

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO DRAMAS WRITTEN BY UMERA AHMED: “ZINDAGI GULZAR HAI” AND “KANKAR”

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper conducts a detailed comparative study of two famous Pakistani TV dramas, "Zindagi Gulzar Hai" and "Kankar." In recent years, the Pakistani drama industry has earned a lot of recognition not just within the country but also worldwide by targeting an audience that can relate to the convincing storylines and get reality checks about Pakistani cultural and societal norms. The study shows various aspects of these dramas, like the message they want to convey, their storylines, themes, characters, dialogues, self-improvement, and transformation of the characters. Additionally, it investigates how women in both dramas face challenging lives under the constant pressure of meeting societal expectations and transforming their personalities for the better. Both dramas are related to women's empowerment and their character development. On the other hand, it also highlights the male-dominated society in which women are considered inferior and are often abused physically or mentally by their toxic partners. It also portrays the effects of toxic masculinity on female protagonists. Furthermore, this study shows how these dramas impact their audience, especially encouraging women to take a stand for themselves, and how these dramas have played a role in important discussions about gender equality, women's empowerment, toxic masculinity, and family dynamics in Pakistani culture.

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### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Pakistani drama industry has developed by leaps and bounds. It has grown into a talent powerhouse, producing fascinating dramas popular with viewers in Pakistan and worldwide (Liao, Chang,

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Lee, & Tsai, 2020). The industry has witnessed an increase in the number of high-quality productions, interesting narratives, and outstanding performances by great actors and actresses. Pakistani dramas include a wide range of topics, from societal challenges to family relationships, and serve as a vehicle for thought-provoking storytelling. The Pakistani drama industry continues to grow and make an impact on the world stage, thanks to its wide and dynamic field of performers, writers, and directors (Zaheer, 2019). *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (ZGH) and *Kankar* have both had an incredible effect on the Pakistani drama industry. These plays have not only attracted a large audience, but they have also raised the bar for storyline and production excellence (Shabbir, Farooqui, & Shaikh, 2021). ZGH set a new bar for character development and narrative complexity with its strong female protagonist and study of societal themes. *Kankar*, on the other hand, throws light on the difficult subject of domestic violence, creating critical discussions and promoting awareness. Both dramas have left a permanent mark on the industry, inspiring other writers to push boundaries and address important societal concerns (Siddique, Bhatti, & Ali, 2023).

ZGH depicts Kashaf, a strong-willed woman, and her search for happiness in the face of societal difficulties. *Kankar*, on the other hand, focuses on the difficult subject of domestic violence and the tenacity of women like Kiran. Both plays are thought-provoking, well-written, and feature excellent acting. They are well worth viewing because of their compelling tales and profound themes (Tabassum & Amin, 2020). Umera Ahmed is the author of *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, and she is also the author of *Kankar*. Umera Ahmed is a well-known Pakistani author and screenwriter who is known for her powerful narrative and realistic portrayal of social concerns. Her thought-provoking works have made a significant contribution to the Pakistani drama industry (Riaz, Iftikhar, & Aslam, 2021).

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To analyse the writing of Umera Ahmed, showcasing the approach towards gender roles of Pakistani society.
- To analyse the challenges faced by Pakistani women when they try to speak up for themselves, whether in or outside a domestic setting.
- To explore the impact of societal expectations on the decisions and progress of Pakistani women.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

This research paper aims to conduct a comparative study of the Pakistani dramas "*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*" and "*Kankar*", written by Umera Ahmed. The study helps to understand the problems faced by Pakistani women when they refuse to fall prey to the tactics of a misogynistic society. It also enlightens the role of Pakistani dramas in highlighting the fact that women go through similar problems daily in their domestic and social lives, irrespective of their social and financial status. The focal point of this research is to represent the survival of Pakistani women in dramas, which is an integral problem in our society where misogyny and gender inequality still prevail in today's time and age (Bhattacharya & Nag, 2016).

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Awareness about gender discrimination and disparity should be given prominence. The study will explore the depiction of social and cultural problems, gender norms, and relationships in Pakistani TV dramas and find out their impact on Pakistani society. The research aims to provide a better understanding of the role of Pakistani dramas in shaping and promoting gender equality.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Content analysis of mass communication mediums, such as radio and television, involves a necessary sampling procedure due to the impracticality of analysing the total output continuously. In 1951, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters initiated monitoring studies to assess television content, focusing on selected cities over a week (Head, 1954). Subsequent studies analysed violence incidents in programmes, addressing the public interest. While the sampling procedure had logical advantages, it posed disadvantages in identifying typical characteristics of television as a whole. Challenges included the prevalence of films originally made for theatrical exhibition and the potential non-representativeness of a single week's sample for an ongoing series. To broaden the sample and analysis, the writer focused on the dramatic programme type, chosen for its complexity, reflection of social values, and popularity (Farooqui & Khan, 2020). The study was limited to regularly scheduled network programs, ensuring a nationally distributed and culturally reflective sample. The thirteen-week test period in March–May 1952 included 209 randomly selected programmes from 64 relevant series, representing 31% of the total universe for that period.

A study focused on developing a media literacy programme using Taiwanese TV dramas for adolescents. Using a quasi-experimental design, ninth-graders (aged 14–15) were divided into an experimental group (n = 126) receiving a media literacy program based on the Message Interpretation Process Model using TV idol dramas and a control group (n = 122) without any gender or media education (Niaz, 2019). Results from a repeated measures analysis of variance revealed that the experimental group exhibited significantly improved media literacy and more positive gender role attitudes post-intervention and at a one-month follow-up compared to the control group. This intervention could be a reference for educators aiming to guide adolescents in challenging gender stereotypes depicted in TV dramas and reducing their frequency of watching such content (Abbas & Mahmood, 2021).

Another study conducted a quantitative content analysis to compare the portrayal of women in Pakistani dramas on two private TV channels, ARY and HUM. The research used purposive sampling and framing theory to investigate whether women are exaggerated or marginalized in these dramas. Given the influential role of the media industry in shaping societal perceptions, the study sought to examine whether women in Pakistani dramas align with Gallagher's (1981) observation that media tends to depict them narrowly within home and family roles, often as dreamers or imaginative figures. The findings highlighted distinct portrayals on ARY and HUM TV. ARY tended to depict women as passive, domestic, and

materialistic, whereas HUM presented women as proud, objectified, professional, and dehumanized. This comparison reveals diverse representations of women in Pakistani dramas across different channels.

The research looked into how media stereotypes and people's hold on gender concerning drama on TV shows can change how people perceive each other. It relies a lot on specific and detailed data on a data set consisting of most Pakistani university students in national and private institutions. A questionnaire was created with specific attributes in mind as the critical input; these were given significant consideration in selecting and compiling the data. As discussed by the data group, the social variety in Pakistani cultures, such as the inclusion of two educational institutions, must be regarded as a variable in this research. For most people, daily exposure to gender stereotyping in traditional media has adverse effects on how they perceive social identities, most notably women (Faiz, Khalid, & Mahmood, 2020).

Television dramas, particularly on Pakistani channels like PTV, ARY Digital, and HUM TV, significantly influence the lives of both men and women. A study conducted at Foundation University Islamabad, Rawalpindi Campus, with a sample size of 100 individuals, aimed to assess the impact of these dramas on behaviour and mindset. Findings suggest that these channels tend to undermine Islamic values, contribute to an increase in divorces initiated by men, and portray a negative image of women. Such content is observed to have a detrimental effect on people's mentality, eroding true cultural values in Pakistan (Drisko & Maschi, 2016; Harwood & Garry, 2003).

Electronic media plays a significant role in shaping societal perceptions of women's roles and positions by presenting specific representations. It constructs content to illustrate women's status in the social structure and their contribution to "social capital." In the context of Pakistan, women are often portrayed as "passive, weak, dependent, and oppressed" (Sagheer & Zubair, 2020). This study focuses on examining how Pakistani television serials, using the example of "Zindagi Gulzar Hai (2012)," shape the image of women. Data was gathered through interviews with playwrights and professionals in the Pakistani entertainment media industry. The responses confirmed the stereotypical representation of women, portraying them as homemakers, assistants, and labourers rather than authoritative figures like doctors, officers, army personnel, sportswomen, and businesswomen, which represent a more realistic image of women in society. The study delves into the perspectives of media professionals, Pakistani drama creators, and agencies involved in cultural production through media (Niaz, 2019; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999).

Turkish television dramas, particularly the latest series "Ertugrul," have gained immense popularity in Pakistan, overshadowing the local drama industry. This research aims to explore the reasons behind the Turkish drama's success in Pakistan by analysing audience responses on Twitter. Twitter, known as the "second screen" or "social television," is a platform where individuals engage in discussions while watching television. To understand the motivations for watching "Ertugrul," a content analysis is conducted on 100 tweets from Pakistani viewers, posted under various related hashtags. Given the shared Islamic faith between the people of Pakistan and Turkey, coupled with the drama's portrayal of Islamic teachings, Pakistanis are actively drawn to watch and discuss it (Head, 1954).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is content analysis of two famous dramas written by the famous writer Umera Ahmed. The dramas are *Kankar* (2013) and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (2012). The dramas were broadcast on HUM TV for consecutive years. The analysis was done by watching the dramas as well as reading about them. The sample of this article includes women's problems in society as well as the empowerment of women in different scenarios. These situations were raised in these dramas to make people aware of the consequences of the problems most women face in their lives. The methodology of the article includes the tools used to collect data. This study is comprised of observation, interpretation, and description, as its basic tool includes non-participative observation (Abbas & Mahmood, 2021).

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### *Drama Serial “Zindagi Gulzar Hai”*

#### *Main Theme of Drama Serial “Zindagi Gulzar Hai”*

The main themes of the drama serial ‘*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*’ are:

- Change and self-discovery of the main character *Kashaf* Murtaza
- The drama mainly highlights the journey of a life full of struggles and difficulties to attain personal success and self-satisfaction.
- It shows different forms of love and relationships, i.e., love and arranged marriage, and develops understanding between

#### *Plot of “Zindagi Gulzar Hai”*

“*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*” is one of the most renowned dramas in the Pakistani drama industry. The show was recognized globally because of its thought-provoking story. The story highlights how daughters are not a liability but a blessing. Women are subjected to discrimination not only by society but even by their families. It was released in 2012, at a time when feminism was initially becoming a thing in Pakistan.

The story revolves around *Kashaf* Murtaza, a character played amazingly by Sanam Saeed, and *Zaroon Junaid*, played to perfection by the nation's heartthrob, Fawad Khan. *Kashaf* is a girl belonging to the middle class. *Zaroon* is a rich, spoiled brat because his mother never really paid much attention to his character development. His mother and sister were both independent women. Our protagonist, *Kashaf* Murtaza, has two sisters and was brought up by her mother when their father left them and married another woman for a son. *Kashaf*'s mother is a school principal. *Kashaf*'s father never really supported her and her sister's education, despite his resistance. *Kashaf*'s mother made sure that her daughters went to the most prestigious institutions and got a quality education. In this pursuit, *Kashaf* gets admitted to one of the most prestigious universities that houses the elite in her city on a scholarship. While *Kashaf* is reluctant to go there because she harbors a deep resentment towards the rich people in society, her mother persuades her to go there. *Zaroon Junaid* also goes to the same university. Both of them get off on the wrong foot on the very first day. This leads to a long rivalry that lasts throughout their degrees.

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Meanwhile, Usamaa (played by Shehryar Munawar) is *Zaroon*'s best friend and admires *Kashaf* a lot. *Zaroon* considers *Kashaf*'s closed-off personality a challenge and tries to befriend her. *Kashaf* remains reluctant and closed off towards his advancements. One day *Kashaf* overhears *Zaroon* condescendingly talking about her and how all the efforts he made to befriend her were just to ridicule her. *Kashaf* gets angry and slaps him. Their ever-strained relationship gets worse. Meanwhile, at *Kashaf*'s house, things worsen between her mother and father, leading to their moving out of their house to another rented house. *Kashaf*'s sister gets married without the presence of her father. *Kashaf* and *Zaroon* both appeared in the CSS exam and cleared it. Now everyone's behaviour towards her changes. The father who never gave them attention, considered his daughters a liability, was against their education, and even kicked them out and now is extremely attentive towards his successful daughter, despite paying no attention to her. He who once thought that success and respect would only be brought to him by a son is now made proud by his daughter. Now *Kashaf* gets posted in DGM.

Just like this, there's a time-lapse, and afterward, it shows how *Kashaf* has gained success in such a short time due to focusing on her career. One day some foreigners came to visit areas of Pakistan that came under *Kashaf*'s jurisdiction, but those visitors came with a *Zaroon* as their guide to the tour. Seeing *Zaroon* after such a long time, *Kashaf* relived all the trauma that she faced during her university time, but on the other hand, she has to work with him as a professional. When she comes back home, Usama insists on meeting her and then proposes to her. She does not answer because, deep down, she does not want to get married. She just wants to focus on her career to give a better life to her mother. Another fact is that she believes she does not have a good fate, due to which she fears ending up with someone like her father. Her sister comes back and tries to convince her of Usama's proposal, but she just remains stubborn on that, saying she is happy where she is.

As for *Zaroon*, he starts taking an interest in *Kashaf* due to her decent character. He asks Professor Abrar to talk to *Kashaf* about his proposal. When Professor Abrar talks to *Kashaf*, she is filled with anger rejecting his proposal, but eventually, she agrees over a kind gesture where *Zaroon* keeps her from getting burned. Both *Zaroon* and *Kashaf* agree to get into this relationship. However, both still have doubts about each other, especially *Kashaf*, because it was not easy for her to forget everything that happened in the past. Slowly, *Kashaf*, who never had a strong male relationship in her life, starts to trust *Zaroon* and thinks that maybe her marriage won't end like her mother's. But on the other hand, both expect different things from each other but are unable to tell each other.

They enjoy each other's company, but as all relationships have problems, their relationship also suffers. Both work in different cities and are not able to spend as much time together, so some misunderstanding comes between them. Both were stubborn, not listening to either side of the story. *Kashaf* leaves to live with her mother; being away from each other makes them realize that they both were wrong, and they both end up apologizing. In the end, they both spend their lives happily with their kids.

Conclusively, we can say that this drama portrays women's empowerment by showing that daughters are not a burden. Daughters can be as much of a support system as sons are. All they want is a little acknowledgment and affection from their dear ones, and they will not leave a single step unturned to ensure their happiness. It is a fact that all women ask to be respected and treated the way they are supposed to be, and this is a beautiful depiction of it.

FIRST FAMILY	SECOND FAMILY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rafiyah Murtaza, played by Samina Pirzada, is a working woman who is raising her daughters on her own despite having a husband, Murtaza, played by Waseem Abbas.</li> <li>• Kashaf Murtaza, portrayed by Sanam Saeed is her daughter.</li> <li>• Sidra and Shehnila are her younger daughters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junaid is the head of the family played by Javed Sheikh. He and his wife, Ghazala, played by Hina Khawaja, have two kids.</li> <li>• Zaron Junaid is their son portrayed by Fawad Khan.</li> <li>• Sara Junaid is their daughter played by Ayesha Omar.</li> </ul>

### ***Drama Serial “Kankar”***

#### ***Main Themes of Drama Serial “Kankar”***

The main themes of the drama serial “*Kankar*” are:

- The story circles the issue of domestic abuse and shows how women are stuck in abusive relationships.
- reflects the traditional gender roles depicting the courage and flexibility of women in breaking societal expectations.
- shows the struggles faced by women in harsh marriages and tries to make society aware of this.

#### ***The plot of “Kankar”***

The story of the drama serial “*Kankar*” revolves around two best friends, *Kiran* and *Arzoo*. They are paternal cousins too, happen to study at the same college, and are too close, just like sisters. *Kiran* belongs to a typical middle-class family, while *Arzoo* has a strong, rich family background, and she is the only daughter of her parents. *Arzoo* is in love with her maternal cousin *Sikandar*, who is a rich guy and lives abroad. On the other hand, *Kirans*’s cousin Adnan likes her. But is unable to ask for her hand in marriage due to his unstable financial condition and his sister’s wedding issues.

*Sikandar* returns to Pakistan meets *Kiran* at the wedding ceremony of *Arzoo*’s brother, and falls for her at first sight. He insists that his mother go to *Kiran*’s house and talk to her parents about his proposal. His parents deny it at first, as they want to make *Arzoo* their daughter-in-law, but after being forced by their only son, they go to *Kiran*’s house and ask for her hand in marriage. This led to a dispute in the family. *Kiran* refuses the proposal first, as she knows that her friend is in love with the man who wants to marry her. *Arzoo* calls off her friendship with *Kiran* and blames her for everything. *Kiran* tries to explain herself but fails, so she finally agrees to marry *Sikandar*.

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At first, they were a happy couple, but soon they started getting into huge fights, which eventually led to *Kiran* being physically abused by her husband. *Sikandar* slaps *Kiran* on the face. Nobody calms her down; instead, they blame her and justify *Sikandar*'s behaviour. Her mother-in-law even scolds her and says that it is justified in Islam that a man can hit a woman. *Kiran* corrects her and tells her that there's no such thing allowed in Islam as to hit a rebellious woman in such a manner that it leaves no spot and doesn't hit her in the face. This leaves her mother-in-law speechless, but she still stands by her son.

However, the couple's fight results in *Kiran* having a miscarriage as *Sikandar* throws her onto the ground during an argument. He tries to seek an apology, but *Kiran* asks for a divorce instead. The families try to change their minds by asking *Kiran* to forgive *Sikandar*, but *Kiran* remains firm in her decision, and *Sikandar* reluctantly divorces her.

After his divorce, *Sikandar*'s mother got him married to *Arzoo*. *Arzoo* is pleased with the marriage but is concerned by *Sikandar*'s feelings for his ex-wife. People blame *Kiran* for her broken marriage and admire *Arzoo* for her luck. Adnan's sister finally gets married after her long-term engagement but still lives at her mother's house as her husband lives abroad. Adnan tries to insist his mother ask for *Kiran*'s hand in marriage for him, but she rejects him as she doesn't want his only son to marry a divorcee.

Despite all the issues and *Kiran* being a divorcee, Adnan can convince both families and *Kiran* is married in an intimate ceremony. After finding out about *Kiran*'s second marriage to her cousin, *Sikandar* gets no chill and even fights with *Arzoo* for no reason. *Arzoo* leaves the house and has a breakdown in front of her mother. *Sikandar*'s mother scolds him for the embarrassment she had to face in front of *Arzoo* and her parents. *Sikandar* apologized, and *Arzoo* got her back.

*Kiran* finds it hard to adjust to Adnan's house because of his sister's misconduct and tantrums. Soon, even *Kiran* and Adnan start having fights but end up settling everything out. *Arzoo* is blessed with a baby boy, and sweets are distributed in the family. *Kiran* and Adnan also receive a box, which annoys Adnan. *Sikandar* eavesdrops on *Arzoo* talking to her mother about *Kiran*'s fights with her husband, and this fills him with happiness. When his wife asks about his happiness, he shows selfishness, which leads the couple to a fight. *Sikandar* ends up physically abusing *Arzoo*, and she leaves the house again with her baby. *Sikandar*'s nature is exposed to the family, and they finally believe that *Kiran* was right to take a stand for herself in front of this abusive man. Adnan's brother-in-law calls his wife to move abroad with him. She is filled with joy and apologizes to *Kiran* for her old misbehaviour.

*Arzoo* visits *Kiran*, asks for forgiveness for always taking her wrong, tells her that she made the right decision by leaving *Sikandar*, and tells her about her marital situation. *Kiran* advises her to think properly before taking any huge step, as she is now also the mother of a child. One day, *Kiran* and her sister-in-law go shopping and happen to bump into *Sikandar*. He tells *Kiran* that he still truly loves her and would even divorce *Arzoo* to get her back. This made *Kiran* slap him in public. She warns him to never contempt a woman or raise his hand on one ever again. *Sikandar* realizes his mistake and seeks forgiveness from *Arzoo*.



In the end, *Kiran* and *Adnan* are going to have a child together. The drama ends on a happy note with a strong message that a woman should never compromise her self-respect and should be strong enough to make her own right decisions.

FIRST FAMILY	SECOND FAMILY	THIRD FAMILY	FOURTH FAMILY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kiran</i> is the main character played by <i>Sanam Baloch</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Jamal</i> and <i>Aisha</i> are her parents portrayed by <i>Behroze Sabzwari</i> and <i>Ismat Zaidi</i> respectively.</li> <li>• <i>Iram</i> is <i>Kiran</i>'s sister played by <i>Diya Mughal</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sikandar</i> is the main male lead played by <i>Fahad Mustafa</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Waqar</i> and <i>Shaista</i> are his parents, characters portrayed by <i>Shehryar Zaidi</i> and <i>Laila Zubairi</i> respectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Arzoo</i> is the second lead character played by <i>Maha Warsi</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Kamal</i> and <i>Faiqa</i> are her parents played by <i>Shakeel</i> and <i>Sabahat Ali Bukhari</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adnan</i> who is <i>Kiran</i>'s cousin is played by <i>Hassan Niazi</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Rukshar</i> is her sister, portrayed by <i>Uroosa Siddiqui</i>.</li> </ul>

## COMPARISON OF THE DRAMAS

### A. Similarities of Drama Serial “*Zindagi Gulzaar Hai*” and “*Kankar*”

Both “*Zindagi Gulzaar Hai*” and “*Kankar*” are Pakistani TV dramas that deal with topics of love, relationships, and societal challenges. Here are some similarities between the two:

- ***Strong Female Leads***

Both shows feature strong female leads who overcome hardships and discuss complex relationships.

- ***Social Issues***

Both presentations shed light on common social issues in Pakistani culture, such as class inequalities, gender inequality, and the value of education.

- ***Family Dynamics***

Both dramas dig into the complexities of family dynamics and the influence of social expectations on household relationships.

- ***Love and Romance***

Both series represent many types of love and romance, emphasizing the difficulty and emotional problems that come with them.

- ***Realistic Portrayal***

Both dramas aim to present individuals who are realistic and approachable, making the stories more interesting and stronger.

- ***Deep Emotional Themes***

Both plays deal with intense emotional themes, including grief, betrayal, self-discovery, and sacrifice.

- ***Stellar Performances***

The casts of both series give brilliant performances that bring the characters to life and deepen the storyline.

- ***Compelling stories***

Both dramas have captivating stories that keep viewers interested and anxious to find out what happens next.

- ***Incredible Cinematography***

Both programs include beautiful cinematography and wonderful images, which improve the entire viewing experience.

- ***Popular Soundtracks***

Both dramas feature catchy soundtracks that enhance the narrative and give the scenes a deeper level of emotion.

Overall, "Zindagi Gulzar Hai" and "'Kankar'" are thought-provoking storylines that engage audiences by getting into the complexities of human relationships and cultural standards.

## **B. Differences Between the Drama Serial “Zindagi Gulzar Hai” and “Kankar”**

### **“Kankar” (2013)**

- ***Status difference***

As discussed in the plot, Sikander belonged to a well-off family, and *Kiran* belonged to a middle-class family. The drama shows the status difference, where one has to worry about nothing in life and the other has always worried about everything. It's demonstrated that the big status difference is in the initial thoughts of the families that are marrying their kids. This discrimination was in '*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*' as well, but in it, the status difference never became the reason to look upon *Kashaf* or her family.

- ***Financial difference***

In '*Kankar*', there are three families related to one another, but the fact that one among them is financially privileged makes others feel looked upon, whereas in ZGH, even though *Kashaf*'s mother was hurt about her husband's second marriage, she never hated her or looked down on her family when her daughters succeeded.

- ***Male dominance***

Both dramas try to show male dominance, but '*Kankar*' shows this dominance by showing domestic violence. As the drama goes on, we see that Sikander, being in love with *Kiran*, marries her by forcing his parents, although they want him to marry *Arzoo*. The marriage starts strong, but soon Sikander starts to change his behaviour by showing dominance over *Kiran* in both aspects—that he is a male and has a strong background. He abuses her physically, apologizes for his behaviour, and then does it again. This led to their divorce. In ZGH, male dominance never gave them the right to abuse a woman physically or verbally.

- *Divorce*

*Kiran*, after being abused by Sikander multiple times, gets a divorce. Everyone still blames her for everything that happened because that's just the way our society works. They never look at the reason for divorce; they just blame the woman for it. Fortunately, this is the thinking of most of society, not everyone, just like Adnan, *Kiran's* cousin, who always loved *Kiran* and was still willing to accept her in his life. In ZGH, the women were shown as more empowered characters than in '*Kankar*', as divorce was thought to be wrong but both partners thought it was fine and they were not being blamed.

- *Abuser*

People in our society want a woman to stay patient in cases of violence because they think that saving a useless marriage is more important than anything else. Sikander used to abuse *Kiran*, and everyone asked her to stay strong and keep on with her life, but eventually, she didn't have the patience to keep on with her relationship. If someone thinks that it was *Kiran's* fault, they are wrong because Sikander had the same behaviour with his second wife, *Arzoo*. So, the drama eventually shows how it was never *Kiran's* fault by patching things up between *Kiran* and *Arzoo*, who both were victims of Sikander abuse. In ZGH, abuse was not a main topic.

## THE THEME THAT DIFFERENTIATES BOTH DRAMAS

Both dramas show different aspects of life. Dramas are made about the problematic issues of society. Similarly, both dramas have shown different problems. If we talk about *Kankar*, we will see the following problems in society:

- Financial stability often makes people proud and arrogant
- Families give more freedom to sons.
- Males trying to prove dominance over females.
- Domestic violence.

### *"Zindagi Gulzar Hai" (2012)*

- *Son superiority*

In the drama '*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*', we see the mentality about the fact that only sons can make parents' old age worthwhile and that the role of a daughter is only to get married and take on the responsibilities of her family. This was the very mentality of *Kashaf's* father at the beginning of the drama, due to which he remarried and had a son with his second wife, and in doing so, he always ignored his first wife and older daughters. But later on, when he sees that his son is nowhere near as competent as his daughters, he tries to redeem himself, but it is difficult for his daughters to forgive him because of their upbringing, which makes them forgive their father. In '*Kankar*', there was no gender problem regarding kids. The ones with girls were happy to raise them with confidence and proud that their daughters were the reason for their business.

- ***Focus on family***

In this drama, the perspectives of two families are displayed: the middle-class family of *Kashaf*, in which the father is not involved in the upbringing of the children, and *Zaroon's family*, which is an elite family that focuses on themselves and is not very family-oriented. In '*Kankar*', every family was proud of their family upbringing and their strong role in their families.

- ***Absence of male authority***

In '*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*', it is shown that the role of the father is suppressed like they are not as involved as they should be in the upbringing of their children. *Kashaf's* father doesn't care about his daughters, and *Zaroon's* father is a businessman who is mostly on trips; his mother is an elite woman who requires her at different events, and all that ends up spoiling *Zaroon's* sister. In '*Kankar*', male dominance is one of the main themes of the drama, especially for *Sikandar*.

- ***Responsibilities***

*Kashaf* and *Zaroon*, seeing their entire lives and how their parents couldn't have a healthy relationship, try their best to make their relationship work by understanding each other and taking on their responsibilities, whereas in '*Kankar*', responsibilities were never shared among the family.

- ***Working out difficulties***

*Kashaf* and *Zaroon* go through a lot of difficulties throughout their relationship but always try to resolve them by talking to each other, which makes them close to one another. That is the only reason they can forgive each other and are not able to comprehend a life without each other, whereas in '*Kankar*', initially, the way to make someone agree to one's stance was by giving a threat or simple violence.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

We note that early drama serials portrayed the limited role of women in the home and kitchen. Women might not dare confront their maltreatment because they were so reliant on their spouses for basic requirements. But as our civilization continues to advance, the dramas of today are evolving. Today, women's empowerment is demonstrated by their independence and their ability to face any challenge.

They no longer worry about being hungry and dying. They fit in with society. They understand their value. We also see that women who are educated have the strength to defend their rights. Additionally, these dramas expose a crucial subject, namely the difficulties faced by couples who have a socioeconomic divide, particularly women. In the drama series *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, we observe how women can stand up for themselves and ascend the success ladder in a male-dominated society.

In the television program *Kankar*, we see that contemporary women are no longer silent about domestic violence. Women used to be portrayed in drama serials as helpless, dependent animals, but that has changed recently as our culture has changed and our country has advanced. This study examines women's roles in society, how they are continuously pressed to conform to social norms, and their everyday struggles in a world dominated by men, where they are frequently the targets of physical and mental violence. And how women might live honourably in a relationship where there is a class divide.

## **CONCLUSION**

Both dramas have some similarities, which makes it easy to compare them. Both dramas deal with topics of love, relationships, and societal challenges. Both dramas challenge and question our male-dominated society and encourage people to speak up for their rights. They use captivating scenes and cinematographic shots to capture the attention of viewers. Moreover, beautiful soundtracks and the way viewers can relate to characters are what make these dramas so special. They highlight major issues that women face in our society and how most women end up not taking a step for themselves, even when they are right. People are more involved when they find something more relatable. These shows also emphasize how maintaining an image in our culture is crushing many young people's hopes. They demonstrate how weak women are frequently denigrated by men who are anxious about themselves. They see themselves as a threat and try to belittle and mock them to feel good about themselves. They exhibit a lovely harmony between moral principles and cultural expectations. Another issue that is presented is how status differences make relationships challenging and how they make people proud and haughty. They end up believing that anything is acceptable for them to do. In reality, those who abuse are those who are afraid of the victim.

This study shows how domestic violence and the struggles of women in a male-dominated society are intertwined. These are the major issues in many cultures and societies. These are rooted deeply in societal norms. These issues have been highlighted numerous times, and much work has been done, but there is still a need for progress. Women need to be treated equally in workplaces so they can also reach their full potential and work alongside men.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Education can be the key factor in overcoming these barriers. Well-educated women also know their worth and how to face these challenges in male-dominated societies. Many legal frameworks have been developed for women to fight against domestic abuse. Still, some women face difficulties due to the societal norms of staying in toxic relationships because divorce is considered taboo in some cultures. Women can overcome these issues by networking and being well-educated to fight for their rights. Moreover, organizations and women's support networks have helped women climb the ladder to success while fighting for their rights. They should be economically independent so they can leave their toxic partners and not depend on them. More research should be done to address this problem, find effective solutions, support women, and work for their empowerment.

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