

Construction of Gendered Identities through Matrimonial Advertisements in Pakistani English and Urdu Newspapers: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Abstract: *Matrimonial ads serve as a rich data source to observe the construction of gendered identities and to find out socially expected gender roles in any patriarchal society, where men and women used to offer those personality traits which are sought by members of the opposite sex.*

The current study focuses on gender differences in desired and declared expectations for males and females such as education, caste, age, height, sect, property/residence, financial stability and personality traits. These findings related to gendered expectations were interpreted through the lenses of gender, social exchange, and social role theories. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used for a thematic analysis and analysis of numerical categories of the desired and demanded attributes for the males and females respectively. A sample of 300 matrimonial ads was collected using stratified random sampling technique from English and Urdu newspapers 'The Nation' and 'Daily Jang'. Results clearly demonstrate that men offer financial stability in exchange for women's physical attractiveness. A strong preference for beautiful, fair, slim and homely girls by male advertisers and demand of well-settled men by female advertisers were observed in Urdu matrimonial ads.

On the other hand, in English matrimonial ads, education is the most demanded variable for both the males and females. This study concludes that matrimonial ads as socio-cultural indicators clearly reflect socially expected roles and inherent gender-biased attitude in Pakistani society because socially expected roles are very different for a man and a woman to be an ideal husband and wife, as a well-settled man is seen as an ideal husband but a woman has to bear the burden of both social and physical satisfaction.

Introduction

Marriage has been a powerful institution in the whole world including Pakistan since antiquity due to religious and socio-cultural influences. Finding a suitable life partner has always been an important concern in every culture and society and people have been using diverse ways for this search. Earlier, people were very dependent on marriage bureaus or informal third persons who offered such match-making services to get appropriate matches. It is true that marriage bureaus have always contributed a lot to

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the marriage settlement process (Dave, 2012) but nowadays, matrimonial ads have become the part of arranged marriage system. Traditional match-making processes have been replaced with matrimonial ads in newspaper and internet, due to increased media access.

Pakistan is traditionally a patriarchal society in which parents believe that by acquiring certain qualities, their daughters/sons can become ideal brides/grooms for any aspiring candidate for marriage. In terms of gender roles within the family, patriarchal ideology is dominant and women are expected to fulfill social and physical expectations expressed by men in matrimonial ads as they demand a woman who should be physically beautiful, educated as well as an expert at the household chores. Therefore, in all the matrimonial ads, women tend to mention more of their educational qualification, societal values, and physical attractiveness and just look for a sound professional status in men. This study attempts to analyze the content of Urdu and English matrimonial ads to highlight the difference between the expected gender roles for males and females in marital relations both in upper and middle classes in Pakistani society.

Following research questions are addressed in the present study:

- 1-How men and women have portrayed themselves in matrimonial ads, according to the desires of their opposite sex?
- 2-What are the similarities in the demands made by both the males and females in matrimonial ads?
- 3- How and in what terms are the findings of matrimonial ads from English and Urdu newspapers different from or similar to each other?

Literature Review:

Marriage, as an essential institution, has been defined by many sociologists and social anthropologists. Radhakrishnan's (1956) interpretation goes like, "marriage is not a mere convention but an implicit condition of human society. It is an adjustment between the biological purposes of nature and the sociological purposes of man"(p. 136). In Pakistan, the responsibility of marrying of sons and daughters generally lies with the parents or the elders of families. But to find a suitable life partner has always been a problem in Pakistan because frauds are very common. To be single and live alone for a woman and even a man is still very challenging in Pakistan (Bokhari, 2011). Therefore, parents have societal pressure to find suitable matches for their children, especially for their daughters as soon as possible.

Koestner and Wheeler (1988) shed light on gender differences in self-presentation style by male and female advertisers in matrimonial ads, published in weekly newspapers from the cities of Rochester and Minneapolis (US). They analyzed that women offer male valued traits and seek female valued traits in their ads. They also pointed out that women offer physical attractiveness and seek professional status while men adopt the reverse pattern. The findings of this study were interpreted through the theories of attraction and

social role expectations and the concluded notion was that men and women frequently used to offer those attributes which are sought by the opposite sex.

According to Zhou et al. (1997), arranged marriage has been a long lasted tradition in China but after the reform in the 1980s, people started to find their marriage partners on their own. Therefore, matrimonial ads started to appear in the newspapers and magazines and several terms, for instance, age, height, appearance, and education are frequently used for self-description. He pointed out that societal values and traditions can be detected in the matrimonial ads such as in China, these ads reveal the discrimination against short people and an increasing concern with one's finances. This study has some similarities with the study conducted by Vaid, (2009) in India. Both Zhou et al. (1997) and Vaid, (2009) claim that matrimonial ads reflect societal values and traditions in China and India respectively.

Vaid, (2009) analyzed the content of matrimonial ads in India and pointed out that all the matrimonial ads reflect the societal standards and conventions of Indian people. The Indian matrimonial advertisements stressed caste and class system, desire for education, physical appearances, and skin complexion which is discussed as the main subject by (Vaid, 2009). He examined print and online sources of matrimonial ads to interpret how skin color affects the match-making process among Indian people.

A content analysis of Indian matrimonial advertisements from the two popular newspapers, The Times and The Hindu was also done by Ramasubramaniana & Jainb (2009).

They noticed that matrimonial ads as socio-structural indicators represent gender role expectations and sex role preferences in India. In their study, they observed that there is a strong preference for fair and slim women as well as well-settled and rich men. Their findings suggested that Indian matrimonial ads reflect gender-biased attitude in Indian familial relations, where the socially expected roles are very different for husbands as compared to wives.

Titzmann, (2011) also conducted a content analysis of online matrimonial ads in India, specifically of female users' profiles and their style of self-representation to find out how women are portrayed on these websites to attract more users. A thorough investigation of the online matrimonial profiles provides a significant insight into the changing notions of love, marriage, and gender roles. This study has pointed out that online matrimonial websites reveal a clear tendency towards representing women with the concept of the "New Indian Woman" because there is a constant attempt to combine "modern" and "traditional" elements in self-descriptions of female profiles in online matrimonial websites.

Dave (2012) also conducted an analytical and linguistic study of Indian matrimonial ads. She finds that language of matrimonial ads proves the fact that woman gets stereotyped as an object of man's desire in Indian society. It is a demonstration of a connection between language and power. So matrimonial ads reveal the inherent

gendered inequality prevalent in Indian society. She attempts to probe the aspect of social reality as represented in the matrimonial ads where the attitude of society and the hidden gender bias is overtly reflected through the language used in them. A woman has to bear the burden of social and physical satisfaction. This makes a woman an object in men's eyes as they decide the criteria of an eligible bride. As a consequence, women remain stuck to their physical appearances and desirability to others, particularly to men.

Yasmeen (2015) studied matrimonial ads in India and found that the language of matrimonial ads represents the reality of Indian society and people's actual expectations more clearly than the other parts of the newspaper. She claimed that the language used in newspapers is also different from literary language, but sometimes of a higher standard than the day to day language of communication.

Siddiqui (2015) has pointed out that, matrimonial ads are relatively a recent phenomenon, which grew in volumes for a number of reasons including higher literacy rate, greater awareness among people and wide and fast media access in South Asian countries such as Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. Matrimonial ads give an opportunity to girls that they can select or reject a candidate as their life-partner. He also claimed that societal stereotypes are reflected in matrimonial ads in these South Asian countries. The present study will analyze the content of matrimonial advertisements from classified columns of two popular newspapers in Pakistan 'The Nation' and the 'Daily Jang', to find out how matrimonial ads are reflecting and constructing gendered identities and reflect gender role expectations in marital relations in the Pakistani society. The present study will also try to explore how the demanded expectations by an advertiser reflect his/her Class and social status.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology:

'The Lenses of Gender' by Sandra Lipsitz Bem (1994):

'The Lenses of Gender' theory by Sandra Lipsitz Bem (1994) is used as a theoretical framework for the present study to highlight different gender-role expectations by males and females. Matrimonial ads highlight that to be an ideal husband or wife, men and women are compelled to possess certain physical attributes and personality traits decided by the opposite gender. All these demands expressed in the matrimonial ads set their gender roles in the society. Bem (1994) claims that a society views gender through:

- i. Androcentrism
- ii. Polarization
- iii. Biological essentialism

i. Androcentrism:

According to Bem, (1994) androcentrism (male-centeredness) tracing from Eve to the most recent times, defines males and their experience as a norm or standard whereas females' experience is seen as a deviation from that norm. Men are inherently superior to women and they are treated as superior whereas the view of a woman "as the other" still firmly exists. The masculine way of doing something is seen as the correct way.

ii. Gender Polarization:

The second lens, gender polarization, highlights male-female differences in every aspect of human life experiences including social roles, modes of wearing a dress, ways of expressing emotions and sexual desires. Children distinguish females from males by cultural clues for example dresses and hair, before they learn about organic differences. This lens places males and females on opposite ends, not so much by biology as by acculturation.

iii. Biological essentialism:

The third lens, biological essentialism, rationalizes the other two lenses and defines the differences between men and women as something natural and therefore, essentially and logically grounded. So, this lens accepts the other two lenses 'androcentrism' and 'gender polarization' as natural and biological consequences rather than as socio-historical constructs.

Social Exchange Theory by George Homans (1958):

Social exchange theory by Homans (1958) is also used for the present study. This theory is about the "social exchanges" or about the "Social Behaviors as Exchange" which are essentially reactions and decisions in relationships. According to social exchange theory, our interactions are determined by the rewards from others. As in matrimonial ads, men demand for women's beauty and physical attractiveness and in the exchange offer financial stability, and vice versa for women.

Social Role Theory by Eagly, (1984):

Eagly (1984) offers gender development that is based on socialization. According to this theory, men and women behave differently in social situations and take different roles due to the expectations that society puts upon them (including stereotyping). Traditionally, women are expected to carry out domestic responsibilities, and men the bread-winners' responsibilities, so women play domestic role and men the provider role in a patriarchal society such as Indian and Pakistani society. (Eagly, 1984).

Methodology:

Research Design

Descriptive and exploratory research design has been used.

Sample and Sampling Strategy

A sample of 300 matrimonial ads was collected through stratified sampling technique from English and Urdu Newspapers from Lahore, published during the months of August to December 2017. 150 English matrimonial ads were collected from 'The Nation', an English daily, and 150 Urdu matrimonial ads were collected from the 'Daily Jang', an Urdu daily. These newspapers publish classified columns for matrimonial ads in Pakistan.

Procedures

For this descriptive research, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Quantitative method is used to quantify the numbers of ads by male and female advertisers, to determine the percentage of ad types as seeker and announcer ads and to highlight the numerical values of expected variables by men and women such as education, caste, age, height, property/residence, nationality and physical beauty. Content Analysis was employed to develop the thematic categories for highlighting the construction of gendered roles and stereotypical expectations from men and women to be married.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Quantitative Analysis (English matrimonial ads)

Table 1. Total number of English matrimonial ads by male and female advertisers

Matrimonial advertisers	No. of Ads	Percentage
Male advertisers	75	50%
Female advertisers	75	50%
Total	150	100%

A total number of 150 English matrimonial ads were analysed. out of which 75 ads were published by the male advertisers and 75 ads were given by the female advertisers.

Table 2: Types of ads by male and females in the English newspaper

Types of Ads	No. of Ads	Percentage
Male Announcer	20	13.33%
Female Announcer	50	33.33%
Male Announcer and Seeker	55	36.66%
Female Announcer and Seeker	25	16.66%
Total	150	100%

Out of 75 ads by the male advertisers, in 14% ads, men just announced their personality traits and in 36.6% ads, they also mentioned their expectations for the ideal life partners. On the other hand, the total number of ads by female advertisers was 150, and in 33.3% ads, women just described their qualities and in 16.6% ads, they also mentioned their desired traits for the suitable matches. Hence it indicates that men are

more conscious about their self satisfaction with reference to their future spouses as compared to women.

Table 3: Attributes Declared and desired by males and females in the English ads:

No.	1		2		3		4		5	
Variables	Education		Caste		Age		Height		Physical Traits	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	67	89.3%	57	76%	45	60%	55	73.3%	29	38.6%
Female	67	89.3%	51	68%	62	82.6%	39	52%	57	76%
Total	134	89.3%	108	72%	107	71.3%	94	62.6%	86	57.3%

No.	6		7		8		9		10	
Variables	Fairness		F. Stability		Residence		Income		Sect	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	2	2.6%	75	100%	55	73.3%	24	32%	49	65.3%
Female	27	36%	-----	-----	25	33.3%	-----	-----	56	74.6%
Total	29	19.3%	75	50%	80	53.3%	24	16%	105	70%

Table 3 has a quantitative account of the details of the expected attributes by males and females for their life partners as expressed in English matrimonial ads. The most desired variable (89.3%) is 'education' with equal percentages for male and females. The second highest variable (72%) is caste and the third highest is age (71.3%). The variable of 'demanded physical traits' is comparatively higher for women than men. On the other hand, for men, there is not a single ad from a female advertiser in which man's 'financial status' is not demanded. Therefore, this is the only variable displaying a 100% occurrence. The variables of height, sect, residence, and nationality are emerging attributes for both men and women with slightly different percentages.

Quantitative Analysis (Urdu matrimonial ads)

Table 4. Total number of Urdu matrimonial ads by male and female advertisers

Matrimonial advertisers	No. of Ads	Percentage
Male advertisers	75	50%
Female advertisers	75	50%
Total	150	100%

The total number of Urdu matrimonial ads was 75 out of which 50 ads were by male advertisers and 75 ads were by the female advertisers.

Table 5: Types of ads by males and females in the Urdu newspaper:

Types of Ads	No. of Ads	Percentage
Male Announcer	18	(12%)
Female Announcer	31	(20.6%)
Male Announcer and Seeker	32	(21.3%)
Female Announcer and Seeker	69	(46%)
Total	150	(100%)

A total number of 150 Urdu matrimonial ads were analyzed, out of which 20.6% ads were published by the females who had just announced their personality traits. On the other hand, 46% ads were given by those women who had not only described their personality traits but also mentioned their demanded qualities for their life partners. Similarly, in 12% ads men have just mentioned their own personality traits and in 21.3% ads, they also have mentioned their required personality traits.

Table 6: Attributes declared and desired by males and females in the Urdu ads:

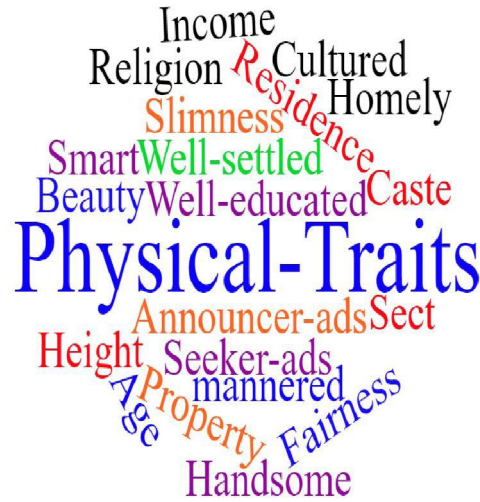
No.	1		2		3		4		5	
Variable	Education		Caste		Age		Height		Physical Traits	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Male	55	73.3%	53	70.6%	45	60%	52	82.6%	38	50.6%
Female	47	62.6%	59	78.6%	62	82.6%	45	60%	67	89.3%
Total	102	68%	112	74.6%	107	71.3%	97	64.6%	105	70%

No.	6		7		8		9		10	
Variables	Fairness		Financial		Residence		Income		Sects	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Male	2	2.6%	75	100%	45	60%	23	30.6%	35	46.6%
Female	26	34.6%	-----	-----	30	40%	-----	-----	50	66.6%
Total	28	18.6%	75	50%	75	50%	23	15.3%	85	56.6%

No.	11		12	
Variables	Homely/ well-mannered girl		Nationality	
	No.	%	No.	%
Male	-----	-----	18	24%
Female	47	62.6%	12	16%
Total	47	31.3%	30	20%

Table 6 displays details of the expected attributes by male and females for their life partners as expressed in Urdu in matrimonial ads. As compared to English ads, the most demanded variable in Urdu ads is ‘caste’ with a percentage of 74.6%. ‘Age’ and ‘physical trait’ are the second and third highest variables with 71.3% and 70% percentages, both for men and women. The percentage of the variable of ‘demanded physical traits’ is comparatively higher 70% than that of the variable of ‘education’ 68% in Urdu matrimonial ads by women than men. As in English matrimonial ads, the variable of ‘financial stability’ is also 100% for men in Urdu matrimonial ad

Word Clouds:



World Clouds signify all the desired and declared expectations in Urdu and English matrimonial ads for both the males and females. These are the most common words used by both the males and females for their self-presentation in matrimonial ads.

Qualitative Analysis

Desired and declared education:

Son 30 years, computer engineer UET, 6' looking for 5'-5" or 5'-6", slim, smart, MBA D Pharmacy MIT & other professional girls proposal, parents contact 0316-1452100. (CM-23424)

The Nation: 15 Nov, 2017

میری بیٹی MA, BEd عمر 30 سال قد 5-3 فہر
رنگ کیلئے تعلیم یافتہ برسر روزگار لڑکوں کے والدین رابطہ
کریں نو پیرو 336-4627437

Daily Jang: 19 Aug, 2017

It was found that education is the most demanded variable in both Urdu and English matrimonial ads which reflect middle and upper classes. The demand and declaration of education as a desired quality in Urdu ads is lesser as compared to English ads yet it is the first highest variable of Urdu ads. It shows that in Pakistan, women's education is preferred both in upper and middle classes. Therefore, female advertisers always mention their qualification such as medicine, engineering, MBA, Masters, and other professional degrees. There was not a single female advertiser who did not declare her educational qualification. Although most of the female advertisers did not directly mention the "desired" educational qualification in men yet there is also a possibility that the 'declared' qualification by them is an indirect indication of the 'desired' qualification in men. On the contrary, male advertisers clearly 'declared' theirs and 'desired' educational qualification in the females. It shows that only eligible females would apply because they will not marry any illiterate or lesser educated woman.

Caste:

Son 30 years, computer engineer UET, 6' looking for 5'-5" or 5'-6", slim, smart, MBA D Pharmacy MIT & other professional girls proposal, parents contact 0316-1452100. (CM-23424)

آرائیں بہن ایم اے اکنامکس بی ایڈ "3-5" عمر 29
کیلئے صرف آرائیں فیملی کے تعلیم یافتہ معزز بیٹوں کے
والدین رابطہ کریں 0308-3007665

The Nation:10 Dec, 2017

Daily Jang: 4 Aug, 2017

In both Urdu and English matrimonial ads, 'caste' is declared by both male and female advertisers such as, 'Son from Jutt family', 'Arain sister', 'Butt', 'Syed', 'Rajput', etc. In most of the ads, people also mention their demand for a similar caste in the potential spouse. It shows that they will not accept any proposal out of their caste. The most frequently mentioned castes in all the matrimonial ads were 'Jutt' and 'Arain'. This insistence of getting married in the same caste reflects the strong hold of the caste system in Pakistani society. It was also noticed that the percentage of caste variable is slightly higher in Urdu matrimonial ads (74.6%) than in English matrimonial ads (72%). It clearly shows caste system is more strictly adhered to by the middle class as compared to the upper class.

Religion /Sects:

In both English and Urdu matrimonial ads, sect is declared by male and female advertisers just after caste such as 'Sunni girl', 'Shia boy', 'Syed family', etc. The most declared sect is 'Syed Shia' in all the ads. It shows that in match-making, a similar sect of both families is very much important for both upper and middle classes in Pakistan.

Syed sunny boy CA+MBA 47 US national +Us own company from any caste MA girl required Liaqat Bhai/ Mrs Alvi 0331-4531505 (CM-24551)

ضرورت رشتہ

ہمیں اپنے پیارے بیٹے سید شعیبہ فیملی عمر 29 سال قد " 5' . 9 UK نیشنل، بزنس میں گریجویٹ کیلئے پیاری ویل ایجوکیٹڈ لاہور کی خاندانی 26 سال سے کم عمر بیٹی کا رشتہ درکار ہے،

The Nation:10 Dec,2017

Daily Jang 3 Oct, 2017

Age preference:

Son, age 25, very slim and smart, highly educated, high profile British national, residence owner in London and Lahore, looking to marry urgently with a slim and pretty girl age 18 to 22 from a highly noble family, 00447804512031,

35 سالہ بزنس مین سمارٹ خوبصورت لڑکا پہلے سے شادی شدہ کو اولاد کیلئے 25 تا 30 سال کی خوبصورت خوبصورت سمارٹ تعلیم یافتہ لڑکی کا رشتہ درکار ہے میری بیورہ معذرت رابطہ 0345-4439261

The Nation: 22 Nov, 2017

Daily Jang: 12 Aug,2017

All the male and female advertisers have mentioned their age in both Urdu and English matrimonial ads. In some of the seekers' ads, men declare their desired age for women as they mention 'girl 22-24' whereas women just declared their own age and did not mention any preferred age for men. This show the stereotypical mindset of men that they always have a desire to marry younger girls no matter how aged they are.

Height:

قد " 5-6 / 27 سالہ بینک آفیسر کشمیری فیملی بیٹی کیلئے آفیسر انجینئر بیٹے کا رشتہ درکار والدین رابطہ کریں بیورہ سے معذرت لاہور 0345-4780091 ی۔ ایم۔ 7034830

Daughter 25, 5'-6", tall, degree holder (Doctor of Physical Therapy) Lahore seeking educated cultured individual from respectable family. Email: stayblessedhome@gmail.com. (CM-15096)

Daily Jang: 25 Oct, 2017

The Nation 13 Oct, 2017

In all the matrimonial ads, both males and females have declared their height. Although, height appears to be an important variable as applied to men yet they are also getting conscious about the height of their life-partners. In some seeker ads, men clearly mention their desired 'height' or they clearly demand a 'tall girl'. Most of the time, that desired height is not similar to their own height but close to their height. It reflects the typical mindset of Pakistani man that his wife should not be taller than himself. Consequently, female advertisers have mentioned their height in the category of their physical traits both in Urdu and English matrimonial ads.

Physical Traits

The variable of 'desired' and 'declared' physical traits in both male and female advertisers confirm the double standards of Pakistani society. All the seekers' and announcers' ads demonstrate that looks are not important for men in marriage, but being beautiful is an obligation for a woman to get married. Women's Physical beauty is so important in a marriage that people often are ready to compromise with other things such as education, dowry, and family status but not with looks.

Women announced their physical beauty whereas men announced their financial stability. In few ads, men have also used adjectives such as 'handsome', 'tall' and 'good-looking'. This shows that men, too, are getting conscious about their looks but still, women mention their physical attributes more than men do. It is important to notice that in Urdu matrimonial ads, the percentage of the variable of 'demanded physical traits for females' is slightly higher (70%) than 'desired and declared education for females' (68%), whereas in English matrimonial ads, the variable of 'desired and declared education' is significantly higher (89.3%) than 'demanded physical traits' (57.3%). It shows that in the upper class, men prefer women's education more than their physical traits whereas, in the middle class, men still give more importance to women's physical appearances and good looks.

Beauty & Slimness:

بچی 27 سال BA گوری دہلی اردو کنواری سنی گھریلو قدر
 5'6" کیلئے تعلیم یافتہ برسر روزگار ذاتی رہائش دراز قدر شہ
 درکار والدین رابطہ نمبر کے ساتھ تفصیلات بھیجیں معرفت
 جنگ بکس 616، match2670@hotmail.com

Rajput girl 25 MA special
 education 5'-8" fair slim smart
 required match from educat-
 ed small family 0321-
 4580830

Daily Jang: 4 Oct, 2017

The Nation, 18 Dec, 2017

There were different degrees of adjectives about beauty that female advertisers had used in matrimonial ads and men also have a desire for a beautiful woman under different categories such as ‘good looking’, ‘pretty’, ‘very pretty’, ‘beautiful’, ‘very beautiful’. Women announced their physical beauty more whereas men announced their financial stability. In the female announcer ads, women mention their physical characteristics of being pretty and slimness by using words such as ‘slim’ and ‘smart’. They also clearly declared their fairness by using words like ‘fair complexion’, ‘white’, ‘very fair girl’. In male seeker ads, men show their desire for a slim, smart, beautiful and fair girl just after declaring their financial status.

Financial stability:

لڑکا MSc پراجیکٹ منیجر ٹیلی کام ان سکنڈے نیویا۔ سکنڈے
 نیوین نیشنل۔ دیل سٹیل۔ قد 6 فٹ 6 انچ۔ عمر 34 سال زمیندار جٹ
 پڑھی کھی چھوٹی فیملی لاہور سٹیٹ کورٹ چاہیے۔ لڑکی اعلیٰ تعلیم
 یافتہ سمارٹ گڈ لوکنگ۔ قد 5'5" - 5'1" عمر 26-27 سال زمیندار
 جٹ پڑھی کھی سلجی چھوٹی فیملی ہو سنجیدہ فیملی رابطہ کریں
 0 3 2 2 - 4 0 6 9 4 0 3

Sunny boy mughal 31 5'-10" job
 saudia software engineer seeks
 for beautiful tall technical pro-
 fessional degree holder girl
 preferable mughal contact
 0323-4113065

Daily Jang: 9 Aug 2017

The Nation: 14 Dec, 2017

In matrimonial ads, some code words are used to demand and declare this variable such as ‘middle-class’, ‘rich’, ‘financially stable’, ‘well-settled’, and ‘reputed family’,. Male advertisers’ declaration of professional degrees, occupation, property, and income also indicate their financial status. All female advertisers preferred a ‘well-settled’ person without naming any specific profession. In return, they mention their own educational qualification and their physical traits. This reflects the stereotypical attitude of parents that a ‘well-settled’ person would be a provider for their daughters’ needs. Although male advertisers did not mention any desired financial status or occupation for women yet their demand for educated girls who have professional degrees refer to a girl who may be working or may have a desire to work. In a few male seeker ads, they directly mention their desire for a girl who is a job-holder.

Residence/Property/Salary:

بیٹا 26 سال 6'-00" سمارٹ خوبصورت سوفاٹ ڈیپارٹمنٹس اردو
سیکنگ انکم ایک لاکھ کسی بھی دیوبندی فیملی سے خوبصورت بیٹی کا
رشتہ درکار 0300/0331-4490687

Unmarried very beautiful slim
smart girl double master 39 5-
'5" brother businessman in
USA residence iqbal town Li-
aqat Bhai/Mrs Alvi 0302-
4796703

Daily Jang: 9 Nov, 2017

The Nation: 21 Dec, 2017

These variables are mostly mentioned by male announcers to show their financial stability such as 'Residence Iqbal Town', '1 Kanal residence DHA', 'own house', '1 lac salary', '6-digit earning' etc. The declaration of residence and owned property is also examined in some female announcer ads by declaring 'Brother businessman', 'USA Residence', 'Father's own business' perhaps to find financially an equal match according to their family's economic status.

Nationality:

A compatible match required
for my son, graduated from
UK's renowned university, age
28, belongs to respectable
family in international busi-
ness, seeking US or Canadian
national girl. Interested par-
ents may contact 0300-
8158699 or sbh57@out-

بلہیم نیشنلسٹی لڑکا عمر 40 قد 5'9" BSC, آرائیں
ہر ذات سے پرہیز لکھی لڑکیوں کے والدین رابطہ کریں
0 3 2 2 - 4 3 4 8 6 7 5

The Nation: 13 Oct, 2017

Daily Jang: 19 Dec, 2017

In both Urdu and English matrimonial ads, nationality or settlement abroad was mentioned and required such as male and female announcers declared 'USA resident boy', 'engineer in Dubai', 'Australian national boy'. Whereas in seeker ads, they clearly mention their demanded nationality for the opposite gender such as "Seeking the US or Canadian Girl/boy". In English matrimonial ads, the percentage of Nationality variable is higher (25.3%) than in Urdu matrimonial ads (20%) which also reflects the difference of approaches between the middle and upper classes with upper classes showing priority for foreign national candidates.

A cultured and well-mannered girl:

ہاشمی اہلسنت بیٹی کنواری خوب صورت خوبصورت
30 سالہ خوش اخلاق "5-5 ماہر امور خانہ داری
MA, MED بالائے ذات سنجیدہ اور خواہشمند والدین
رابطہ کریں 0333-4022852

Mughal 29, height 6.1", CA finalist boy
looking for tall, beautiful and well
mannered girl, age 19-23, no mar-
riage bureaus, 0347-1170216. (CM-
24110)

Daily Jang: 14 Jang, 2017

The Nation: 11 Oct, 2017

All the male advertisers want a woman having characteristics as described 'a cultured and well-mannered girl' and for this, they use words such as 'well-mannered', 'homely', 'households expert', 'serious', 'loving' and 'mature girl'. The most frequently desired attributes in women are "well mannered and homely girl". It may refer to a girl who puts her home first or a girl who does good housekeeping or a girl whose dress sense is very much cultured and who wears a traditional dress rather than the western outfits. The demand for these attributes is higher (31.3%) in Urdu matrimonial ads than in English matrimonial ads (15.3%).

Discussion:

The analysis revealed that in the contemporary Pakistani society as reflected in matrimonial advertisements, a deep gender divide exists, where the socially expected roles are very different for husbands and wives. There are some similar demands which are expected of both men and women such as education, caste, sect, age, and height with some differences in the percentages. So, these ads also demonstrate a social understanding of what the ideal woman/man should be like and what type of characteristics a desirable, ideal, life partner should demonstrate. Overall, the findings suggest that matrimonial ads reflect and construct gendered identities and traditional gender-role expectations for both men and women. These findings have been interpreted with Social Role Theory by Eagly, (1984). According to the Social role theory, men and women frequently offer those attributes which are sought by the opposite sex in order to be considered eligible in the marriage market. Therefore, the attitude of society with a clear gender bias is reflected in the 'desired' personality traits in both the male and female advertisers as Bem, (1994) claims in the 'Lenses of Gender'. Men have become more and more demanding and they want a superwoman with very distinct personality traits to be found in one person. This concept of a 'complete woman' or a 'superwoman' is disturbing because women are expected to fit themselves according to the norms decided by men. The results of the present study. The results of the present study shows a significant difference between what males and females expect in terms of their 'life partners' personality traits. Females are expected to be 'feminine' by being caring and loving. Male advertisers also demand some other physical attributes such as beauty, fairness, and height. That is why women describe those expected attributes while announcing

themselves in the marriage market. On the other hand, women just demand financial stability for

which they use the word “well-settled man”. These findings can be interpreted according to the Social Exchange Theory by George Homans (1958) that women offer physical attractiveness and seek professional status while men adopt the reverse pattern. All of these findings can be interpreted as a reflection of an oppressive patriarchal social system in Pakistan. Because Pakistani society is in the midst of an influx of more liberal values amid existing traditional values, men demand a woman with professional degrees as well as an expert in the household chores. The present study has uncovered the fact that matrimonial ads produce notions of ideal gendered identities. Overall, the findings of the current study suggest that matrimonial ads reflect the same kinds of ideals: the importance of an attractive physical appearance for women and material wealth for men as depicting highly gendered social roles. The persistence of gendered lenses both in self representations and spousal expectations in this study is a reminder that androcentrism, gender polarization, and biological essentialism continue to be at the core of individual identity in Pakistan. It is important to notice that men have insisted about their demand for a fair and beautiful girl, whereas girls are silent about this aspect in men. It is due to stereotypical and deep-rooted socio-cultural conditioning of Pakistani society, which teaches a woman to be just an obedient wife and it also reflects the male mindset of having a perfect and obedient wife. The demands of looking good are problematic and even become stressful for some girls. Though the desire for looking good is a natural instinct especially in females but becomes challenging and difficult when one wants to follow the dictates of others regarding their ideas of a perfect appearance as girls have always mentioned their physical attractiveness, as desired by men.

Conclusion:

Advertisement, as a propaganda, has become a very powerful medium for constructing identities and shaping people’s thoughts. Similarly, matrimonial advertisements shape minds of both men and women to follow the demands of their opposite sex as expressed in the matrimonial ads.

This study clearly highlights women’s stereotypical and subordinate status in Pakistani society and reflect socially expected roles and inherent gender-biased attitude. In Pakistan, socially expected roles are very different for a man and woman to be an ideal husband and wife. A well-settled man is seen as an ideal husband but a woman has to bear the burden of both social and physical satisfaction. It is alarming as it affects their individuality adversely. It creates a dichotomy between men and women’s personalities as the controller and the controlled. This alarms about the existence of a situation in the society where men and women are not treated uniformly because good appearance is not a condition for men to enter into a marriage. A woman is much more than a body but she becomes an object in the marriage market and this gender-biased attitude affects her role and status in society.

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