Challenging Gender Stereotypes in Pakistani Kids’ Literature: An Application of Feminist Theory on “Teen Bahadur”

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Abstract

Aim of the Study: The aim of the study is to explore the significance of animated movies in Pakistani kids’ literature and identify the impact of animated movies on the lives of kids and their role in the formation of female identity. The research claims that children’s literature can be cherished unconsciously but in a systematic manner, developing the idea of feminism in kids through kid’s literature. The issue that the author has raised is that all animated movies have a prodigious influence on the lives of children by portraying characters in animated movies. He tried to make a connection the gender roles and literature in the context of Pakistani society and culture. Social issues like gender roles, gender discrimination, and class system are important in it. Methodology: The author adopted the exploratory research framework. The study utilized a qualitative research approach by applying feminist theory for content analysis to focus on Pakistani kid’s literature by paying special attention to the Pakistani animated movie “Teen Bahadur” as a sample. The sample was determined through typical and critical case sampling methods on Pakistani kid’s literature. Findings: The findings of the study revealed that the portrayal of little girl “Amana” in the animated movie “Teen Bahadur” challenges gender stereotype and promote gender equality and feminism especially liberal and cultural feminism by promoting education and freedom also with women empowerment in Pakistani society. The character of Amana was portrayed as a role model for all young girls in Pakistani society. Conclusion: The summative discussions within the light of the findings acquired in this study imply challenging gender stereotypes and cultural norms in Pakistani society, promoting feminism and equality through kid’s literature.

Keywords

Gender stereotype, Liberal feminism, Pakistani kid’s literature

1. Introduction

Society assigned a traditional gender role to men and women which was practiced for centuries which is called gender stereotype. Gender stereotype means to show a gender empowered and the opposite gender considered to be less empowered as gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity. Our society as a mixture of different elements also shows some type of gender stereotype not only in the real world but also in literary work through different
Kid’s literature also represents society like adult literature but its sensitivity is more intensive than adult literature as it creates an effect on immature children’s minds, whose concept is not much cleared already. They learn it from kids’ literature without any discrimination of wrong or right and accept or strengthen the ideas already present in their minds as compared to adults who have already a mature mind setup. Kid’s literature is not beyond from impact of society and animated movies as a part of Kid’s literature have a unique impact on the thoughts and attitudes of children and control the actions of children by strongly influencing their minds of kid’s because media influences the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of the audience (Gatel, 2019).

As Yunizar (2014) said the movie could be used as a medium for community learning and instilling specific ideals so it said that it is a powerful medium for learning as well as for education as it dealt with social elements including feminism which is necessary for everyone for better understanding of society. As film is a powerful medium of education and feminism is a major element of society and as well as film it is necessary to analyze the film which is only possible by character analysis of the film. According to Hannam (2007), “Feminism is a set of ideas that recognize in an obvious way that women are inferior to men and seek to address imbalances of power between the sexes”. Feminist movements in various sectors, consisting of social, political, economic, and education goal to pick out social injustice inside the reputation quo and convey their specific attitude to endure on issues (Tandon, 2008). Therefore, films can be used to focus on feminist problems and encourage discussions on the way to deal with those imbalances of strength.

1.1 Rationale of the study

Literature is never beyond the real world because literature always portrays real life by portraying the imaginative character. Pakistani society is a patriarchal society so gender stereotype and depiction of women in Pakistani literature is very common. Animated movies or cartoons as a type of literature also portray gender stereotypes and feminism, which is needed to analyze. Teen Bahadur is the first Pakistani animated movie on which much research was conducted to find the role of media and also the cultural identity of Pakistan but never analyzed from the perspective of gender stereotypes and feminism so researchers conduct research to explore these aspects of the movie to give a way to future researcher.

1.2 Research Questions

1) How does the gender stereotype represented in the movie “Teen Bahadur” challenge patriarchal norms in Pakistani society?
2) How character of Amana portray liberal feminism in the movie “Teen Bahadur” as representative of Pakistani society?
3) How character of Amana portray cultural feminism in the movie “Teen Bahadur” in the Pakistani cultural context?

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study is helpful for students and researchers as a reference to understand the movie “Teen Bahadur” from the perspective of gender stereotype society and feminism as a challenge. The study is also helpful for psychologists and socialists to understand the role of media generally and cartoons especially on children with reference to Pakistani culture. The result of the research reflects the true culture and society of Pakistan through the eye of the animated movie “Teen Bahadur”.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Description of the theory

Feminism was first coined by French philosopher “Charles Fourier” in 1837. Feminism is derived from the Latin word “Femina” which means “women”. Feminism is a movement for the equal rights of women with regard to men in the fields of economics, politics, and socialism. It provides theories related to women to analyze the women. The intent of feminism is to reveal how the evaluation of the social situation is, wherein a female takes their existence, unlocks the opening to reconstruct their universal aspects, and gives them the possibility of freedom for their destiny. Smelik (2008) argued that feminism opens the way for new aspects of socialism by giving new indicators, slogans, and strategies. A study conducted by Kadwa and Alshenqeeti (2020) explained feminism as it is gender equality between men and women in the fields of politics, and economic. Education, socialism, and its subtypes as an intermingle subject. It showed that women's roles
have no limitations in the society.

Tong and Botts (2018) stated that there are four types of feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, and liberal feminism. Liberal feminism says that women not only equally participate with men but also can do anything that men can do and all the things which they want without any limitation. Fakhrian and Islamiyati (2017) stated that man or woman is created in an equal position, harmonious, and having the same potency and rationally. But later situation does not remain the same due to the class system and other social and Marxist factors one of them is feminism which is based on gender.

Women's liberation, and the attainment of female equality with men, needs a wide range of platform, which is greater than party politics, and also the power of the state. It needs a deep analysis of power relations in society with respect to men and women. One can judge it on the parameters of gender, sex, Patriarchy, and public and private aspects of life in society. Gender stereotype is also a part of these parameters as a gender role in society. Brannon (2016) described gender stereotypes as consisting of beliefs about psychological traits and characteristics, as well as the activities appropriate to men or women. Evans and Davies (2000) enlisted the traits and characteristics of masculine and feminine as masculine consists of being Argumentative, Aggressive, adventurous, Risk-taker, assertive, competitive, decisive, and self-reliant, and feminine consists of Emotionally expressive, Affectionate, tender, impetuous, nurturing, panicky, passive and understanding as a trait of gender stereotype.

2.2 Review of previously carried research related to the theory

Winarshi et al. (2021) conducted research on the movie “Brave” to reveal how Merida’s character deal with gender stereotypes, whether she falls within the stereotypes rule or not by applying the theory of sex role to find feminine elements and the theory of feminist identity by Nancy E Downing and Kristin L. Rush. Research pointed out that Merida's character does not represent gender stereotypes as masculine traits dominated by the character rather than female as opposite to gender stereotype. Furthermore, the technique of Merida’s stereotype adjustments commenced from revelation level and the climax is she survived to the degree of energetic dedication. Quite similarly, Putri et al. (2014) analyzed the movie “She’s The Man film” by applying feminist theory and by using the approach of character analysis after analysis the result of this study depicted the physical appearance of the main character, the personality of the main character and social relationship of the main character that showed that Viola as a protagonist was a brave girl and proved that gender never influence on her and she defeated man on the base of her training and strong well power so it create the sense of identity and freedom as well as cultural freedom.

Yaslinar (2023) conducted research on the Zootopia movie to analyze feminism especially liberal feminism and its elements by content analysis method and after research concluded that liberal feminism present in the movie in the shape of freedom, equality, moral values, individual autonomy and justice. Ekatma et al. (2022) analyzed the film Brave by applying feminism theory through Nancy Mandell’s approach on the basis of liberal, social, and radical feminism and depicted that discrimination between men and women present and oppression of women also portrayed in the movie.

2.3 Description of the animated movie “Teen Bahadur”

“Teen Bahadur” is a Pakistani Animated movie presented by Waadi Production in 2015 with the cooperation of SOC Films and ARY Films. It is directed by “Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy” who is an Oscar winner. It is the first Pakistani “3D” animated movie. The duration of the movie is 90 mins. It is a social comic movie and targets both children and youth. It is the story of three extraordinary children Amana, Saadi, and Kamil who live in a village known as “Roshan Nagar” or “Roshan Basti”. The story begins with the kidnapping of children by a thug known as Mangu escaped by Saadi’s father. Thug flees away and hides himself in a cave where he meets Baba Balam who is a Dominic power representative and gives Dominic powers to Mangu and gives a Dominic key to him to extract black powers from it and advises him to protect the key.

Mangu occupied the Basti “Roshan Nagar” and killed the Saadi’s father as a punishment to prevent the children from kidnapping him. He controlled the whole village with the help of his goons and now the village's name is “Andhair Nagar”. After a few years, three children raised their voices against the injustice of Mangu. One day they enter into clock tower which is the residence of Mangu and his goons where all the children get some mysterious powers later they are empowered more by “Deenu Chacha” who is a representative of good powers on the basis of these powers and courage they fight with Mangu and his goons and destroy the key and Mangu in a black hole and create peace in village.

Jamil (2017) studied cultural identity in two animated movies “Teen Bahadur and Unicorn Black’s Burka Avenger” which intends to dive deeper into the designing of characters i-e protagonist, antagonist, and supporting characters. The research showed the way pre-conceived notions of cultural identities have been represented in the animations. This study
will aid in better understanding the complexities of cultural identity reflected in popular media that helpful for readers to understand cultural complexities in the media-received notion of cultural identity that is deeply rooted in animated movies or electronic media. Rehmani (2018) studied three cartoon programs “Quaid Say Baatain (2013), Burka Avenger (2013), and 3 Bahadur (2015)” by applying Social Action Theory by Anderson and Meyer and Cultivation Theory by George Gerbner. The purpose of the study is to bring to light the positive image of Pakistani society through media.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Thesis statement

This study applies feminist theory to analyze the Pakistani animated movie “Teen Bahadur” as a means of challenging gender stereotypes in Pakistani society.

3.2 Research Design

Current research is qualitative research to explore gender stereotypes and feminist elements in the movie “Teen Bahadur”. As the movie encompasses feminist elements, a mixed purposeful sampling strategy has been adopted to gather the data. The primary source of data is the content of the movie and secondary data is a review of other researchers and experts on the movie. For analysis, researchers used the ‘narrative analysis technique’ which is a sub-type of content analysis to explore the theme and elements of feminism in the movie by exploring diction or dialogue and characters of the story.

3.3 Framework of analysis

An animated movie always consists of two types of characters on the basis of story and sub-story in the movie major characters and minor characters. Researchers analyzed feminist elements and gender roles by keenly analyzing the diction, dialogue, social roles, and behavioral traits of major characters of the movie male and female separately. Social roles archetypally acknowledged as masculine were dominant, leader, and hero (Lippa, 2005). While females were domestic, recessive, and followers. The theoretical framework of research consists of six steps.

1) Identify the narrative structure of the movie including characters, theme, and dialogue or diction. This was helpful for analyzing gender roles and elements of feminism.
2) Identify the gender roles of characters portrayed in the movie male and female separately
3) Analyze the portrayal of female characters and elements of feminism. It is helpful to diagnose the traditional role of females in society.
4) Analyze the portrayal of male characters and elements of masculinity. It is helpful to diagnose the traditional role of males in society.
5) Analyze the relationship between males and females to explore the social archetypal role of gender.
6) Analyze and explore feminist themes such as liberal feminism, cultural feminism, Marxist feminism, and Radical feminism together with how questions associated with gender inequality and women’s empowerment are addressed. This will provide insight into whether the movie challenges or reinforces traditional gender roles and whether it promotes feminist values.

![Figure 1. Framework of analysis.](image-url)
4. Finding and Discussion

After an in-depth study of “Teen Bahadur” a Pakistani Animated movie, using a narrative content analysis approach for thematic analysis the study showed that gender roles were portrayed in the movie and also challenging gender stereotypes in the movie by portraying the female character “Amana”. The plot of the movie moves around three children that is the protagonist of the movie and one of them is female. In this way, two boys “Saadi and Kamil” and one girl “Amana” is work together to fight against an evil force. Amana worked equally with two boys played a leading role and showed strength and braveness in all campaigns and events while fighting with evil force known as “Mangu”.

It is a fact that the role of Amana as an equal member and as a protagonist challenges traditional gender roles in Pakistani society which often place girls in supportive roles or limit their participation in society. This can be represented as promoting gender equality and against traditional gender stereotype roles, which is a central aim of the gender role of females in Pakistani society. The mother of “Saadi” is also a widow and a doctor who brought up her single child bravely in society and works to earn with males equally. It shows that she is a brave and strong mother who works as a caregiver and nurtures at a time. Further, she is supportive of her child “Saadi” in his fight against evil. It is against patriarchal norms, which show that women are courageous and capable as men.

Gender stereotype is deeply rooted in Pakistani society where women's role is recessive and male is dominant but the movie challenges gender stereotype by showing female characters as brave, strong, intelligent, and leader that means it challenges gender stereotype in the movie and as well as in Pakistani society because the movie is not beyond from real world as literature.

Literature in the form of movies also portrays the theme of feminism and one of them is liberal feminism. Liberal feminism focuses on equal rights of males and females in society as portrayed in the movie “Teen Bahadur” by the character of Amana. As Amana is a schoolgirl and plays with Saadi and Kamil who is her friend it means that she enjoys equal rights to education and participates freely and equally in all types of activities even during a fight with Mangu equally participate in the fight rather she leads both the male's character which shows that she has right of equal opportunity as a female.

Researchers analyzed that Amana has a leading role among friends as an intelligent, strong, brave, and knowledgeable girl who sometimes looks dominant on her friends by ordering them. She is also a student and fellow of Kamil and Saadi which shows gender equality and liberalism. Instead of opposition to “Mangu” an evil force against education school will open and children will also study in it Mangu want all the children of “Roshan Nagar” to remain ignorant and he ruled on them due to their ignorance. This is also constructed as a critique of patriarchal construction that seeks limited access of women to education and knowledge and gives limited freedom and rights to education. The study also highlights that actions, movement, diction, thought, and dialogue are those elements that portray the theme of cultural feminism in the movie by supporting the character of Amana in the movie. The character of Amana portrayed cultural feminism through her beliefs and actions as she is portrayed as a strong and independent young girl who has the courage to fight against oppression and injustice, the ability to make decisions, and also the ability to take action on her decision as shown when she and her friends in clock house and she take the decision to flee away from the exhaust fan hole on the occasion of attack of goons. She also decided to attack on clock house to rescue her friend Saadi when he was abducted by goons of Mangu.

Amana's portrayal is different as compared to the typical woman archetype in society and she plays the role of model for other young girls as she thought and also represented that she is unique and different from others. She believed that women's experiences are different from men which have also some value. She speaks openly without any fear or thought that her actions or words may be against the culture of society. She moves freely at night and also has friends Saadi and Kamil which is also portrayed liberal feminism. Amana's fortitude and valor stimulate the other characters in the movie to join her in the fight for justice. The character of Amana proves a new wave of feminism in Pakistani culture as she portrays women’s empowerment and agency as she is strong enough as another male character. She is a character in the movie that shows a prime example of cultural feminism in Pakistani culture by medium of electronic media or movies. Her character in the movie highlights the significance of women in the culture or society as a vital agent of culture.

5. Conclusion

The basis of findings and discussion collected from an in-depth study of the movie showed that female characters especially Amana and Saadi’s mother challenge the gender stereotype of strong and brave women that shows gender role and challenge the gender stereotype in a patriarchal dominant society where women's roles are recessive and limited.

The movie also portrays a different type of feminism by portraying women's character one of them is Amana who represent liberal feminism as she plays with boys, makes a decision, and take part in the fight against evil showing her
equal participation with boys and promoting gender equality. She gets an education with boys and moves freely which promote gender role and shows liberal feminism. Amana is a role model for other young girls and her diction, thought, dialogue, and actions show her confidence and belief. All these represent cultural feminism as a constructed agent of society. To encapsulate the current debate, the movie “Teen Bahadur” represents gender roles and challenges gender stereotypes in Pakistani culture and society by emphasizing the importance of women’s empowerment and freedom. It also focuses on education and freedom in the job of females and acknowledges the leading role of women in society as nurture so the movie and character of the female protagonist also highlight the importance of liberal and cultural feminism.

References


