

PORTRAYAL OF VIOLENCE IN PAKISTAN FEATURE FILM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ZIA ERA AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT OF BENAZIR BHUTTO

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the portrayal of violence in Pakistani Feature Films while developing a comparative analysis during the eras of late military dictator General Zia and former Primer Pakistan Benazir Bhutto. As, the two regimes have opposite governance mechanisms; socio-political and religious approaches, wherein cultural activities were practiced with two different lenses. Gen. Zia's regime imposed cultural sanctions on entertainment programs including films, dramas, and newscasting in the name of enforcing the Islamic system of governance, whereas Benazir Bhutto's regime provided freedom of expression for liberal thoughts, showbiz programs, and movies on women empowerment. However, this research hypothesis the physical, verbal, and psychological violence portrayed in feature films produced during the regime of Zia was more than the violence portrayed in movies produced during Benazir's regime. Researchers employed a quantitative approach with content analysis as a research method. Based on the equal allocation method, 5 movies in Urdu and Punjabi languages were taken from Zia's era, and five movies from Benazir Bhutto's era. A coding sheet was developed with the assistance of trained coders while dividing data sets into different variables involved in physical, abusive, and psychologically oppressive acts. The study approved cultivation theory as ideas cultivated through films were gratified by the viewers. The results reveal that the time and scenes portraying violence in movies produced during Zia's era were much higher as compared to the era of Benazir Bhutto. Results showed the steps of women's empowerment and cultural liberation were reflected in the movies. The women felt empowered and free from any religious or cultural or social taboos involved in creative achievements. The research suggested the government should step forward and design certain definite benchmarks with the recommendations to the Censor Board to adopt and ensure violence-free movies.

Keywords: Abusive Language, Comparative Study, Content Analysis, Feature Films, Physical Violence, Women Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Learning about violence leading to the adaptation of aggressive behavior (Krahé, 2014) by the viewers is a phenomenon widely investigated after the invention of television (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Gunter & Harrison, 2013). Violence itself is widely considered an 'entertainment factor' which has different categories including random and described (Anderson, Gentile, & Buckley, 2007; Wulf, Rieger, & Schmitt, 2018). The first nature is associated with small-scale violence (Martin, 2021) whereas the latter is believed to be committed with a determined mindset in a well-planned manner. Such programs have a high ratio of acceptability among a huge proportion of the population watching television (Comstock & Scharrer, 1999; Golshevsky et al., 2020). Public access to the television provided an opportunity for its viewers to be exposed to several sorts of entertainment programs including current affairs, news bulletins, dramas, films, etc. (Shehata, Hopmann, Nord, & Höijer, 2015). Every program was initially liked and hugely watched by the viewers especially the entertainment programs that started attracting viewers to great extent in different parts of the world. Entertainment programs, i.e., dramas, movies,

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and feature films have an impact on the minds of the viewers (Raney, Arpan, Pashupati, & Brill, 2003; Rooney & Bálint, 2018; Vorderer, Knobloch, & Schramm, 2001). Television viewers started learning the same sort of attitude and implementing their learned behaviors in their practical life which were learned from television programs (Shanahan, Shanahan, James, & Morgan, 1999; Wen, Josiam, Spears, & Yang, 2018).

Effects of television viewing assembled social scientists, societal stakeholders, and other policymakers at a common point to develop a comprehensive strategy or a framework for media operations. As the phenomenon involved all the viewers across the globe, accordingly, various states and countries chalked out their own guidelines for the operation of the television. They developed a code of ethics with a request to media outlets to implement in true letter and spirit for the sociopsychological well-being of the television viewers (NKANATHA, 2019). As discussed above, television programs are of different natures and a movie is an entertainment product that engages the audiences with pin-drop silence, thus, making a huge impact on their minds (Walmsley, 2019). A movie can truly affect the cultural and social patterns of the viewers (Reyes, 2016; Staiger, 2000) while giving a significant effect on the language of the viewers, dress, dialogues, and routine conversation between the members of the society (Ginsburg, 1995; Sue, 2016).

According to famous filmmakers, a movie has the power to leave a lasting impression on the linguistic structure of the society, molding the imagination level of the viewers and even their thinking style about different socio-political, economic, and even development issues at local, national, regional and at a global level (Kumar, 2020). Ingmar believes only a movie has the power to pass on the art of one civilization to another, from one culture to another culture (Livingston, 2019). During this course of occurrence, a movie definitely changes the mindset of the people watching the film (Engert & Spencer, 2009). We have observed in the recent past that Indian movies were changing the language, lifestyle, and even personality traits of children in Pakistani society (Ahmed, 1992). Indian movies affected Pakistani society to the extent that different individuals including women, children, and young people started to use the words spoken in Indian movies (Mishra, 2002). Accordingly, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had to intervene in the affairs of the entertainment industry, and subsequently, a ban was imposed on Indian movies (Gopal, 2011; Irum, Mittal, & Afzal, 2019).

The critics, however, shared that as Lollywood was producing movies below the mark, lacking artistic and aesthetic sense and lifestyle in accordance with modern needs, therefore, they justified the influx of Indian movies in Pakistani society (Germen, 2010). According to one school of thought, Indian Film Industry was producing movies that carry outclass direction, characterization, and plots which attract viewers, therefore, if we impose the ban, their movies would be watched by the rest of the world (W. Brown et al., 2010). So, when the movies of any country would be watched in any state, the content, language, and impression given in the movies would automatically be transformed from movie to the viewers. For instance, if a Hollywood or Bollywood Movie carries vulgar content, obscenity, violent acts, physical assault, or any other form of violence, then the same would be shifted from among the viewers. Therefore, instead of criticizing or banning movies from other countries, according to them, we need to produce quality movies that may attract our audience.

Significance of Research

With the advent of media especially mass media, different researchers of social sciences including scholars of mass media discipline started analyzing the effects of violent movies on movie lovers. In different parts of the world, a significant literature has been produced to measure and effects, and analyze the portrayal of violent scenes in movies and video games. For instance, Albert Bandura conducted a famous Bobo Doll study to examine the effects of violent scenes in games on the attitudes and subsequent behavior of television viewers (Felson, 1996). The study in hand is an effort to examine the effects of violent scenes on the attitudes and behavior of the viewers. A comparative analysis of movies produced during the two regimes including one military dictator-led regime and the other was a democratic rule was chosen. This study would be helpful for future researchers to further explore the phenomenon with a broader perspective, as this study has analyzed the violent scenes in comparison with music, songs, comedy, and other concepts portrayed in the movies. This study is significant owing to it its contributing element for empowering the public psychologically thus recommending for producers and directors of the movies chalk out certain ways or adopt methods for the production of quality-based movies and dramas.

Problem Statement

Violence in movies or dramas is a primitive subject, with different dimensions in modern times. Different societies have treated this problem with different strategies, laws, norms, social values, and even lifestyles. In the Pakistani context, this is still a big social problem, which affects other fabrics of society including social, cultural, religious, financial, and political structures. It is believed that women are subjected to violence and they are victimized by the hands of males in the patriarchal society of Pakistan where males dominate women. Women circles yet believe that males were oppressing females in different fields including workplaces, offices, educational institutions, and other areas. According to the feminist perspective, women are physically assaulted, thrashed, victimized, and even killed by violent men whose behavior would have been developed after being exposed to crime shows, violent movies, violent acts, etc. This study has tried to address this problem to some extent by developing a comparative analysis of the violent scenes in the movies produced during two different regimes in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this paper are given as:

1. To explore violence in Pakistani feature films during Gen Zia and Benazir Bhutto regimes.
2. To examine the different categories of violence projected in the movies with the lens of comparative analysis of the movies of both regimes.
3. To analyze the role of Pakistani films as a platform for violence promotion during both regimes of Gen Zia and Benazir Bhutto.

Hypotheses

This study has investigated the phenomenon with the following hypotheses:

- H₁:** The verbal violence in films during the Zia era would be greater than in the Benazir Bhutto era
- H₂:** The weaponry violence would be greater in the Zia regime than Benazir Bhutto regime.
- H₃:** The portrayal of physical violence will be greater in terms of time and ratio of violent scenes in the Benazir Bhutto regime than Zia regime
- H₄:** The ratio of violent scenes would be greater in number during the Zia regime than Benazir Bhutto regime

Literature on Violent Movies in Pakistan

According to a study conducted by Benazir Bhutto (2013), Indian Film Industry was the highest film-producing industry in the world after Hollywood. There are tens of thousands of movie lovers across the world who watch movies regularly and mold their lifestyles as per movies. According to another study, vulgar scenes like lovemaking or merrymaking are widely watched by adults and young generations. Housewives and young girls learn different attitudes including romance, merrymaking, and the concept of victimization, and even consider themselves as the 'subjects of the males'.

According to a study carried out by Fagan and Browne (1994), women watching a scene of physical assault or violence at home, start considering that they were too being victimized by the hands of their males/ husbands in their homes. According to a study, women start believing the world portrayed in the movies was the real world. In fact, they cultivate the thoughts of violence and victimization learned from the movies. For instance, Pakistani cinema in the late 1960s was considered the most powerful medium of persuasion and attitude-building (Allen & Jones, 2012). In the late 1970 and 1980s, Pakistani cinema especially Punjabi films ruled over all other entertainment programs (Ayres, 2008).

A cinema is, of course, quite an easy way to access information and entertainment for a large population (J. S. Brown, 2000). The film industry is somehow quite different industry than others including the drama industry; the working style, methods of production, rules, and regulations of the film industry are quite different (Caldwell, 2008). The main element of cinema in Pakistan was easy to access to cheap entertainment, therefore, the people used to wait for Eid days to watch the maximum number of movies before the influx of cable networks (Kirk, 2016). According to a study, different castes especially in Lahore started producing movies in the name of various dacoits, and infamous figures and promoted them through the lens of a camera (White & THOMAS, 2005). For instance, the element of 'enmity' dominated the film industry from the 1970s to 2000 during which hundreds of movies were produced that projected violence in the name of 'bravery' (Langford, 2009).

According to a study carried out by Ali (2007), around 12 clans comprised of 'Gujjar, Arain, Butt, Nuts, etc.' used to project their castes and infamous persons. Consequently, a study reveals that

movies like ‘Maula Jutt, Achoo Da Veir, Gujjar Da Veir, Budha Gujjar, Kalu Shahpuriya, Varyam, Shareef Gujjar, Gunda’ and other such movies were produced in Pakistan which carried violent scenes from start to end.

According to the cinematography of such movies, a hero used to carry a sickle [Gandasa] a wooden stick with having hammer at the end, which was the ‘catastrophic’ weapon for massacred of dozens of armed dacoits. However, according to a comparative analysis-based study on eight movies conducted by Khan and Ahmad (2010) in 2005, the violent content and violent scenes were much more in numbers and scenes in Pakistani movies as compared to Indian movies. According to the findings of another study, Pakistani media in general and Pakistani films, in particular, were promoting aggressive behavior among the viewers or movie lovers. According to the findings, there is a strong relationship between the violent scenes in Pakistani movies and the aggressive behavior of the viewers (Khalid & Bashir, 2012).

According to the findings of a study, the reasons behind portraying violence in Pakistani movies were illiterate producers and directors of the films, therefore, they included scripts in accordance with their mindset toward society, contrary to the reality that violence was not part of Pakistani society to the extent portrayed in the movies (Saeed, Rehman, & Usmani, 2018).

According to a study conducted by UNESCO on 5000 children selected randomly in 23 countries across the world, the results revealed that children under the age of 12 years were highly influenced by violent content rather than media being the ‘behavior-changing agent’ among the kids (Aslam, 2015).

According to the study, the phenomenon of domestic violence was the direct outcome of Pakistani movies projecting violence in a justifiable way where a dacoit, killer, and a negative character kills, slaughters, thrashes, and knocks down other criminals in the names of ‘justice on the spot’ (Ullekh, 2018). According to findings, women were being subjugated in the name of empowerment in Lollywood movies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers have employed content analysis as a method of conducting research on the portrayal of violence among Pakistani feature films during Gen. Zia and Benazir Bhutto regimes.

Population

The population was taken as the Pakistani feature films both in Urdu and Punjabi released during the period of Gen. Zia (1978-1986) and Benazir Bhutto (1993-1996) based on the equal allocation method.

Sample Size

The researchers employed a random sampling method to choose a sample of 5 movies [which carried violent scenes] from each era of Gen Zia and Benazir Bhutto to analyze the violence.

List of Movies Selected in General. Zia Era

Movie's Title	Director	Cast	Genre	Year
Ranga Daku	Arshad Mirza	SultanRahi, Afzaal Ahmad,Aasia, Adeeb,Illyas Kashmiri	Drama, Action	1978
Maula Jutt	Yunus Malik	Sultan Rahi, Mustafa Qureshi,Aseia	Crime, Action, Drama	1979
Behram Daku	Kh. Feroz Din	Sultan Rahi, Aasia, Allaudin Talish	Action	1980
Athra Puttar	Ch. M. Arif	Sultan Rahi, Aasia, Ali Ijaz, Mustafa Qureshi	Action, Crime, Enmity	1981
Baghi Sipahi	Fiaz Sheikh	Mumtaz,Sultan Rahi, Mustafa Qureshi, Afzaal Ahmad	Action, Music, Crime	1986

List of Movies Selected in the Benazir Bhutto Era

Movie's Title	Director	Cast	Genre	Year
Danday Da Daur	Aslam Aziz	Sultan Rahi, Saima, Shahida Mini,	Drama, Action	1993
Gujjar Da Vair	Pervaiz Rana	Sultan Rahi, Saima Humayoun Qureshi	Crime, Action, Drama	1994
Raja Sahib	Shahid Rana	Sahiba, Sana, Adil Murad, Afzal Ahmad	Romance, Music	1996
Mehndi	Zahoor Hussain Gillani	Kemal, Shiba, Shafqat Cheema	Music, Romanic, Culture	1996
Munda Shararti	Rana Irshad Ali Manj	Rambo, Sahiba, Madiha Shah, Ghulam Mohayuddin	Comedy, Music, Romance, Music, Crime	1996

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was those violent scenes that are examined in quantity.

Category Construction

The researchers developed five main categories including:

Physical Violence

Any scene of an individual [hero or villain] wherein a person (A) harms physically the other person (B) by using force like dragging, smashing, hitting, or beating by the use of his hand(s), within an objective to hurt, humiliate and punish the other person. All these sorts of violence were considered as physical violence.

Verbal Violence

Any violent scene wherein some individuals [hero(s) or villain(s)] use aggressive and indecent language for other opponents; scream at, shout at, threaten to murder, or even threaten to claim lives or damage their properties was considered verbal violence.

Use or Display of Weapons

The researchers coded the usage of weapons or even display of weaponry articles [traditional to sophisticated] in this category. This category also included violent scenes to murder or harm, injure an individual by hitting him physically with a sickle or wooden stick, or iron rod, chaining him with ropes or other items, or using any form of weapon to kill him.

Data Collection and Presentation of Data

The data has been collected keeping in view the explained categories through a coding sheet, which carried these main categories mentioned above. During watching the chosen movies, the researchers included all the related violent scenes in the specific category while noting down the number of scenes and the time duration. However, the researchers further chose selective scenes chosen randomly from all the 10 movies and developed their comparative analysis for this study.

Reliability

In order to examine the element of reliability of the study, the researchers employed the inter-coder reliability method. The researchers also included selective scenes of violence in Pakistani movies that were further inter-coded.

RESULTS

According to the research method of the study in hand, 5 movies in Urdu and Punjabi each from the regime of Gen. Zia ul Haq and Benazir Bhutto were chosen randomly and violent scenes and time

duration of such scenes were taken for content analysis. First of all, the adaptation of the content analysis technique to examine the portrayal of violence in Pakistani feature films appeared to be the most appropriate and successful research method for this study. Since the researchers have included all the categories including physical violence, verbal violence, and use or display of weapons, therefore, the researchers found no difficulty in detecting the nature of violence from the movies. Most of the incidents/ scenes of violence [keeping in view their categories], the scenes, dialogues, and aggressive attitude of the characters [heroes or villains, etc.] were clear cut to examine. As, all the movies produced or directed during the era of General Zia were serious in nature i.e., filmed to showcase the hegemony of ‘good dacoits’ who had indulged in wrongdoings to make good for others, therefore, the researchers found no difficulty in identifying the meanings or comprehension about the motives behind the violent acts and aggressive behavior of the good or bad characters. Subsequently, during the analysis of the movies produced in the 2nd regime of Benazir Bhutto, instead of violence, humorous elements or comedy seemed dominant, and even in the later part of the regime, most of the movies eliminated the phenomenon of violence or sickle [Gandasa] culture.

Secondly, the researchers applied different indicators to measure the data based on the portrayal of violence in movies. Although these tables or the data presented in the tables may not be statistically significant in the literal sense these revealed the nature of violence and tone of the movies. Thirdly, these categories have enabled the researchers to develop a comparison between the movies of the Gen. Zia era and the movies of the Benazir Bhutto era keeping in mind the researchers developed a content analysis of three types of violence. The percentage of characters presented in movies and projected use or display of weapons was lower than the ratio of physical violence or verbal violence but even then use and display of weapons was a common element repeated times and again in the movies. The following movies were chosen from the era of Gen. Zia.

The researchers developed the coding sheet keeping in view the main three categories including physical violence, verbal violence, and use or display of weapons.

Coding Sheet for Content Analysis

Violence Scenes fall in Category: Y Violence Scenes do not fall in Category: X

Year	Film’ Title	Placement	Portrayal Category	Coder 1 Physical Violence	Coder 2 Verbal Violence	Coder 3 Display of Weapons
1978	Ranga Daku	Y	Violent	Y	Y	Y
1979	Maula Jutt	Y	Violent	Y	Y	Y
1980	Behram Daku	Y	Violent	Y	Y	Y
1981	Athra Puttar	Y	Violent	Y	Y	Y
1986	Baghi Sipahi	Y	Violent	Y	Y	Y
1993	Danday Da Daur	Y	Violent	Y	Y	Y
1994	Gujjar Da Vair	Y	Violent	Y	Y	Y
1996	Raja Sahib	X	Cultural	X	X	X
1996	Mehndi	X	Romantic	X	X	X
1996	Munda Shararti	X	Cultural	X	X	X

The most predominant type of violence was found as physical violence with firearms (65% | n = 890) and verbal violence (55% | n = 767), followed by the violence created by the display or usage of weapons (53% | n = 698). Accordingly, the non-lethal form of violence was found as physical violence (35% | n = 435), verbal violence (38% | n = 211), and the use or display of a weapon (28% | n = 195). According to the analysis, violent scenes were existent in abundant in the movies produced

during the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq whereas the movies in the earlier part of Benazir Bhutto regime also carried the same nature of portrayal of a violent scene, but in the later or 2nd part of the regime, the tone and culture of movies were changed.

Table No. 1 Severity and Nature of Violence in Movies

Nature	Lethal	%age	Non-Lethal	%age	Unknown	%age	Total
Physical	890	[65%]	435	[35%]	91	[13%]	41%
Verbal	767	[55%]	211	[38%]	58	[9%]	37%
Display of Weapon	698	[53%]	195	[28%]	57	[7.1%]	27%
Total	2355	70%	841	25%	211	5%	100%

Category-wise Analysis

The researchers analyzed the data of movies keeping in view their nature of violence i.e., quantity and time duration of each movie, and presented results as per the category mentioned above.

Physical Violence

As per data analysis, the results showed that physical violence was the most dominant form of violence in movies produced and released during both eras (see Table no.1). Out of the total population of violent scenes (n=890), 65% of scenes were produced with violent acts, where characters regardless heroes or villains and their supports [side roles] were found involving in projecting physical violence (see Table No.1). This was the leading category of violence in the movies produced in both eras. However, in the later part of the 2nd regime [Benazir Bhutto] the element of violence decreased and was replaced by the element of cultural orientation, humor, and comedy.

Verbal Violence

According to the results, the total population of verbal violence (n=767) revealed that 55% of violent scenes involved abusive language, including threatening, the humiliating, and intimidating language used against the opposite party. Following the first category, the 2nd category was also a leading category in projecting verbal violence in most of the movies. It was also found that the in the later part of the Benazir Era the tendency of violence was decreased as compared to the earlier era of Gen. Zia wherein Gandas culture was promoted through different characters including Sultan Rahi, Mustafa Qureshi, and others. In fact, the element of verbal violence is dominating factor used by these two famous characters in Punjabi movies.

Use/ Display of Weapons

As per the analysis of the data, in (n=698) crime scenes which are a total of 53% of the overall population of all ten movies, the gangsters, heroes, or bad characters displayed or used weapons against their opposite parties(see Table No.1). This was the third leading category of weaponry violence. According to a comparative analysis of the data of both era's movies, the (n=195) scenes which were 28% of the total population where characters were found to be non-lethal, and that arena fell under the Benazir Bhutto regime.

DISCUSSION

In most cases of communication research, the researchers adopt the approach of framing to identify which types of frames were used in the next contents, programs, or even in entertainment. Investigation of phenomena through the lens of 'portrayal' is also widely liked by researchers. In the present study, the researchers adopted the quantitative approach to examine the portrayal of violence in movies produced during the two eras of Gen Zia and Benazir Bhutto. The researchers coded different variables into three main categories and explored that the phenomenon of physical violence was dominant in Pakistani feature films produced during the era of General Zia-ul-Haq.

According to the findings, the movies produced in Benazir Bhutto's era were also similar to the movies produced in the Gen Zia era. So, all the hypothesis of this study made by the researcher has

been rejected. The critics of the movies believed that the tendency of producers and the mental approach of the directors cannot be changed overnight. Therefore, the producers and directors of the movies continued producing the same sort of content, which they believed, was popular among the viewers. In actual sense, in absence of the second opportunity, there was only one entertainment medium i.e., a film that was quite popular among the masses, consequently, they were forced to watch the content whichever was being aired or telecasted on the television. As per multiple findings of various studies, the Gandasa culture was not the true culture of Punjab rather such sort of culture was being enforced on them and the viewers were forced to watch the same culture presented to them in movies. Otherwise, the viewers or the movie lovers altogether rejected the Punjabi moves which carried violence, aggressive or indecent language, and started watching other forms of movies including romantic, cultural, or comedy. The influx of cable networks provided the movie lover an opportunity to multi-dimensional movies even from other countries including India. Indian Punjabi movies mostly carried the element of comedy replaced Pakistani Punjabi movies carrying the element of aggression and violence.

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