

Wardrobe Representation Metrics in Pakistani Movies: A Screen-Time-Based Study of Traditional and Western Dresses

Muhammad Ihtisham¹, Hamd Nawaz²

¹ MS Scholar, Riphah Institute of Media Sciences, Riphah International University, Islamabad, ihtishanmalak@gmail.com

² MPhil Scholar, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Malakand, hamdnawaz92@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63163/jpehss.v3i4.887>

Abstract

This study examines the representation of traditional and Western clothing in Pakistani cinema through screen time-based content analysis of two high-budget films: *Jawani Phir Nahi Aani 2* (2018) and *Money Back Guarantee* (2023). Clothes in movies are a powerful visual tool that shape perception of culture, identity, and modernity. Pakistani films have dominant by Western culture, while traditional and national outfits such as the *Shalwar Kameez* receive limited screen visibility. Using quantitative content analysis researchers calculated the duration (time per frame) of different dress such as jeans, flowy maxi dresses, lehengas, suits, and traditional costume to point out trends in wardrobe representation. Findings revealed dominancy of Western and modern garments in the selected movies. In the film titled “*Jawani Phir Nahi Aani 2*,” the lead heroine appears in shalwar kameez for only 4.63% of total screen time, while in tight jeans and Western tops for 28.78%, flowy maxi dresses for 13.99%, and lehengas with visible midriffs for 29.68%. In movie named “*Money Back Guarantee*” the lead heroine portrayed in tight jeans for 44.67% of the screen time, while the lead actor is framed purely in Western suits. These findings indicate a significant shift towards Western aesthetics in Pakistani cinema, reflecting broader cultural shifts and growing cinematic preferences. Based on the findings it is attractive for new generation but on the other side it will also raises question about the marginalization of cultural clothing, traditional values and norms.

Keywords: Film, Dress Code, Tradition, Culture, Violation, Pakistan, Impact, Lollywood, Screen time

Introduction

It has been observed that western culture is dominating on the other cultures. The combination of Western fashion and local fashion has made a unique statement. Which step up the question of gender binaries in Pakistan. Pakistani society has traditionally strict about dress codes. This is closely related to standards cultural and religious traditions (Kanwal,2025). Modern clothing, Western culture, eating style, new fashion trend, luxury lifestyle, and also cultural changes are promoted through dramas. Cultural changes and Social have taken place. This happened in Pakistan because of the representation of Western culture in dramas. (Usman, 2022).

Similarly, Pakistan culture has been also influenced by other cultures which is practicing by the residents. The national media is representing foreign culture. Changed the lifestyle of the local people. Comparatively, women watch more television than men, which in turn has a profound

impact on their dress, Language, behaviour, home decoration ideas, and women's attitudes have changed, while dressing style and hairstyles are also imitated by the younger generation. (Shabana, 2022).

However, Geo and Hum TV dramas. Have a significant impact on women's language and dress. The more you watch television, the more likely you are to have wrong ideas about life. Modern costumes are used more frequently in dramas. Television has had a great impact on women's lives and also changed Opinions about their clothing choices because the media used powerful techniques to change women's minds regarding their clothing (Sher Dil, 2023) In recent years, there has been a significant increase in modern and revealing clothing styles in Pakistani films, such as tight jeans, flowy maxi dresses, and lehengas that expose the midriff, while the traditional shalwar kameez appears relatively rarely. This pattern suggests a shift in the portrayal of female characters, with modern fashion being used to convey glamour, youth, and universal identity. Understanding this shift is essential to examining how Pakistani cinema contributes to changing cultural norms and audience expectations regarding women's appearance.

Objectives

- To explore dress code in Pakistan films
- To calculate how much time given to different dresses

Research Question

RQ1: What kinds of dress the Pakistan movies promote instead of national cultural dress?

RQ2: How much time has been given to each dress in the selected Pakistani movies?

Literature Review

According to Kahkshaan (2016) that a "Janan" movie was studied, in which show more modern side of a Pathan woman sleek, blow dried hair who's have no qualms in being face to face with the opposite gender, whereas, on the other hand the movie a negative character was shown in the traditional dress Shalwar Qamis with traditional and cultural cap of Pushton "Pakol" in the complete movie.

However, Rida, Saba and Misbah (2014) that the initial stage of dramas and films industry passed through a golden era. At the time a lot of valuable content were related to culture in 1970 to 1990 portrayed by PTV and were considered best in the Indian subcontinent. After the end of golden age a lot of violations appeared in the films and dramas contents which negatively effected the Pakistan's society and norms such as hatred, jealousy, greed and also revenge.

Additionally, Iffat (2022) studied the item songs in Pakistani movies, which directly related and linked the film and audience. Item song in a film are quite controversial and are limited to India and Pakistani films. Item song is characterised as cine-sexual idea consisting of a sexual dance performance where mostly the focus is on the item girl whom is often accompanied by male characters pleasing them by body and facial gestures. The female characters were mostly shown in short dresses and sharp focus to attract audiences. Mid shorts using only for showing female characters costumes. The female characters were objected like a product to be sold out by giving them the best packing in items of attractive jewellery, dress, seductive move and visible makeup. However, Ishaq, Manawar, & Anwar, (2021) stated that Pakistani film industry is growing fast and producing better films, but many mistakes can be seen in the context and presentation of the films. Many such films have been made in Urdu which have been criticized for portraying immorality and dealing with moral issues. If the facts are presented responsibly, it can have good results in the change of attitude and behaviour of the viewers positively and vice-versa. According to historians, the culture of Pashtuns is old, whose history goes back centuries.

However, Shabbir (2016) Says that several issues are facing in the front of the growth of the movie industry including quality and inconsistency. It can be easily observing that success is hard to come by without powerful stories. Farther, it has need passionate filmmakers in the industry, without thinking whether the film is primarily going to be financially profitable or not? Not necessarily masala films for hits and big screen. According to Fozia, Sadia (2017) the impact of the revival of Pakistani film industry that people of Karachi especially watch Hollywood movies more than Pakistanis. Ironically most of the Pakistani people have less interest in movies as well. The main reason why Pakistani do not watch Pakistani movies is because they think that they are coping Indian culture, values, moral value, ethics, norms, language (religion) and also traditions. People do not waste their time and also money on it to go to the cinema. Because of it mostly people like to watch film at homes. According to the theory of "consumption and gratification" Pakistani cinema is producing and making most of films according to people's interest like whether they want to use item songs or not. While farming theory says that people will soon get used to dance items, and also short dresses, focus on the social issues, women empowerment etc. so according to the situation film directors, producers and also script writers spend time and invest money. do will spend in productive uses for them and also for the society.

On the other hand, Nobil (2014) investigates the current discourse on Pakistani cinema in order to pave the way for a more important discussion, asking: what does cinema really mean when it comes to "death"? What do I mean and what are the assumptions about the nature of cinematic "life"? Flow from it? More fundamentally, what is meant by "Pakistani cinema", and what kind of confusion arises from its vague and inconsistent use as a generic term encompassing film production from a vast and historically unstable entity like Pakistan? are What are born? Confusion and conflict arise? Final set of questions related to the term "Industry". Here again, defining and distinguishing terms of reference is a useful starting point for exploring other units of analysis that may be appropriate for describing social realities and aesthetic forms as opposed to life. And allows complex words of death. Uzma, Tahira, Tariq (2015) explored that Pakistani cinema has gone through various periods of ups and downs and its sense of continuous decline in recent years has surprised cinema enthusiasts and founders. It not so easy for the film industry to come with the new side and come out of apparently no win condition. Our film makers and producers usually claim that they are producing such content which audience want and also our have public has bad taste. They easily ignore and pass over that public his low taste is their own creation. People do not know about any better, but when a Indian film are easily available to them so people watch them in general, they just ask why Pakistani producers can't make better films for Pakistani cinema lovers. Additionally, Erum (2015) revealed that the lack of dynamic ideas, recurring themes and also the absence of modern facilities, infighting in the industry, illegal screening of Indian films on cable, new electronic channels and pirated foreign films are among the issues. Availability has led the downfall of Pakistani cinema. Industry studies have recommended that Lollywood should find a niche market and build on its cultural strengths. The current boom in Pakistani cinema calls for a multi-pronged approach to simultaneously improve quality, quantity and the economics of the situation.

According to the Asad, Mahmood (2024), the Hollywood and Bollywood films has had an impact on Pakistani audiences due to globalized and diverse content. Particularly, Indian and Western cultures are presented in women's and men's clothing, respectively. In the language domain, individuals also demonstrated a somewhat higher affinity for Hindi. The research shows that Bollywood films is impose Pakistani audiences about Indian culture. The research also found that the presentation of Islam and Muslims in Bollywood films is more negative than positive or neutral.

Additionally, Maham, Shahid (2025) Cinema has a significant power in shaping cultural representations and influencing social norms. By promoting diverse stories and authentic images, film can foster understanding, empathy, and inclusion. Current Pakistani films provide “London Nahi Jaunga” as part of several productions that present Western cultural themes with multicultural stories. The Pakistani film industry reflects cultural change through gender imagery and the growing tension between old customs and modern, and also the growing acceptance of multiple religious beliefs and races.

Similarly, Shah, Robina (2024) did content analysis of Pakistani Urdu films to examine gender showcase in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Female characters are predominantly presented with glamorous looks (30.9%), but this representation has decreased with time. The emphasis on glamour reflects societal norms that prioritize physical appearance over other attributes such as ability and intelligence. Furthermore, the classification of dressing styles shows that while Eastern clothing is prevalent among female characters (29.8%), and Western styles is increasing among male characters (40.6%). This shift may highlight cultural mixing.

However, Ayesha (2025) found that the Pakistani film industry has evolved significantly throughout its history to reflect social and cultural developments. Since its inception, Pakistani cinema has faced issues related to censorship and traditional perspectives. The film “Zindagi Tamasha” is an interesting study of the cultural perceptions of society. The film serves as a powerful case study that dissects forms of discourse and opposes cultural perceptions. It also provides a multifaceted prism through which to view the dynamics of Pakistani culture.

On the other side, regional and local language films are also adopting western culture as Yusra, Liaqat, Faiza (2020) said that Various symbolic, allegorical, and symbolic signs were discovered, which are associated with cultural depictions. The heroes of Pashto films were mostly depicted wearing the traditional dress code but in unbuttoned shirts and strapless shoes, with piercing looks, aggressive personalities, and psychological inclinations towards inhumanity and brutality. They were represented, using Kalashnikovs and other weapons to mock the law by using illegitimate force.

Theoretical Framework

Framing theory were applied in this research to evaluate the presentation of western and traditional dresses in the movies. Framing theory is a communication and media theory that explains how information is presented (framed) and how this presentation influences people's understanding and opinions about an issue, event, or person” (Goffman,1974).

This study applies framing theory to analyze how Pakistani Movies frame different types of Dresses, including traditional, modern and Western through their visual visibility on screen. Study found that the increased screen time given to Western and glamorous clothing in Pakistani films such as tight jeans, flowy maxi dresses, and lehengas with visible midriffs can be understood as a deliberate visual frame that shapes the way femininity and modernity are portrayed, by repeatedly visibility on screen than traditional clothing such as the shalwar Qamis, filmmakers create a frame in which Western or revealing clothing were associated with attractiveness, confidence, and modernity, while traditional dressing were framed as ordinary, modest, or less glamorous.

Methodology

To explore modern dress trends, the current study conducts a content analysis of the screen time devoted to different types of clothing in two high-budget Pakistani films: “Jawaani Phir Nahi Aani 2” (2018) and “Money Back Guarantee” (2023). These films were selected due to their commercial success, high production value, and strong presence of female characters whose wardrobes play a significant role in visual storytelling. By measuring and comparing the screen time of

Western/modern clothing with traditional Pakistani clothing, this study aims to reveal patterns of clothing representation in contemporary cinema and the cultural messages embedded in these visual choices. The present research is based on structural dress code in Pakistani movies that what types of dress code are promoting in Pakistan film industry, which is directly influenced on the audiences. The current research also investigates that why the film western contents effect the Pakistani traditions, norm, values, culture and cultural dress code mostly.

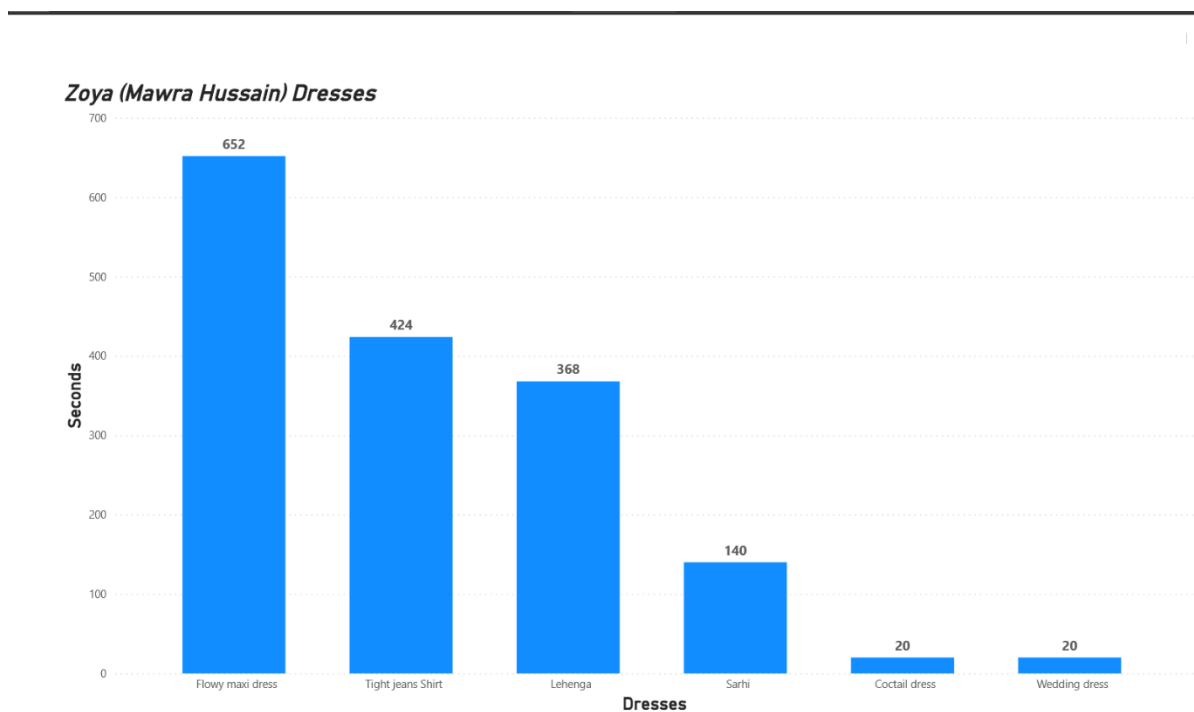
Findings

The findings revealed that the Pakistani movies mostly promoted others dresses like trousers, Tight jeans, suite and mostly Flowy maxi Dress. In the first movie “Jawani pir nahe ani 2” the statistics explored that the screen time of Shalwar Qamis of Heroine was 4.63% of the entire movie and Tight jeans screen time was 28.78%.

The results also showed that director exposed the jeans screen time differently due to types of jeans and T shirt uses by the actors. 13.99% of Flowy maxi Dress, 6.62% of trouser shirt, 6.38% of Sarhi, 5.67% of skirt, while 29.68% screen time were given to Wedding dress “Lehenga” that exposed the women belly clearly that is a social taboo.

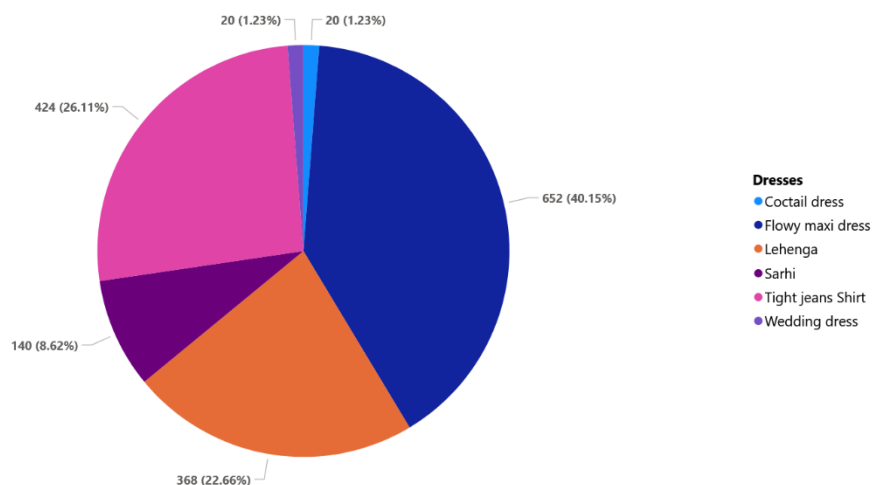
Second lead Heroine dress screen time was also calculated in which 40.15% screen time were given to Flowy maxi Dress. 26.11% screen time of Tight jeans shirt. 22.66% to Lehenga. 8.62% to Sarhi. Besides it, the movie also randomly took some shorts in western dresses, while the lead Hero Shalwar Qamis screen time was 28.95% and jeans screen time was 47.94%.

Figure 1: Main Lead Heroine dresses visuals



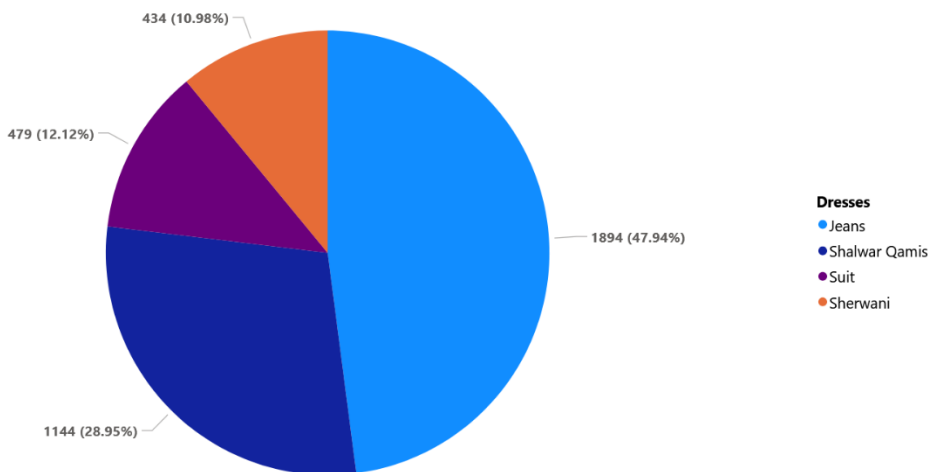
Second Lead Heroine dresses visuals

Zoya (Mawra Hussain) Dresses Ratio



Second Lead Heroine dresses visuals

Sherry (Humayun Saeed) Dresses Ratio

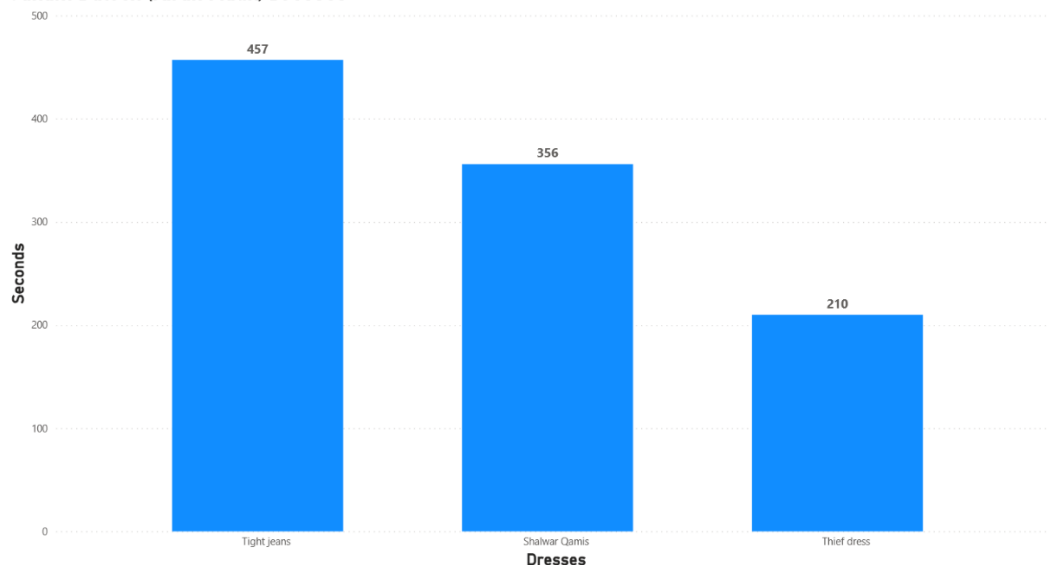


Main Lead Hero dresses visuals

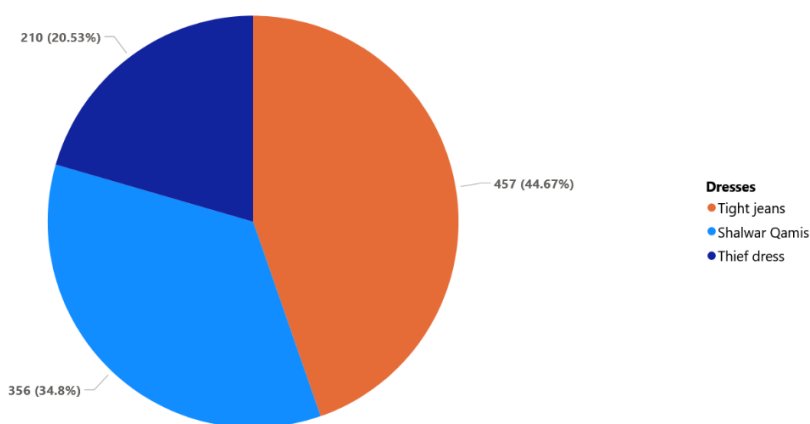
The data shows that the second film “Money back guarantee” which released in 2023. The ratio of Shalwar Qamis were 34.8%, Tight Jeans were portrayed 44.67%, and actors with thief dress were

20.53% of main lead Heroine, while, main hero Character was only shown in dress Suit with screen time of lead hero 100%.

Sanam Baloch (Kiran Malik) Dresses



Sanam Baloch (Kiran Malik) Dresses Ratio



Main Lead Heroine dresses visuals

Conclusion:

It is found that the results obtained from the study point out a clear shift in the representation of dress styles in Pakistani films. The analysis of screen time finds that modern and Western outfits such as tight jeans, flowy maxi dresses and suit that receive significantly more visibility than traditional outfits like shalwar Qamis for both male and female actors. Pakistani dress code is shown less than one third of the film time in the selected movies. Some shorts were captured of random people in violated dress. Mostly Tight jeans were used for female characters and also Lehenga in which belly etc. was clearly visible. The prominence of these unconventional costumes may reflect changing audience preferences, changing fashion norms, or the film industry's attempt

to appeal to a broader or younger demographic. However, it also raises questions about the balance between modernity and tradition in cultural representation and media portrayal. This trend suggests that the contemporary Pakistani cinema increasingly prioritizing fashion choices that align with the global and modern aesthetics rather than culturally rooted styles.

References

- Ayesha, A. (2025). *Cinematic discourse and cultural perception: A case study of Zindagi Tamasha in Pakistani cinema*. *Regional Tribune Journal of Film Studies*, 3(1), 12–29.
- Erum, S. (2015). *Challenges and decline of the Pakistani film industry*. *Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 7(4), 55–70.
- Fozia, S., & Sadia, R. (2017). *Impact of the revival of the Pakistani film industry on audience preferences*. *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 33–48.
- Iffat, M. (2022). *Representation of women in Pakistani item songs: A feminist media analysis*. *Journal of Gender and Media Studies*, 9(1), 101–120.
- Ishaq, R., Manawar, R., & Anwar, M. N. (2021). *Portrayal of Pashtun culture in Pakistani Urdu films: A critical cultural analysis*. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 9(3), 241–258.
- Kahkashan, S. (2016). *Dress codes and female representation in the Pakistani film “Janaan.”* *International Journal of Media Studies*, 12(2), 77–89.
- Kanwal, S. (2025). *Breaking the binary: A structuralist–semiotic analysis of fashion and gender fluidity in Pakistan*. *Erevna Journal*, 5(2), 77–94.
- Latif, M. A., & Ahmad, M. (2024). *Cultural effects and Muslim identity: An analysis of Bollywood cinematic reels and its impacts on Pakistani society, civilization and ethos*. *AL MISBAH Research Journal*, 4(3), 1–14
- Maham, M., & Shahid, S. (2025). *Cinema’s cultural power and representation: Western themes in contemporary Pakistani films including London Nahi Jaunga*. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 87–105.
- Nawaz, S., & Roshan, R. (2024). *Gender’s portrayal in Pakistani Urdu cinema during the first two decades of the 21st century: A content analysis*. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 13(4), 154–167.
- Nobil, A. (2014). *Death, life, and identity of Pakistani cinema: A critical discourse analysis*. *Journal of Film and Cultural Theory*, 6(1), 15–35.
- Rida, H., Saba, K., & Misbah, M. (2014). *Evolution and decline of Pakistani film and drama industry*. *Journal of South Asian Media Research*, 2(1), 66–81.
- Shabana, K. (2022). *Cultural transformation through Pakistani media: Influence on women’s dressing, language, and lifestyle*. *Journal of Culture and Society*, 10(1), 55–70.
- Shabbir, A. (2016). *Quality and inconsistency in Pakistani cinema: Issues and prospects*. *Pakistan Media Review*, 3(2), 89–100.
- Sher Dil, M. (2023). *Impact of Geo and Hum TV dramas on women’s clothing and language choices*. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(1), 120–135.
- Usman, S. (2022). *Western cultural influences in Pakistani dramas and changing societal norms*. *Journal of Cultural Communication*, 14(1), 23–39.
- Uzma, N., Tahira, K., & Tariq, S. (2015). *Rise, fall, and challenges of Pakistani cinema: A historical analysis*. *Pakistan Journal of Arts and Literature*, 11(3), 201–219.
- Yusra, Y., Liaqat, L., & Faiza, F. (2020). *Cultural symbolism and character representation in Pashto cinema*. *Journal of South Asian Media Research*, 6(2), 45–60.