

Gender issues in hindi language family based teleserials

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ABSTRACT

Teleserials in India constitute major share of the time devoted to entertainment programmes on the Hindi language channels of Indian television. In India, teleserials rose to popularity after Humlog, the first TV serial that became a major success on Doordarshan. Liberalization and globalization led to the private channels started telecasting mega serials about big business families. The year 2008 led to the birth of Colors TV as a new channel, and Balika Vadhu, as a women centric thematic soap. A new shift in the emphasis in the content of family based teleserials was observed. UN and CEDAW guidelines as well as Beijing 20 laid emphasis on portrayal on women in media and its linkages with gender empowerment. Content of teleserials became a question of primary concern. As a part of the doctoral study on 'Gender issues in the Hindi language family based teleserials', an analysis of the primary themes of the content of 182 teleserials on Youtube over the time frame 2008-2016 was conducted across four popular Hindi channels *i.e.* Starplus, Zee TV, Sony and Colors within the context of gender. A total of 182 family based teleserials were telecasted across the four identified channels between 2008-2016. Of them, 87 teleserials (47.80%) revolved around women and gender. Out of a total of 87 gender centric teleserials, 47 teleserials had some issue related to gender as their primary theme; 31 teleserials focused on the challenging life journeys of women in a diversity of situations as the primary theme; and 11 teleserials focusing on women centric relationships. Among the 47 teleserials focusing on gender issues, 32 teleserials focused on issues related to marriage and gender, 03 teleserials focused on issues related to gender based discrimination, 04 teleserials focused on issues related to gender based violence; and 08 teleserials focused on a variety of other gender issues as their primary theme. Channel wise, more than 50% of teleserials on ZeeTV, Sony TV and Colors TV had gender as the primary theme. Starplus, though had the highest number (28), the proportion was 40.00%.

Key Words : Family based teleserials, Gender issues, Women centric teleserials, Challenging life journeys of women, Gender and relationships

INTRODUCTION

Teleserials in India constitute 80-90% of the time devoted to entertainment programmes on the Hindi language channels of Indian television. Soap operas or teleserials have stories generally revolving around 2 to 5 families associated with each other. All teleserials have a central theme, have basic plot and sub plots. They are slow and stories reach viewers' homes daily. Stories may have one or more protagonist. The viewers develop a symbiotic relationship with the protagonist and the key characters of the teleserials. Viewers get involved with the content and context of the

story at the level of their psyche.

Teleserials in India rose to popularity after *Humlog*, the first TV serial that became a major success on Doordarshan, followed by many others like *Udaan*, *Buniyaad*, *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata* on Doordarshan in the pre-liberalization era. Doordarshan tried to define the televiewing space of teleserials appealing to the Indian-ness of the Indian audience.

Post liberalization and globalization, the private channels started telecasting mega serials about big business families and their family relationships focusing on the household issues and concerns. In the post liberalization and globalization era, teleserials like *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, *Kasauti Zindagi Ke*, and *Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki* rose to unparalleled popularity (Munshi, 2012).

Kyunki and *'Kahaani'* redefined televiewing space through their mega stories, film like visual quality, and a content that brought day to day household level issues of relationships and spaces to people's homes. *'Tulsi'* and *'Parvati'* became popular household names. Many such teleserials journeyed for more than 4-5 years including the likes of *Kasauti*, *Kyunki* and *Kahaani*. Due to their unending length and stories losing relevance running across generations, these teleserials started inviting a lot of criticism towards the end. Gender as a concern was beginning to find negative treatment through some of these serials.

In the year 2008, with the birth of Colors TV as a new channel, and *Balika Vadhu*, there was sudden new shift in the emphasis in the content of family based teleserials (Kottary, 2009). Content wise and context wise, there were efforts to focus on women's voices, concerns and struggles in some way. Gender as a concern was beginning to find a specific voice and space.

Theoretical framework :

The question of content and context:

Given the very high popularity of teleserials, the question of content and context with respect to gender needs to be reviewed as the images, issues and stories carried in the teleserials have a high potential of influencing the viewers in some way. The influence could be positive or negative, constructive or destructive, and short term and long term. The *Cultivation theory* and the *Socialization theory of Media Effects* by Denis Mc Quail also state the role of mass media, particularly the entertainment programmes in influencing the viewers in subtle manner (Mc Quail, 2010).

Understanding gender and sex:

The concept of gender enables us to state that sex and gender are different. Sex is biological, helping to categorize people in to male and female; and gender is sociological. The distinct socially and culturally created and perceived roles of men and women are called gender. Gender therefore is the social and cultural definition of men and women (Bhasin, 1999 and Bhasin 2000).

Global initiatives on women and media :

The *Beijing Platform for Action*, set up in 1995, emphasized on the need for the media to play a role in shifting the gender stereotypes. Twenty years later, again, the *Beijing 20* emphasized, that *'Everyone deserves to live free from the burden of harmful gender stereo types'* (Beijing 20, 2015).

An ongoing UNESCO-SWAN (South Asian Women's Network) initiative, *'Women for Change: Building a Gendered Media'* in May 2016 developed a set of practical gender sensitive guidelines for women in media in the South Asian Region (UNESCO, New Delhi, 2016).

CEDAW, UNIFEM in its 2006 report focused on the linkages between Sex Role Stereotyping and Prejudice, Status of Women in India and Role of Media.

It stated that the absence of clear censor guidelines on sexual stereotypes had resulted in the glorification of women's subordination through unhindered media portrayals. It stressed that '*the absence of any regulations in television programmes* resulted in a stereo typical portrayal of women in serials (CEDAW, UNIFEM, 2006).

Gender Recommendation No. 19 of the CEDAW Committee clearly pointed that '*cultural practices/ attitudes, perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion*'. Such practices had the potential to justify gender-based violence.

The Indian context :

Broadcasting Contents Complaints Council (BCCC) was set up in India to regulate the content of cable Television. The BCCC guidelines were applicable to all non-news broadcast programmes on television. The guidelines discourage portrayal of women as '*an object of sexual exploitation*' and discourage glorification '*of social evils like child marriage, dowry, bigamy, son preference*' etc (IBF Guidelines).

Content analysis of Hindi language family based teleserials :

Trends in content of the Hindi language family based teleserials in general, as well as, content related to gender and women were studied through an analysis of the primary thematic treatment of the story. A study was conducted for analysis for primary themes of the content and storyline of family based teleserials over the time frame 2008-2016. Epic and mythological teleserials were excluded from the sample Teleseries like crime shows, talk shows, talent shows etc. were also excluded.

Content analysis:

To analyze the trends in content of the family based Hindi language teleserials telecasted 2008 onwards, with respect to gender and women; data was gathered by visiting the websites of each channel. Data was gathered over the time frame of 2008-2016. Four popular channels identified for inclusion in the study were Starplus, Sony, Zee TV, Colors, since these were the most popular channels. Also other channels were excluded for the purpose of manageability of the data.

METHODOLOGY

Each teleserial on air between 2008-2016 was studied briefly for an idea of its basic storyline, content, background and type of teleserial. Teleserials were visited through their channel websites and Youtube. Few episodes of each teleserial were watched for clarity on content. Teleserials on air as on 2008 even if they were continuing from the past were also included. This exercise was undertaken to study the trends in content and range.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on their thematic content and basic storyline, three broad categories of content emerged among the teleserials. The three broad categories arrived that emerged were General (Themes

related to family and social life with no specific emphasis on gender or women); Gender centric (stories around women protagonists or issues related to women or gender as a primary focus); and Gender as an issue built into script (primary theme did not revolve around women or gender but some aspect of gender roles emerged as a part of the story).

Channel wise classification of teleserials (2008-2016) :

Table 1 reveals that out of a total of 193 teleserials on air, there were 182 family based teleserials telecasted across the four identified channels between 2008-2016. Of them, 87 teleserials (47.80%) revolved around women and gender, either focusing on stories women protagonists or some gender issues. Channel wise even though Starplus (28) had the highest number of gender centric teleserials, proportion wise Zee, Sony and Colors were nearly equal and faired much higher than Starplus. More than half of the family based teleserials on Zee TV, Sony and Colors revolved around women and gender as the primary theme.

Table 1 : Channel wise classification of teleserials (2008-2016)

Name of channel	Number of teleserials (Total) (N)	Family based teleserials (Total) (n)	Family based gender centric tele serials (n1)
Starplus	74	70	28 (40.00%)
Colors	45	42	22 (52.38%)
Zee TV	41	39	21(53.84%)
Sony	33	31	16 (51.61%)
Total	193	182	87 (47.80%)

Gender centric teleserials; channel wise thematic analysis :

An analysis of the content of gender centric teleserials based on the primary theme around which the story revolved; conducted channel wise, as well as theme wise, led to the following classification. Based on the primary theme of the content, the gender centric teleserials were classifiable in to three broad categories: a. Teleserials around specific gender issue, b. Challenging life journeys of women protagonists in the teleserial as the primary focus; and c. Relationships challenges of the women protagonists as the primary focus.

Themes and issues raised in gender centric teleserials :

A channel wise analysis of the trends in gender centric scripts of the tele serials is presented below.

Starplus:

Out of the 28 teleserials in the gender centric category, all the teleserials revolved around stories and life journeys of women protagonists in some way. Among them, 16 out of 28 teleserials were scripted around specific gender linked issues in family or society; 08 teleserials had stories around courageous and challenging life journeys of women in diverse tough situations; and 04 teleserials focused primarily on diversity of relationships of women and their challenges. Starplus aired 04 teleserials with stories originating in rural areas in the gender centric category.

The 17 teleserials focusing on gender centric issues included 10 teleserials around issues related to marriage.

Table 2 : Teleserials on gender and marriage (Starplus)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial starplus	Primary theme issue- Gender and marriage
1.	<i>Kumkum- Ek pyara sa bandhan</i>	Widow remarriage.
2.	<i>Zindagi ka har rang gulal</i>	Remarriage between brother in law and sister in law
3.	<i>Sapna babul ka... Bidaai</i>	Fair and dark complexion discrimination
4.	<i>Diya aur bati hum</i>	Balance between home and work
5.	<i>Ek nanad ki khushiyo ki chhabi... meri bhabhi</i>	Loving bond between two sisters in law
6.	<i>Sasural genda phool</i>	Class issues and marriage
7.	<i>Mitwa phool kamal ke</i>	Orthodox practices related to marriage in UP.
8.	<i>Sajan Ghar jana hai</i>	Non acceptance of daughter in law from lower caste.
9.	<i>Chehra</i>	Marriage of disabled girl on a wheelchair
10.	<i>Namkaran</i>	Interfaith marriage and effects on children.

The range of issues around marriage encompassed widow remarriage including remarriage between widowed sister in law with brother in law in rural Gujarat (02), preference for fair complexion in marriage and struggles of a girl with dark complexion to find a match (01), life journey and marriage of woman with disability who is wheel chair bound (01); non acceptance of daughter in law from lower caste in an upper caste home (01), marriage adjustment and class issues (01), rituals and orthodox practices related to marriage in UP (01), a woman's dream for higher education, career and family support after marriage to become an IPS officer (01); loving, caring, bond of happiness and love between two sisters in laws (01); and search for identity of a girl child, not accepted as a result of the parent's interfaith marriage (01).

Table 3 : Teleserials on gender based violence (Starplus)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Starplus	Primary theme issue- Gender based violence
1.	<i>Mann ki awaaz pratigya</i>	Rape, stalking.
2.	<i>Maryada: lekin kab tak</i>	Domestic violence, rape, victimization of women.

The next category of issues that surfaced were violence against women, rape, stalking and victimization (2 teleserials). Both teleserials had issues of violence and rape with in the household due to class, caste and clout.

Table 4 : Teleserials on gender based discrimination (Starplus)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Starplus	Primary theme issue- Gender based discrimination
1.	<i>Ek veer ki adaas-veera</i>	Non acceptance of girl child, brought up by kid brother
2.	<i>Everest</i>	Daughter's desire to scale Mount Everest for acceptance by father

Two teleserials revolved around girl child rejected by the family. This included girl child rejected by the father and daughter's craving for acceptance by climbing Everest (01), and girl child rejected by the family brought up by the kid brother (01).

Table 5 : Teleserials on other gender issues (Starplus)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Starplus	Primary theme issue- Other gender issues
1.	<i>Shraddha</i>	Chardham Yatra of parents, daughter's dream.
2.	<i>Tamana</i>	Women and cricket

The other gender issues arising in the teleserials on Starplus included a daughters desire to take her parents for Char Dham Yatra normally supported by sons (01), and women and sports with Tamana's desire to become a cricketer (01).

Some teleserials may fall in more than one category but they have been grouped in the specific category based on the primary theme or issue that it focused on. It is interesting to note that each serial in some way will fall under the category of gender based discrimination/ violence. Any discrimination based on sex can be understood as a form of violence. Also most teleserials in the other gender issues category may also fall in the category of discrimination or violence in some way. They have been grouped separately because of a larger issue that they focus on.

Table 6 : Teleserials on challenging life journeys (Starplus)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Starplus	Primary theme - Challenging life journeys
1.	<i>Dosti... Yarriyaan... Manmarziyan</i>	Women's empowerment and self discovery
2.	<i>Sapno Se Bhare Naina</i>	Self discovery and self empowerment
3.	<i>Ruk jana nahi</i>	Women empowerment in male dominated society.
4.	<i>Sangam</i>	Daughter's efforts to strengthen her family
5.	<i>Grihasti</i>	Journey of self discovery seven women after the death of patriarch.
6.	<i>Navya-Naye dhadkan naye sawaal</i>	Self empowerment and empowering other women in the matrimonial home
7.	<i>Kasturi</i>	Difficult life journey through betrayals
8.	<i>Mohi... Ek khwaab ke khilne ki kahaani</i>	Life of a tribal girl named Mohi.

Starplus telecasted 08 teleserials with stories focusing on the tough and challenging life journey of women protagonists in some way. Among them, 07 stories focused on challenging life journeys of women protagonists themselves, finding a way for self discovery and empowerment in some way. One story focused on life journey of seven women in a family impacted by the death of male patriarch (*Grihasti*). Among the seven stories of women, two teleserials were based on journeys of young women for self discovery and self empowerment (*Dosti Yarriyaan... and Sapno se bhare Naina*). Two stories focused on efforts of the protagonist in facing the male dominated society and uplifting their parental family (*Ruk jana nahi, Sangam*). Navya was a unique story of a girl upholding family values, post marriage, uniting the family and improving the status of women in the matrimonial family through her new empowering ideas and efforts. One story of love and betrayal in the tough life journey of woman in family and relationships (*kasturi*). *Mohi* was a unique teleserials focusing on the life dreams and challenges of a tribal girl.

Table 8 : Teleserials on gender and relationships (Starplus)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Starplus	Primary theme gender and relationships
1.	<i>Suhani si ladki</i>	Difficult life journey of Suhani
2.	<i>Sabki Laadli bebo</i>	Story of the Bebo and her relationships
3.	<i>Behenein</i>	Sacrifices of sisters
4.	<i>Ek hazaro mein meri behna hai</i>	Sister's love.

In the teleserials on gender and relationships category, out of total of four teleserials, two teleserials focused on relationships between sisters, and one story on relationships challenges post marriage (*Suhani si ladki*) and supportive relationships for Bebo in her parental family (*Sabki Laadli bebo*).

Colors TV :

Colors TV channel aired 22 gender centric teleserials. Among these 14 stories focused primarily on one or more than one gender issue. Of these, 08 teleserials had issues related to marriage as the primary theme, one teleserials focused on gender based discrimination as the primary theme and

two teleserials focused on gender based violence as the primary theme. A total of three teleserials focused on other gender based issues.

There were a total of 04 stories on difficult life journeys of women protagonists facing societal challenges, and 04 stories focusing primarily on women protagonists and their relationships.

Out of a total of 22 gender centric teleserials, Colors TV telecasted 07 teleserials contextualized in rural areas.

Table 9 : Teleserials on gender and marriage (Colors)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Colors TV	Primary theme issue- Gender and Marriage
1.	<i>Balika Vadhu</i>	Child marriage and consequences
2.	<i>Na Bole Tum Na Maine Kuchh Kaha</i>	Marriage of young unmarried boy with a widow with children.
3.	<i>Ishq Ka Rang Safed</i>	Widow remarriage.
4.	<i>Bandhan Saat Janamon Ka</i>	Marriage and dowry
5.	<i>Laagi Tujhse Lagan</i>	Black girl married to rich gangster because of superstitions.
6.	<i>Bhagya vidhaata</i>	Tradition of abducting the groom and marriage at gun point in Bihar.
7.	<i>Aise Karo Naa Vidaa</i>	Marriage and destiny of rape victim
8.	<i>Thapki Pyar Ki</i>	Issue of stammering girl and her marriage.

Out of a total of 08 teleserials around issues related to gender and marriage, two teleserials focused on widow remarriage (*Na Bole Tum Na Maine Kuchh Kaha*, *Ishq Ka Rang Safed*) and one teleserials on the issue of child marriage in rural Rajasthan (*Balika Vadhu*). The range of other issues related to marriage surfacing in teleserials on Colors TV included Dowry (*Bandhan Saat Janamon Ka*), marriage by abducting a bride groom at gunpoint as a tradition in Bihar (*Bhagya vidhaata*), forceful marriage of a poor slum girl with a black painted face to save the life of a rich gangster (*Laagi Tujhse Lagan*); and problems of a stammering girl in finding a suitable match for her marriage (*Thapki Pyar Ki*).

One telserial focused on fate of a rape victim in village forcefully married to royalty because of rape committed by the prince of royal family (*Aise Karo Naa Vidaa*).

Table 10 : Teleserials on gender based violence (Colors)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Colors TV	Primary theme issue- Gender based violence
1.	<i>Na Aana Is Des Laado</i>	Female Feticide and violence
2.	<i>Phulwa</i>	Based on life of Phoolan Devi.

The category of gender based violence included two teleserials. *Na aana is des laado* had female feticide and primary focus even though it included a huge range of issues related to gender based violence including rape, domestic violence, discrimination etc. *Phulwa* was a unique story loosely based on the life of bandit queen Phoolan Devi.

Table 11 : Teleserials on gender based discrimination (Colors)		
Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Colors TV	Primary theme issue- Gender based discrimination
1.	<i>Mere Ghar Aayi Ek Nanhi Pari</i>	Birth of a girl child after many years.

In the section of gender based discrimination, *Mere Ghar Aayi Ek Nanhi Pari* was the story of positive approach welcoming the birth of a girl child in family after 18 years.

It is important to mention here the case of *Balika Vadhu* and *Na aana is desh lado*. Both the

serials started with one primary issue as the central theme, but took a lifecycle approach and touched a huge range of gender centric issues as a part of the story and situations. *Balika Vadhu* started with the primary focus on child marriage but went on to handle issues associated with women's personal and social life like literacy, access to health, discrimination, status in family and society, widowhood, employment, separation, remarriage etc. *Na aana is desh lado* started primarily on female feticide, but touched a very broad range of gender issues like violence, rape, victimization, lack of human rights etc. Most other serials focused on one primary issue and its contextualization in to the script.

Table 12 : Teleserials on other gender issues (Colors)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial	Colors TV	Primary theme issue- other gender issue
1.	<i>Agni pareeksha Jeevan Ki —Gangaa</i>		Superstitions regarding skin disease in a girl.
2.	<i>Krishna dasi</i>		Life of devdassis.
3.	<i>Udaan</i>		Girl child sold as bonded labor.

The list of other gender issues in the table above is self-explanatory. Other issues included life of Devdasis, bonded labor of a girl child sold even before birth; and superstitions regarding skin disease in a girl and the societal pressures face by her.

Table 13 : Teleserials on challenging life journey (Colors)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial	Colors TV	Primary theme challenging life journey
1.	<i>Rangrasiya</i>		Abduction and forceful marriage of a girl to gun smuggler.
2.	<i>Madhubala</i>		Life journey through tough circumstances.
3.	<i>Bani — Ishq Da Kalma</i>		Challenging love story.
4.	<i>Maati ki Banno</i>		Young orphan girl journey to search for her family.

Of the four stories on difficult life journeys of women protagonists, three stories focused largely on tough life journey through relationships in difficult circumstances to find love (*Madhubala*, *Bani*, *Rangrasaiya*); and one story focused on the tough journey of an orphan girl to search for her land and family.

Table 14 : Teleserials on gender and relationships (Colors)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial	Colors TV	Primary theme Gender and relationships
1.	<i>Swaragini</i>		Bonding between sisters
2.	<i>Shastri Sisters — Chaar Dil Ek Dhadkan</i>		Bonding between sisters
3.	<i>Sasural Simar ka</i>		Marriage and family relationships.
4.	<i>Uttaran</i>		Caste and class issues in friendship

Among the four stories focusing only on the relationships of women protagonists, two stories revolved around relationships between sisters (*Swaragini*, *Shastri Sisters- Chaar Dil Ek Dhadkan*) and one story around life journey of challenges in relationships post marriage (*Sasural Simar ka*).

One story on challenging relationships of two friends from different class and caste backgrounds brought up together, and their different life outcomes (*Uttaran*).

Sony TV :

Sony TV channel aired a total of 16 teleserials in the gender centric category. Of them, seven teleserials were based on specific gender issues as primary theme, eight teleserials were based on

challenging tough life situations and life journeys of women in the personal and socio economic front, and their self development in some way. One teleserial focused only on the challenges of gender centric relationships of women protagonists.

Table 15 : Teleserials on gender and marriage (Sony TV)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Sony TV	Primary theme issue- Gender and marriage
1.	<i>Ekk Nayi Pehchaan</i>	Loving bonds between Daughter in law and mother in law
2.	<i>Tum aise hi rehna</i>	Expectations of a wife from marriage
3.	<i>Baat hamari pakki hai</i>	Marriage of adopted orphan girl
4.	<i>Aathvaan Vachan</i>	Mental health care of the girl child
5.	<i>Godh bharaai</i>	Infertility and social attitude
6.	<i>Sujata</i>	Mother's Sacrifices for her family

All the six issue based teleserials had stories revolving around issues associated with gender and marriage. Among them, two stories focused on gender role expectations from relationships in marriage. *Ekk Nayi Pehchaan* brought to surface a positive relationship between daughter in law and mother in law as a positive example. *Tum aise hi rehna* focused on the gender roles and expectations of a wife from her husband after marriage.

Baat hamari pakki hai focused on the problems in finding a suitable match, and marriage of an adopted orphan girl by her relatives. *Aathvaan Vachan* focused on the issue of responsibility of mental health care for girl child with mental health issues after the marriage of her sister, accepted by the brother in law.

On the issue of motherhood, one teleserial focused on the differential social treatment in dealing with the Infertility of men and women (*Godh bharaai*). *Sujata* was the women centric story of the sacrifices of a mother named Sujata for her family.

There was no teleserial focusing on girl child discrimination and gender based violence as the primary theme, treated as a singular issue on Sony TV.

Table 16 : Teleserials on other gender issues (Sony TV)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Sony TV	Primary theme issue- other gender issues
1.	<i>Palampur Express</i>	Women and Olympics.

Palampur Express was the story of meeting challenging personal aspirations of a girl and her struggle against all personal and social odds to become an Olympic runner.

Table 17 : Teleserials on challenging life journey (Sony TV)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Sony TV	Primary theme Challenging life journeys
1.	<i>Krishnaben khakhrawala</i>	Women empowerment and inspiration for others.
2.	<i>Desh ki beti Nandini</i>	Challenging life of a daughter and citizen.
3.	<i>Kehta hai dil jee le zara</i>	Sacrifices of a daughter to support her family on father's death
4.	<i>Virudh</i>	Conflict of ethics faced by a daughter.
5.	<i>Baytaab dil kee tamannaha</i>	Three young girls and their dreams for self discovery.
6.	<i>Meet Mila de Rabba</i>	Journey to find love.
7.	<i>Dekha ek khwaab</i>	Life of royalty.
8.	<i>Amber Dhara</i>	Story of conjoined twins.

Sony TV telecasted eight teleserials on challenging life journey of women in a diversity of tough situations and achievement of their challenging life goals. A widow's journey to bring up her children and become an example of women empowerment and support to others (*Krishnaben khakhrawala*); exemplary journey of a young woman to become a responsible family member and citizen (*Desh ki beti Nandini*); struggles and sacrifices of a daughter to support her family and business after her father's death (*Kehta hai dil jee le zara*) and a daughter's trial in conflicting ethics in fathers business (*Virudh*) were stories of challenges faced by women in the socio economic and personal fronts. *Baytaab dil kee tamannaha* focused on challenging journey of three girls from a small town after the death of the parents.

Two other stories of challenges on the personal, ethical and moral fronts included journey of Moniya, a longlost princess who reaches her family, finds her relationships and rules her kingdom based on human values (*Dekha ek khwab*) and a woman's journey to find love and marriage (*Meet Mila de Rabba*).

One teleserial brought attention to the issue of conjoined twins and their life journey (*Amber Dhara*)

Table 18 : Teleserials on gender and relationships (Sony TV)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial	Sony TV	Primary theme gender and relationships
1.	<i>Hum Ladkiyaan - Mayke se sasural tak</i>		Four friends and their dreams and relationships.

Sony TV telecasted only one teleserial focusing only on women and their relationships (*Hum Ladkiyaan - Mayke se sasural tak*). It focused on dreams and relationships of women with self, family and marriage. The teleserial focused largely on the journey of relationships with parental home and matrimonial home.

Zee TV :

Zee TV channel aired 21 teleserials in the gender centric category. Among them, 10 teleserials focused on specific gender issues, 09 teleserials focused on the tough life journey of women protagonists in challenging situations, in meeting their dreams, self discovery and empowerment; and two teleserials focused on relationship of women protagonists. Only one teleserial in the entire list revolved around a male protagonist, portraying a non conventional son in law playing a positive role in the life of his wives's family.

Table 19 : Teleserials on gender and marriage (Zee TV)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial	Zee TV	Primary theme issue- gender and marriage
1.	<i>Saat Pher: Saloni ka Ghar</i>		Dark complexion girl and struggles for marriage.
2.	<i>12/24 Karol Bagh</i>		Late marriage, compromises.
3.	<i>Agle Janam Mohe Bitiya Hi Kijo</i>		Purchase of young brides in Bihar to produce son.
4.	<i>Banoo Main Teri Dulhan</i>		Marriage of mentally unstable man to a poor girl.
5.	<i>Doli Armaano Ki</i>		Abusive marriage and walking away
6.	<i>Satransi Sasural</i>		Comedy / a family with seven mothers in law
7.	<i>Meri sasur ma</i>		Loving bond between mother in law and daughter in law
8.	<i>Jamai Raja</i>		Non stereo typical son in law.

Ten teleserials with gender centric issues as the primary theme included eight teleserials around gender and marriage and its diverse dimensions; and two teleserials around other gender

issues.

The eight teleserials around issues related to marriage included two stories on challenges and problems of finding a suitable match. The first focused on finding a match for a dark complexioned girl even if she is a very good human being (*Saat Phere: Saloni ka Ghar*); and the second teleserials focused on stigma, issues associated with late marriage of a young Punjabi girl and implications on her life and family (*12/24 Karol Bagh*).

The practice of purchase of young poor brides in Bihar for producing a son, struggles of women sold in such marriages (*Agle Janam Mohe Bitiya Hi Kijo*) was the only story from rural background focusing on multiple issues of gender justice.

Story of a fraudulent marriage and cheating of a poor young girl married to a rich mentally unstable man and her challenging life (*Banoo Main Teri Dulhan*); abusive marital relationship, separation and implications (*Doli Armaano Ki*) were other issues associated with gender and marriage.

Three teleserials focusing on marriage and relationships included a comedy on relationships in a home with seven mothers in law (*Satransi Sasural*); and two teleserials on positive non conventional relationships in marriage. These included a positive role model of a bond between a mother in law and daughter in law as an example of positive social change (*Meri Sasu Ma*), and a non conventional son in law playing a positive role in the life of his wives's family (*Jamai Raja*).

There was no teleserial focusing on girl child discrimination and gender based violence as the primary theme as a singular issue on Zee TV. However serials like *Saat Phere*, *12/24 Karolbagh*, *Agle janam mohe bitiya hi kijo*, *Doli armaano ki* and *Banoo mai teri dulhan* had multiple components of discrimination and violence as sub themes in their stories.

Table 20 : Teleserials on other gender issues (Zee TV)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Zee TV	Primary theme Issues- other gender issues
1.	<i>Aapki Antara</i>	Life of an autistic girl child.
2.	<i>Kala teeka</i>	Superstitions/ discrimination between own and adopted girl child.

The two teleserials on other gender issues included one daring teleserial focussing on problems of an autistic girl child and her life journey, struggles and relationships (*Aapki Antara*); and one teleserial focusing on superstitions to use an adopted dark complexioned poor orphan girl to ward off evil eye on the real fair daughter (*Kala teeka*).

Table 21 : Teleserials on challenging life journey (Zee TV)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Zee TV	Primary theme challenging life journey and women empowerment
1.	<i>Afsar Bitiya</i>	Higher education and career for women, self empowerment.
2.	<i>Mera Naam Karegi Roshan</i>	A daughter's crusade for justice and equality.
3.	<i>Ghar ki Lakshmi Betiyann</i>	Daughter's right to equity in parental home and women's empowerment
4.	<i>Yahaan main ghar ghar kheli</i>	Daughter's struggles to save her heritage parental property
5.	<i>Hitler Didi</i>	Daughter's efforts to bring up her family and fight social evils
6.	<i>Zindagi ki Mahek</i>	Life journey of a woman with a passion for cooking, self development.
7.	<i>Kasamh Se</i>	Journey of three sisters after parent's death.
8.	<i>Sapne Suhane Ladakpan Ke</i>	Young women and their dreams for self development.
9.	<i>Chhoti Si Zindagi</i>	Life of two girl orphan girl children.

Out of a total of 09 teleserials on tough life journey of women and girls in difficult challenging situations, three teleserials on journey related to self development and women's empowerment included struggles of women protagonists for higher education and career (*Afsar Bitiya*), struggles for right to equity and empowerment (*Ghar ki Lakshmi Betiyann*); and fight against injustice and inequality in family and society (*Mera Naam Karegi Roshan*).

Two teleserials focused on struggles and sacrifices of daughters to support and uplift their parental families in crisis (*Yahaan main ghar ghar kheli, Hitler Didi*). Two teleserials had stories around the dreams, personal aspirations for self development and struggles of women protagonists (*Zindagi ki Mahek, Sapne Suhane Ladakpan Ke*). One story focused on the tough life journey of three sisters after the demise of their parents (*Kasamh Se*). There was one story on the tough life journey of two orphan girl children (*Chhoti Si Zindagi*).

Table 22 : Teleserials on gender and relationships (Zee TV)

Sr. No.	Channel/ Name of the serial Zee TV	Primary theme gender and relationships
1.	<i>Maayka</i>	Relationships of three sisters with their parental home.
2.	<i>Do Saheliyaan</i>	Friendship between two girls of different caste and class.

Zee TV channel telecasted only two teleserials around relationships of women. One story revolved around relationships between three sisters and their parental family (*Maayka*), and the other story on relationships and life journey of two women friends from different class and caste backgrounds (*Do Saheliyaan*).

Channel wise summary of themes in content :

To summarize, it can be said that, out of a total of 182 family based teleserials, there were a total of 87 teleserials with gender issues, themes or stories on life of women protagonists across four popular channels under study. Channel wise, out of a total of 87 gender centric teleserials, 50 teleserials *i.e.* 57% were contributed by Starplus and Colors together; and 71 teleserials *i.e.* 81% were contributed by Starplus and Colors and Zee TV together.

Table 23 : Channel wise Thematic breakup of Gender centric teleserials

Channel name	Total gender centric	Issue based teleserials				Total Issue based teleserial	Total Challenging life journey of women	Total Women centric relationships
		Issues related to marriage	Issue related to gender based discrimination	Issue related to gender based violence	Others issues			
Starplus	28	10	02	02	02	16	08	04
Colors	22	08	01	02	03	14	04	04
Zee TV	21	08	—	—	02	10	09	02
Sony	16	06	—	—	01	07	08	01
Total	87	32	03	04	08	47	31	11

The 87 gender centric teleserials included 47 teleserials around issues related to women and gender as the primary theme, 31 teleserials around the challenging life journey of women protagonists under in a diversity of difficult situation and 11 teleserials around gender and relationships of women under specific circumstances.

It is important to mention that the 31 stories on challenging life journey of women had emphasis on the women protagonists and their tough situations, their self development, contributions to family and society in some way as the primary theme. In these stories the journey of women in addressing the challenges and facing them, the process was given the primary focus in the stories.

The stories on gender and relationships focused largely on relationships of women with respect to gender roles. These stories were focusing on the relationship aspect and challenges of women.

Many teleserials because of their overlapping content related to gender and women were classifiable into more than one category like discrimination, violence, empowerment etc. However, the classification has been undertaken and presented based on the basic primary theme and plot of the stories in teleserials.

Gender issues:

Out of a total of 47 issue based teleserials, 32 teleserials had marriage and its related dimensions and challenges with respect to gender and women as the primary theme. Three teleserials focused purely on the issue of discrimination, and four teleserials focused purely on the issue of gender based violence as the primary theme; and eight teleserials focused on a variety of other gender issues as the primary theme.

Starplus and colors together accounted for 30 teleserials *i.e.* 63% of the total number of teleserials on gender issues as the primary theme. Also Starplus, Colors TV and Zee TV together contributed 40 teleserials *i.e.* 85% of the total issue based teleserials.

In the category of teleserials on challenging life journey of women, 80% of the teleserials *i.e.* 25 teleserials were contributed by Starplus, Zee TV and Sony TV together. In the category of gender and relationships, out of a total of 11 teleserials, 08 teleserials *i.e.* 72% were contributed by Starplus and Colors together.

Summary and conclusion :

The birth of Colors TV and *Balika Vadhu* in 2008, the unending length of K serials (*Kyunki...*, *Kahaani...*, *kausati...*) and their unrealistic content led to a change in the emphasis of the content in Hindi language family based teleserials. A study of primary themes of 182 Hindi language family based teleserials across four popular channels *i.e.* Starplus, Colors, Zee TV and Sony TV was conducted over the time period 2008-2016 by visiting the teleserials on YouTube and channel websites together.

The study revealed that out of a total of 182 family based teleserials on these channels, there were 87 teleserials focusing on either women protagonists or issues related to gender and women. Interestingly, gender centric teleserials accounted for 46% of the total number of family based teleserials on the four channels.

Among the 87 gender centric teleserials, 47 teleserials focused on some gender issue as the primary theme, 31 teleserials focused on challenging life journey of women protagonists and their contributions to family and society in some way. 11 out of 87 teleserials focused on gender roles and relationships of women as the primary theme.

Among the 47 teleserials on gender issue as primary theme, 32 teleserials focused on issues related to marriage, 04 teleserials focused on gender based violence as primary theme, 03 teleserials focused on gender based discrimination as primary theme; and 08 teleserials focused on other gender issues as their primary theme. There were 31 teleserials focusing on challenging life journey of women, their self development, dreams and life goals. 11 teleserials focused on gender and

relationships as their primary theme.

Channel wise, Starplus, Colors TV and Zee TV together contributed 40 teleserials *i.e.* 85% of the total issue based teleserials.

In the category of teleserials on challenging life journey of women, 80% of the teleserials *i.e.* 25 teleserials were contributed by Starplus, Zee TV and Sony TV together.

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