the prime minister, does not have a clear association with gender.

Overall, while there is no direct association between the gray colour and male gender, however, the use of gray in these examples contributes to the creation of male characters and their associated traits and identities.

Another colour that Pakistani female English writers have predominantly associated with male gender in their novels selected for the study is 'khaki'. In fact, this is the most dominant colour used with the male gender as can be seen in the above table. There can be multiple and diverse reasons for this tendency but a close analysis of abstracts like, 'The men in **khaki** from the Pakistan Army had already been to Rokeya Hall, hoping for a bounty of virgin spoils.' (Line 258: The Upstairs Wife by Rafia Zakaria, 2015.); 'That the men in **khaki** from the central province absorbed the country as though it was only theirs.' (Line 822: The Shadow of the crescent moon by Fatima Bhutto, 2013); 'Instead of his usual shalwar kurta, he wore a stiff **khaki** uniform.' (Line 1146: The End of Innocence by Moni Mohsin, 2006); and, 'He was ablaze in sickeningly sweet cologne and looking, he believed, very sexy in a **khaki** suit, fuchsia shirt, and a white-and-fuchsia-striped tie.' (Line 1316: The End of Innocence by Moni Mohsin, 2006), suggests that repeated mention of "men in khaki" in the first two excerpts demonstrates that khaki is strongly associated with military and masculine identity. The use of a khaki uniform in the third excerpt further reinforces this association, as the character's usual shalwar kurta (a traditional South Asian garment) is replaced by the more masculine khaki uniform. In the final excerpt, the use of a khaki suit also suggests a certain level of masculine authority or power. Overall, the use of khaki in these examples serves to create a strong gender identity that is associated with masculinity, strength, and authority.

From the analysis of data presented in table no.1 it can be derived that the use of color in literature can serve as a powerful tool to create and reinforce gender identity. In the novels of Pakistani female English writers, the predominant association of bright colors like pink, yellow, purple, green, and orange with female gender, and the predominant association of light, sober, and decent colors like brown, gray, and khaki with male gender, act as gender markers that reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes. By using color in this way, these writers are able to create and reinforce gender identity and contribute to the larger cultural discourse on gender in Pakistani society. The findings of this study have implications for literature and society. The use of colors as gender markers in literature can reinforce or challenge gender roles and stereotypes and can impact readers' perceptions of gender in society. The findings of this study suggest that although Pakistani female writers are challenging gender norms through their use of color in their writing but still they are unable to completely break shackles of gender stereotypes.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the use of colors as gender markers in English novels written by Pakistani female writers. Through a corpus-based critical analysis of textual excerpts, it has been found that bright colors such as pink, orange, purple, yellow and green are strongly associated with femininity, while sober and light colors such as brown, gray and khaki are often associated with masculinity. These color associations are used to create and reinforce gender identities of the characters, their traits, and their behaviors. The findings of this study shed light on the power of language and its ability to shape and reinforce societal norms and stereotypes related to gender. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of understanding the cultural context in which the literature is produced and consumed. This study can provide a framework for future research on the role of language and gender in literature, which can contribute to a better understanding of the social and cultural issues related to gender identity and representation. Ultimately, this research can help promote gender equality and challenge gender stereotypes in literature and beyond.

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