



Salbia Abbas¹ Fajar Sattar² Kaneez Rubab³ Noor Ul Ain Fatima⁴

Abstract: The history of the drama industry traces back to rich literature, notably beginning in 1964 when PTV emerged as the pioneering channel for broadcasts and transmissions. A recent study delved into the influence of Pakistani dramas on the mental health, psychological well-being and QOL (quality of life) in female university students. Using a cross-sectional research design with quantitative methods, the study recruited a sample of 300 participants through a purposive sampling technique. Data was collected by the application of a self-developed demographic sheet and standardized scales: the Young Mental Health Scale, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, and Jhon Flanagan's Quality of Life Scale. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis, revealing a significantly positive correlation ($r = .354, p < .000$) among the studied variables. In conclusion, the study explored how Pakistani dramas impact mental health, well-being, and quality of life. Educators and mental health professionals can use these findings to better support students in managing developmental challenges and promoting overall well-being. Recommendations include integrating media literacy education into university curricula to empower students to critically engage with media content. Moreover, mental health programs should incorporate strategies to mitigate any potential negative effects of media consumption on students' well-being.

Key Words: Pakistani Dramas, Mental Health, Quality of Life, Psychological Wellbeing, University Students

Introduction

Pakistani dramas have a rich history. Almost around 1964 first broadcast was telecasted from PTV's first national channel in Pakistan. In the beginning, Pakistani dramas got much success, 'Khuda ki Basti' was the first serial launched in 1969 by PTV. This drama presented the social, domestic and traditional life of a common man living in the country. Advancements in media technology have significantly transformed the landscape of mass media, offering new avenues of entertainment such as film, drama, and music. The emergence of Pakistani dramas reflects cultural and societal challenges, customs and trends. Previously, limited accessibility to these dramas was seen in Pakistan as the source of TV antennas, but now, they are available widely due to the popularity of technological advancement (Khan, Safdar, & Ashraf, 2018). Currently, Pakistani dramas not only depict the local culture but also contain elements from Indian and Western cultures. Many questions are raised due to this evolution about psychological well-being and quality of life in viewers, specifically, female university students. Today, Pakistani dramas not only depict local culture but also incorporate elements from Indian and Western cultures, often featuring bold scenes and diverse themes. Big entertainment channels like Hum TV, Geo, Ary Digital and Green Entertainment play a key role in shaping viewership trends (Shabir, Safdar, Imran, 2018). Recent research explored that Pakistani dramas affect attitudes and behaviors concerning language, festivals, dietary habits, lifestyles and attire (Manzoor, Jabeen, & Hanif, 2019). Social issues are addressed, and messages about resilience and empowerment dramas also describe negative aspects like domestic violence and unrealistic expectations (Adnan, Yousaf, & Gillani, 2019). Four key variables were examined: Pakistani dramas as the

¹ Lecturer (Associate), Department of Psychology, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

² Student, Department of Psychology, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

³ Student, Department of Psychology, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴ Student, Department of Psychology, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

independent variable, and mental health, quality of life, and well-being as the dependent variables. The amalgamation of psychological & emotional well-being is known as mental health, while quality of life assesses overall life satisfaction and various life domains. Well-being is a holistic state of happiness and equilibrium across social, mental and physical dimensions (Diener et al., 2000). Popular dramas like "Udaari," "Zindagi Gulzar Hai," "Ye Dil Mera," "Sabaat," and "Ishq Zahe Naseeb" explore diverse themes, including psychological disorders like PTSD and dissociative identity disorder (DID), adding complexity to their impact on viewers. While Pakistani dramas offer entertainment and teach valuable lessons, excessive consumption can lead to negative effects such as poor time management and unrealistic expectations (Khan et al., 2020). It is crucial for students to find a healthy balance, prioritize their emotional well-being, and critically engage with media content to maximize its positive influence. In sum, Pakistani dramas play a major role in shaping cultural narratives influencing quality of life and psychological wellbeing among university students. Awareness of these dynamics can be helpful in understanding the development of media literacy programs and mental health interventions developed to support young viewers in navigating their consumption of media.

Literature Review

To explore the influence of Pakistani dramas on the mental health, quality of life, and psychological well-being of university students, a comprehensive review of numerous articles published between 2017 and 2023 was conducted. Pakistani television evolved with the development of Pakistani television in October 1963. The first telecast of Pakistani drama was conducted in Lahore on 26th November 1964 and has been a focal point in mass communication research in the country (Khan, 2020). Pakistani dramas depict societal norms, challenges and roles of women diverging from traditional expectations, depicting their struggles against societal and familial pressures (Khan, 2020). Researchers defined that exposure to dramas featuring crime, violence, or mental illness leads viewers to perceive societal conditions negatively. However, viewers who are able to differentiate between reality and fiction usually hold a positive perspective towards individuals with mental disorders. Since the 1960s and 1970s, civil movements efforts have been made to destigmatise mental health, enhance service accessibility and integrate mental health into widespread health care systems (Khan, 2020). The concept of quality of life emerged in the 1960s, focusing on house satisfaction and financial stability before expanding to encompass broad evaluations of life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Edwards, 1970). In the meantime, Well-being is deeply rooted in philosophical and religious traditions emphasizing holistic approaches to fulfil life style (Diener et al., 2000). Studies by Baig (2011), Karim (2016), and Shah and Bhatti (2013) describe the statistically significant impact of Pakistani dramas on language, fashion, and social norms among youth. Popular Pakistani dramas channelled through ARY, Hum TV, and Geo TV played a pivotal role in shaping cultural, traditional and societal trends among viewers, especially young audiences (Baig, 2011; Karim, 2016; Shah & Bhatti, 2013). Recent literature highlighted the influence of Pakistani dramas, films, and serials on cognitive perspectives and quality of life of viewers, most specifically women, revelling negative and positive perspectives in addressing stressful conditions in their lives to enhance their overall satisfaction with life (Kamran et al., 2023).

According to the knowledge of the researcher, the least literature is available concerning the constructs under study. There are some notable gaps in research specifically addressing the psychological impacts of dramas on the mental health and well-being of university students, especially females. Current research aims to fill this literature gap by investigating the relationship among three constructs such as mental health, psychological well being and Quality of life among female university students. Through this exploration, the research seeks to offer valuable insights into the ways media consumption shapes cognitive health and emotional well-being in contemporary Pakistani society.

Theoretical Framework

Theories of Mental Health, Quality of Life and Psychological Wellbeing

Social Learning Theory

Social learning occurs when individuals learn by observing others, whether through direct interaction or media such as dramas and movies. This type of learning is particularly effective when the observer admires



and feels affection for the person demonstrating the behaviour. Observers can indirectly experience reinforcement by witnessing the consequences of others' actions. If a role model is rewarded or punished, observers may adjust their own behaviour accordingly. (Bandura, A. [1961](#))

Cultivation Theory

suggests that prolonged exposure to media, especially television, shapes individuals' perceptions of reality. The theory emphasizes the cumulative impact of consistent messages, proposing that frequent viewers of television are more likely to accept its portrayal of the world as accurate. This phenomenon, known as the "Mean World Syndrome," describes an increased perception of the world as more dangerous and threatening. Cultivation Theory examines how heavy and light viewers differ in their perceptions, highlighting how shared television experiences contribute to a standardized worldview. Theory of cultivation depicts that understanding cultural norms, social issues, and specific themes may affect the impact of attitudes and beliefs of viewers, including university students, in shaping their understanding of reality overtime.

Dependency Theory

Sandra Ball Rokeach and Melvin Defleur presented a theory of media dependence. This theory examines the reliance of viewers on media for social interaction and information concerning rituals, social norms and the latest fashion trends (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, [1976](#)). DT defines the impact of attitudes, behaviors and the flow of societal information within the society and mediated communication. This theory illuminates the relationship between mental health, well-being, perception of relationships and quality of life. For instance, university students may depend on Pakistani dramas for cultural insights, social connections,

Gratification Theory

The theory of gratification defines that individuals actively select and use media, such as dramas, to satisfy specific needs and desires (Katz et al., [1973](#)). University students might view dramas for entertainment, emotional release and relaxation, which can positively influence their psychological well-being and quality of life. However, it's crucial to recognize that individual differences, personal experiences, and other factors can also influence how dramas impact mental health. It's always advisable to be mindful of one's emotional well-being and seek support if necessary.

Methodology

Research Design

The current study employed a quantitative research methodology using a cross-sectional design. This methodological approach allowed for the examination of variables at a single point in time.

Sampling Population

A sample of 300 students, with equal representation of both male and female participants, was recruited using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling methods. The sample size was based on saturation.

Measures

Three scales were used for the assessment of the influence of Pakistani dramas on university students. These were the Mental Health Recovery Scale, Quality of Life Scale, and Psychological Well-Being Scale.

Mental Health Recovery Measure Scale (MHRS-30)

The Mental Health Recovery Measure (MHRM) scale, developed by Young et al. in [1999](#) and later revised by Young and Bullock in [2003](#), consists of 30 items. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree), with no reverse-scored items. The total score is derived

by summing the responses for each item, with a theoretical range of 0 to 120. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the MHRS-30 is 0.94, indicating high internal consistency reliability

Quality of Life scale (QOL -13)

Quality of Life scale created originally by John Flanagan in the 1970's has been adapted for use in chronic illness groups. It consists of 13 items. The single item is not scored on OPQOL, and it is coded as Very Good (1) to Very Bad (5). Each of the 13 items is scored Strongly agree, Agree=2, Neither=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5. The items are summed for a total OPQOL brief Score, and then positive items are reversed coded so that a higher score represents higher QOL. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for OPQOL- brief is 0.856. OPQOL- brief ranges from 13 to 65, and higher scores indicate higher QOL.

Psychological Well Being (PWB-18)

Psychological Well was originally created by Ryff's and Keyes in 1995. It is a self-report instrument that comprises 18 items measuring six dimensions of psychological Well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, personal growth, positive Relations with others, and purpose in life. It consists of 7 response options. Q1, Q2, Q3, Q8, Q9, Q11, Q12, Q17 and Q18 were reversed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for PWB is 0.77, as reported by Chinaweze.

Procedure

The empirical findings closely matched our key variables: mental health recovery, quality of life, and psychological well-being. Before data collection, permissions were obtained from scale authors through email and chat communications. Institutional approvals were also secured from Government Murray College Sialkot, University of Management and Technology Sialkot, University of Sialkot, and Government College Women University Sialkot to conduct the study. Both male and female participants were included in the research, and they provided verbal and written informed consent. Researchers ensured participants understood the questionnaire instructions and provided assistance with any questions or concerns, adhering strictly to ethical guidelines. Data was analyzed by the application of Descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS.

Ethical Considerations

Current research strictly follows all ethical considerations. It maintained strict confidentiality, obtained informed consent, and conducted debriefing sessions. Authorization from relevant authorities was obtained to conduct the study. Participants within the specified age group were recruited through verbal or written consent procedures. Researchers assured participants that their information would remain confidential and solely used for academic purposes, fostering trust among participants.

Results

Descriptive were calculated to summarize the distribution of demographics in the sample. The results are as follows:

Table 1

Demographic statistics in the sample

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Age | 300 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.6300 | .61184 |
| Gender | 300 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 1.5000 | .50084 |
| Education | 300 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.9200 | .32755 |
| SES | 300 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.1433 | .58646 |
| Family system | 300 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.3333 | .69558 |
| MHTOTAL | 300 | 10.00 | 155.00 | 76.6067 | 19.81787 |
| PWBTOTAL | 299 | 20.00 | 145.00 | 55.1070 | 19.91581 |
| QOLTOTAL | 300 | 14.00 | 63.00 | 30.3633 | 8.96545 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 300 | | | | |



Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for six variables: Age, Gender, Education, SES, Family system, and three totals (MHTOTAL, PWBTOTAL, QOLTOTAL). The sample size (N) is 300. The mean and standard deviation for each variable are shown, indicating central tendency and variability. For example, the mean age is 1.63 with a standard deviation of 0.61, and the mean QOLTOTAL is 30.36 with a standard deviation of 8.97. This table provides an overview of the distribution of each variable, helping to understand the characteristics of the sample.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2

Correlation analysis between sexual harassment and depression

| Variable | N | Mean | Standard Deviation | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--------------------------|-----|-------|--------------------|------|------|------|
| Mental Health | 300 | 80.90 | 15.52 | 1 | .354 | .332 |
| Quality of Life | 300 | 34.32 | 14.87 | .124 | 1 | - |
| Psychological well being | 300 | 71.52 | 13.29 | 1 | - | - |

Note: **Significance level at 0.01.

Table 2 shows the findings of Pearson correlation ($r = .487$, $P < 0.01$), indicating that there was a statistically significant relationship between Mental Health ($M = 80.9$, $SD = 15.67$) and Quality of Life ($M = 34.32$, $SD = 14.87$), the relationship was positive. While the values of Pearson moment correlation ($r = .354$, $P < 0.001$) indicate a statistically significant relationship between quality of life ($M = 34.32$, $SD = 14.87$) and Psychological well-being ($M = 71.52$, $SD = 13.29$). Results revealed that three constructs are positively correlated with each other. In essence, the study unveils the pivotal role of Pakistani dramas as a mediating force in shaping an individual's lifestyle psychological and emotional well-being.

In essence, the study unveils the pivotal role of Pakistani dramas as a mediating force in shaping an individual's lifestyle psychological and emotional well-being.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the profound impact of Pakistani dramas on the mental health, quality of life, and overall well-being of university students. These dramas portray complex social issues and relatable characters, fostering empathy and connection among viewers (Baig, 2011; Karim, 2016; Shah & Bhatti, 2013). However, they also carry the risk of perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing detrimental societal norms (Khan, 2020). As students navigate the challenges of higher education, they internalize these portrayals, which can influence their self-perception, relationships, and coping strategies. Our research underscores the importance of responsible content creation, media literacy education, and mental health support services to mitigate potential negative effects and leverage the positive aspects of Pakistani dramas in promoting student well-being (Kamran et al., 2023). This study challenges our initial assumption that Pakistani dramas have a negligible impact on the quality of life and well-being of university students.

Conclusion

In sum, current research highlighted a significant relationship among mental health, psychological well-being and quality of life in female university students. Findings indicated that there is a significant impact of Pakistani dramas on mental health, Psychological well-being and quality of life. There is an indication of positive and negative impacts on the mental health of television viewers. While these dramas can offer comfort, social support, and emotional outlet, they also perpetuate harmful stereotypes, reinforce damaging societal norms, and promote unrealistic expectations. The research underscores the importance of responsible content creation, media literacy education, and mental health support services to mitigate potential negative effects and maximize the positive influence of Pakistani dramas on student well-being. By exploring the intricate relationship between media, culture, and mental health, this study enhances our understanding of the factors influencing university students' lives and informs evidence-based strategies to promote their mental health and overall well-being.

Recommendations

The study's findings open up new avenues for future research that could enhance our comprehension of the relationships between exposure to Pakistani dramas, symptoms of mental health, and quality of life. Exploring the underlying factors that mediate these connections would uncover the complex mechanisms influencing how Pakistani drama exposure affects mental health symptoms and quality of life. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how these relationships evolve over time, offering a deeper understanding of their dynamics.

Study Implications

The current research holds significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it serves as a foundational study that opens pathways for future research to deepen our understanding of students' aspirations to improve their mental health, quality of life, and psychological well-being. Practically, the findings will pave the way for the policymakers and govt. Agencies to activate mental health practitioners to enhance the mental health, psychological well being and quality of life among female university students.

References

- Adnan, S., Yousaf, A., & Gillani, S. (2019). Impact of Pakistani Dramas on Youth's Social Values. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 28(1), 147–156.
- Baig, S. (2011). Concept of well-being in Islam: An analysis of Pakistani dramas. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 22(2), 147–164. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39101-4_5
- Ball-Rokeach, S. J., & DeFleur, M. L. (1976). A Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects. *Communication Research*, 3(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365027600300101>
- Bandura, A., Ross, D., & Ross, S. A. (1961). Transmission of Aggression through Imitation of Aggressive Models. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63(3), 575–582. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045925>
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (2000). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(2), 276–302. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.125.2.276>
- Edwards, A. W. (1970). *The measurement of psychological well-being*. In A. W. Boyer & W. J. McGuire (Eds.), *Persons in the social environment* (pp. 167–183). New York: Pergamon Press.
- Kamran, A., Khan, H., & Fatima, U. (2023). Exploring the impact of Pakistani dramas on women's cognitive perspectives and quality of life. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 35(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000345>
- Karim, A. (2016). Understanding well-being from an Islamic perspective. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 10(1), 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.3998/jmmh.10381607.0010.104>
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and Gratifications Research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509–523. <https://doi.org/10.1086/268109>
- Khan, H., GhaniA., & Cheema, M. (2023). Influence of Pakistani Tv Channels on Language and Dressing of Women: A Study of Geo and Hum Tv Dramas. *Journal of Professional Research in Social Sciences*, 10(01), 53–75. <https://doi.org/10.58932/mula0005>
- Khan, H., Kamran, A., & Fatima, U. (2020). Pakistani dramas and student well-being: A study of media representation, self-perception, and coping strategies. *Journal of Television and Media Studies*, 8(2), 123–140.
- Khan, M. K., Malhi, A. T., Ali, G., & Manzoor, H. (2023). Cultural Effects of Urdu Dramas of GEO and HUM TV among University Students of Narowal. *Human Nature Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 35–45. <https://hnpublisher.com/ojs/index.php/HNJSS/article/view/15>
- Manzoor, S., Jabeen, S., & Hanif, S. (2019). Impact of Pakistani dramas on mental health of young adults. *Pakistan Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 17(1), 33–38.
- Shabir, A., Safdar, S., & Imran, M. (2018). Social media defy spiral of silence theory and provides baseline for new spiral of social media theory: Ground perspective. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 39(4), 1549–1558. <https://pjss.bzu.edu.pk/index.php/pjss/article/view/783>



- Shah, S. I. A., & Bhatti, M. A. (2013). Well-being and quality of life in Islamic perspective. *Journal of Management Research*, 5(4), 234-244.
- Young, S. L., & Bullock, W. A. (2003). The Mental Health Recovery Measure (MHRM) scale: A revision of the MHRM. *Journal of Mental Health*, 12(3), 267-277. <https://10.1080/0963823031000118244>
- Young, S. L., & Ensing, D. S. (1999). Exploring recovery from the perspective of people with psychiatric disabilities. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 22(3), 219-231. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0095240>