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José María Pino Suárez 400-2 esq a Lerdo de Tejada, Toluca, Estado de México. 7223898475*

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**TÍTULO:** Estilística feminista: Representantes femeninas en historias contemporáneas de escritores paquistaníes.

**AUTORES:**

1. Asmat A. Sheikh.
2. Fatima Ali.
3. Nazia Suleman.
4. Hira Ali.
5. Haniya Munir.

**RESUMEN.** El propósito del presente estudio es investigar cómo están representadas las mujeres en los cuentos de los escritores paquistaníes. La investigación actual también explora si el género del autor tiene alguna influencia sobre el vocabulario que usa. El estudio propuesto es de naturaleza cualitativa. Los resultados también revelaron que los escritores masculinos pakistaníes son más sexistas en su vocabulario para retratar personajes femeninos en comparación con los escritores femeninos. Los futuros investigadores pueden explorar los mismos datos siguiendo los dos restantes: niveles sentenciales y discursivos del modelo de Mills (1995). El presente estudio también puede extenderse para comparar dos tipos de género como escritores por parte de los futuros investigadores.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Representación de género, roles de género, identidades, sexismo, vocabulario sexista.

**TITLE:** Feminist Stylistics: Female representations in contemporary stories by Pakistani writers.

**AUTHORS:**

1. Asmat A. Sheikh
2. Fatima Ali
3. Nazia Suleman
4. Hira Ali
5. Haniya Munir

**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of the present study is to investigate how women are represented in the stories of Pakistani writers. Current research also explores whether the author's genre has any influence on the vocabulary he uses. The proposed study is qualitative in nature. The results also revealed that male Pakistani writers are more sexist in their vocabulary to portray female characters compared to female writers. Future researchers can explore the same data by following the remaining two: sentence and discursive levels of the Mills model (1995). The present study can also be extended to compare two types of genre as writers by future researchers.

**KEY WORDS:** Gender portrayal, gender roles, identities, sexism, sexist vocabulary.

**INTRODUCTION.**

Language is a tool used to establish, maintain and exercise class differences, gender discrimination and power. As Foucault (1981) describes discourse as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak'. In this sense, a discourse is something which begets something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be investigated in isolation. Same are the views of Foucault (1990) when he says that every discourse is in the form of dialogue. There is something (an utterance, an idea) in response to which another

discourse emerges. So, all discourse is in a form of dialogue in its true essence. Similarly, sexism is also a form of dialogue in a societal structure where unequal power relations of the society and institutions struggle for power positions, knowledge and resources and then suppress those in multiple forms who remain deprived of these larger societal forces. Society thus plays an essential role in the mind-makeup and behavioral patterns of human beings.

Pakistan is a country where males are superior in every field of life as compared to females. There might be various reasons for this self-imposed and false superiority but the objective of current research is to study how females are portrayed in short stories by Pakistani writers and to find out if there is the influence of the gender on the writer while choosing and using particular (sexist/neutral) vocabulary for the opposite gender. By typical definition, sexist language is considered to be any language that is supposed to include all people but intentionally or unintentionally excludes a gender – this can be either males or females.

The issue of sexist language is a hot issue with feminists since 1960s. An investigation into the sexist vocabulary is to study the relationship between language and gender. The word ‘gender’ does not refer to our anatomy but our social programming of attitudes and behaviors as male or female. Biology determines our sex (male/female) and culture or society determines our gender (masculine/feminine). A gender role is the expected behavior of any male or female in that particular society. For example, nudity is a taboo for females but Western countries do not consider this offensive. So, gender roles vary from culture to culture. Sexism is also an attitude of one gender towards other and it also depends upon the society in which it takes birth, establishes a firm position through repetitive practices and maintained by its practitioners for holding a superior position. There are many definitions of sexism; the one which is most famous is by Vetterling- Bragin (1981): “...the practices whereby someone foregrounds gender when it is not the salient feature”.

Even in English language which claims to be global and international language, there are expressions loaded with sexism which trivializes females. Sexism is not just about statements which express gender inequality but also on stereotypical and outdated beliefs associated particularly with women. There are certain words or grammatical choices which indicate particular sexist attitude towards the opposite gender. In addition, there is another more powerful type of sexism which is labeled as 'institutionalized sexism'. It states that people need to "...increase the consciousness of language and power and particularly of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others"; so the textual analysis of language can help the readers to be aware of the ideologies of gender differences which are oppressive in their nature.

Vetterling- Braggin (1981) clarifies that, "[a statement] is sexist if it contributes to, encourages or causes or results in the oppression of women". She realizes the limited scope of this definition but she confirms this as a form of resistance against sexism on the part of females. Lakoff (1975) states that sexism in language parallels sexism in society and is a symptom rather than a cause. Mills (1997) defines sexism as follows: "Sexist language is the language use, conscious or unconscious on the part of the speaker, which may alienate females (and males), and which may lead to the establishment of the environment which is not conducive to communication and effective social interaction".

Cameron (1998) argues that sexist language cannot be equated with naming process from a masculine point of view rather it is a multifaceted phenomenon occurring in multiple complex systems of representations, and all have solid roots in historical traditions. She further confirms that this multidimensionality of sexism makes it difficult to understand.

As sexist language is used to represent a wide range of various elements such as the use of generic pronouns, particular sexist word endings such as -ette (usherette), nouns referring to men and women which seem to have a different range of meaning, insult terms having different connotations for men and women, fragmentation. The language which uses these and more ideas and concept like these is

sexist language, and the person who employs such language is chauvinist. Sexist language against women is made “officialized” by patriarchy. This type of language is institutionalized by the powerful male sector of the society; in dictionaries in grammar books and in literary texts sexist vocabulary and ideas are established, maintained and propagated. Schulz (1975) points out that sexism also mean ‘semantic derogation’ of women. It is a process which is systematic and in which words and phrases connected with women become negatively influenced. He further mentions that it is possible to insult a man by simply calling him “girl or a woman”, and it happens even in the most developed lands of the universe.

It is not insulting for a woman to be labeled as a boy or man. In fact, it is a kind of compliment for her. This is gender inequality in its most basic forms. It stands for pragmatic, social or grounded differentiation of human beings. This differentiation has two sides: social and biological. Biological differentiation is based on anatomical differences between male and female bodies whereas social differentiation defines gender perceptions for its users. Bukhari and Ramzan (2013) define gender inequality as disparity among human beings. Gender inequality appears both in the workplace and at home in most societies. This is beautifully depicted in the literature as well which is an imitation of life.

Literature and especially Pakistani literature suggests a clear division between masculine and feminine gender roles. This division seems to be existing since time immemorial and it enhances gender differences and inequality between both sexes. Initially, these differences are supposed to be innate. Men should behave in a masculine way and females in a feminine manner. Thus, society has expectations of acceptable behavior from both sides on the basis of prescribed rules for possible masculine and feminine behaviors. And with the passage of time, this societal prescription takes the form and status of a norm. Any deviation is strongly contested and denied; then, these norms lead human beings to sexual stereotyping in almost all spheres of life; male is the breadwinner for the

whole household and female has the typical role of being mother and caretaker for whole household. Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) notices that many researches focused on female representation represent women as under-represented in all domains of media; cartoons, commercials and other programs. Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) updated their research previously held in 1970s and compared the gender representation in cartoons of the past and present and ultimately concluded that stereotypes are not really dead. This is why young boys learn to dominate at a very tender age; they learn from their environment.

The role of media is also of crucial importance in the formation and modification of gender roles among children and young adults. Animated movies and cartoons are valuable sources of socialization. And media and television are active agents in establishing and maintaining the idea of gender roles among children all over the world. Children are very susceptible to the gendered content portrayed on television because at the age of 2 or 11, they cannot differentiate between reality and fantasy.) asserts that women are presented as ‘rewards’ for men, who choose the right product. Females are represented as ‘body’ rather than ‘somebody’.

Traditional, non-traditional and socioeconomic gender roles are mobility, power of making decisions, violence, mental distress and mental well-being, clothing requirements, right to divorce, access to education, sexual subjugation, female infanticide, witnessing, property owner, right to contract and choice to profession. Males have all rights reserved to these gender roles because of the patriarchal social setup of any particular society. An in-depth review of the literature suggests that gender roles were traditionally divided into strictly feminine and masculine roles and there was no resistance to this tradition until recently when women started to recognize their self-esteem and basic rights. They are learning to stand for their own cause (Kalimoldayev et al., 2016). And women are doing this through “language”.

Gender as a social stratification system is the major building block in social and discursive structures of unequal statuses. Butler (1990) asserts that gender is a social institution and it creates distinguishable social statuses which determine rights and duties of human beings. In the process, one gender becomes dominated and the other subordinate. When gender is the major part of structured inequality, the subordinate gender has less power, prestige, respect and economic rewards than the dominated one.

In Pakistan, men dominate women and hold a firm grip over positions of power, authority and leadership. Cultural productions, religion, sports and media also reflect men's interests as they are an authority. Calhoun (1999) explains five ways in which the hegemonic patriarchy is constructed in our social setup: a) by exercising physical power and control over submissive bodies, b) by achieving professional success, c) by transmitting familiar masculinity, d) by displaying frontiership and d) by enacting heterosexuality. Men know perfectly well how to dominate over women. Campbell (1999) mentions the unequal societal behavior towards both genders by stating that men are male humans whereas women are human females. And it is through language that these ideas and concepts are born, established and propagated. Cameron (1998) notices that language is a tool that carries ideas and assumptions and these become familiar and conventional through their repetitive re-enactment in our day-to-day language. Same is the case with sexism in language; it has become familiar, acceptable and conventional because of its repetitive usage.

In Pakistan, there is a distinct division between male and female social roles and power positions. Men consider themselves as 'superior' and women as 'inferior'. It was argued that language was man-made and that women were excluded from the process of naming and defining objects and beings of the world and their own selves. Talbot (1998) expresses the same idea, "classifying people is part of the naming and ordering of experience, it both reflects and sustains existing social relations and identities and categorization of people is a powerful normative force". So when this powerful

normative force rests in the hands of males, they always identify women in sexual terms as Schulz (1975) is of the similar view that men always think about women sexually. She (ibid) further argues that women are subjected to semantic derogation and there are three origins of pejoration; a) association with a contaminated concept, b) euphemism, and c) prejudice. She asserts that among these the first origin is the best explanation. Mills (2008) mentions that an important factor in judging any statement for sexism is ‘presupposition’; that any activity linked with women is necessarily trivial or secondary as compared to exalted male activities.

Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (1992) state that people employ language as a basic tool to construct themselves and others. They construct themselves and others as “kinds”, and the construction is characterized by regularity of characteristics, attitudes, duties and participation in social practice. Lorber & Farrell (1991) propagates the same idea by stating that gender is thought to be bred in our genes. It is difficult to believe that it is a human craftsmanship. Gender is a human production like children and it depends on humans practicing it in their societies. The exploitation of women and domination of men over women is a social construction and it has social history and particular (power) functions. It is not the result of sex, philosophy, body or hormones. Butler (1990) confirms the idea by stating that gender is constructed by identifiable social processes.

One of the factors of male domination and sexist language is to label men’s experience as human experience. This fact brings into light another common sexist practice in language usage, i.e. collocations. It means connotative meanings of the word are not dependent upon the word itself but on its particular contextual use. Romaine (2001) maintains that meanings of the words are constructed and maintained by patterns of collocations which transmit cultural meanings and stereotypes.

Daniyal Mueenuddin is a Pakistani-American writer and his short stories’ collection “In Other Rooms, Other Wonders” has been translated into sixteen languages and won many awards (Mueenuddin, 2009). The collection comprises of eight short but interconnected stories. The stories

are located in Punjab and revolve around a landlord Harouni and his household. The basic themes are feudalism, gender exploitation and the predicament of subjugated people. Ray investigates whether Mueenuddin's collection considered a part of Pakistani literature or American literature because of its bold treatment of sex and other obscene issues. Khalid studies gender exploitation in one of the stories from Mueenuddin's collection by employing Van Dijk's model of critical discourse analysis. The present research investigates Mueenuddin's collection of short stories for its sexist vocabulary and dishonor in representing Pakistani females (Mueenuddin, 2009).

Muneeza Shamsie is a Pakistani writer, journalist and critic. Her most famous work is her compilation of works by Pakistani writers. "And the World Changed" is one such compilation; it is a collection of contemporary stories by Pakistani Women. It comprises of twenty-five stories written in English by Pakistani writers living either in Pakistan or abroad. The basic theme is the resistance of women in the typical Pakistani society which is patriarchal in its essence. Waterman reviews that these stories are significant for dealing with the trauma of partition, Islamic folklore, clash of cultures, superstitions, optimism, sexual politics and arranged marriages, etc. The current research employs Shamsie's edited compilation for comparing female representations by female authors with male's point of view in representing females and the study of the influence of the writer's gender on the particular use of sexist vocabulary for women (Shamsie, 2015; Ahmadi et al, 2014; Khosravi & Moghadam, 2014).

## **DEVELOPMENT.**

### **Research Questions.**

There are two research questions:

- a) How females have been portrayed in contemporary short stories by Pakistani writers?
- b) What is the influence of the gender of the writer on the selection of the particular sexist vocabulary?

### **Significance.**

The focus of this paper is on comparing the representations of major female characters in the selected stories by male and female Pakistani writers. The close scrutiny of the text may help the readers to recognize how language choices may serve the interests of some people to the detriment of others.

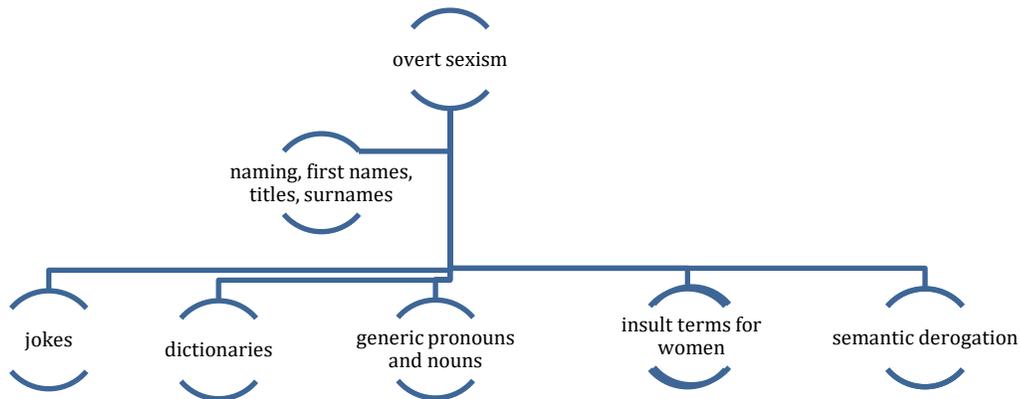
### **Theoretical frameworks.**

The current study employs purposive sampling technique and four short stories are selected from the books: “In Other Rooms, Other Wonders” by Daniyal Mueenuddin and “And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women” edited by Muneeza Shamsie. Data comprise of two stories by Daniyal Mueenuddin namely, “Saleema”, and “In Other Rooms, Other Wonders” and two stories from Shamsie’s edited collection namely, “Rubies for a Dog: a fable” by Shahrukh Husain and “The Daughters of Aai” by Fahmida Riaz. Feminist and Constructivist theoretical lenses provided the theoretical frameworks to conduct the present study. The data have been analyzed in the light of models presented by Mills in *Feminist Stylistics* (1995) and *Language and Sexism* (2008). Mill’s (1995) model is helpful for analysing language on three levels: lexical, sentential and discourse. The current study has been limited only to lexical level. On lexical level, there are certain questions to be explored to find gender discrimination and sexism in the text/discourse. Questions proposed by Mills (1995) will be followed while analyzing the selected data for current study:

1. Are the gender-specific words used in the texts of the selected stories?
2. Is the generic pronoun “he” used to refer to males in general?
3. Are generic nouns used to refer to males?
4. Is the suffix ‘-man’ used to refer to males?
5. How are males and females named in the text?
6. Do any of the terms used to describe males or females have sexual connotations?
7. Do the terms used to describe males or females have any taboos associated with them?

The relationship between language and society is a crucial one. Even in Stylistics this relation is of utmost importance and “Feminist Stylistics” investigates how people style their language promoting or demoting gender discrimination or sexism towards one particular gender. In “Language and Sexism”, Mills (2008) provides insights how speakers and writers use sexist language overtly or covertly. Mills (ibid) illustrates that there are two types of sexism: a) overt and direct sexism, b) covert and indirect sexism. Mills (ibid) defines overt sexism as follows: “Overt sexism is the type of sexism which can be straight forwardly identified through the use of linguistic markers and through the analysis of presuppositions which has historically been associated with the expression of discriminatory opinions about women”.

In her model, overt sexism works on two levels: words and meanings, processes and reported speech. The present investigative study has been limited to the levels of words and meanings for the sake of time and space constraints. On the level of words and meanings, overt sexism takes on following shapes in a discourse.



### **Types of Overt Sexism.**

Beauvoir’s (1989) concept of social construction of women as “other” is important to relate sexist language for women to see the mind-makeup of the whole society. In Pakistan, women are treated as inferior to men. Through their actions and language, they (males) make females realize their lower

status. The present research will investigate the language of both male and female writers to analyze sexist attitudes in opposite genders. It will provide valuable insights into linguistic and stylistic attitudes of one gender towards the opposite by comparing their writings.

### **Data analysis.**

Language is a way of expressing and communicating our thoughts, feelings and ideas to others. The theory of 'linguistic determinism' clearly depicts how different language structures determine differences in views of societies. This theory has two stages. The first stage depicts how people name the world differently based on its relevance to their real life. The second stage asserts that it is actually language that produces our perception of the world. The second stage is of particular importance for feminists for a variety of reasons.

Some consider the inherent properties of sexism in languages; others are interested in finding out lexical gaps in the language. Many feminists argue that sexist society needs to be changed and language reforms are pointless and useless if the mind-makeup of any society is sexist in its essence. Cameron (1998) points out that language reforms are not enough to change the sexist language, change has to be made at an institutional level, which she labels as 'the gatekeepers of language'. So, if women are represented in derogatory terms, the question is to look for the reasons behind this description of 'second sex'. Is it because of language itself or because of the individual/collective thought-systems in our communities? In Pakistan, most women are treated as inferior beings and the language used for them is mostly sexist.

### **Naming, Diminutives.**

Mills (1995) defines how naming process is not just the names we give the world. Names are not reflection of reality nor arbitrary descriptions, rather these stand for cultural representations and reflect the mind makeup of any society. The title and name of the main protagonist of the story

‘Saleema’ is an example of overt sexism and male domination over females. This name is derived from male name ‘Saleem’. In Arabic, as Hachimi (2001) points out that whilst males’ first names often begin with ‘abd’ denoting a relation to Allah (Abdu-Latif), women’s names cannot display a similar relation to Allah. The equivalent names for women are instead ‘Latifa’ and ‘Naima’, where the female is seen to be derived from the male form.

Latif (gentle) + feminine form ‘a’

Saleem (gentle) + feminine form ‘a’

The first names which are given to women tend to have diminutive forms, whereas male names tend not to be seen as diminutive. In the short story “Rubies for a Dog: A Fable”, the name of the heroin is ‘Samira’, which is also a diminutive form of male name ‘Samir’. Although the writer of this story is a woman, her selection of this name is in keeping with the major theme of the story which is the superiority of a son over a daughter.

### **Dictionaries and Gatekeepers.**

Mills (1995) is of the view that although dictionaries are treated as prescriptions but these are essentially descriptive in nature. Therefore, words which are described and defined in dictionaries reflect prejudices of lexicographers. ‘Haughty and proud’ are adjectives which are commonly associated with women, not only in Pakistan but also in modern, educated countries. As in Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the meanings of haughty and proud are made understandable by such sentences:

‘She has a rather haughty manner’.

‘She knows she’s lost, but she is too proud to admit it’.

In both these sentences, “disapproving and negative” use of these words is associated with the pronoun ‘she’ (woman). Mills (ibid) is of the view that sexism can be observed on an institutional level such as dictionaries. These not only document sexist definitions against women but also enable

the promoting through saved entries to be looked at or searched for by the generations to come. In “Saleema”, the word ‘coquettish’ is used for Saleema which is a specific adjective for women almost all over the world and the author introduces Kamila – a woman from upper class of a typical Pakistani society as,

“Haughty and proud, Kamila allowed no intimacies” (Mills,1995; p. 32).

Why not these words are used for male members of the society? Pauwels (2003) argues that dictionaries like grammars are sites of education and normative language. The adjective used for ‘Samira’ in ‘Rubies for a Dog: A Fable’ is “pari”, in ‘Saleema’, the line ‘she felt pretty’ is positively used. There is a marked difference between the way male and female represent “female bodies”.

Another word ‘slut’ is associated with women. Mueenuddin used it too in his representation of female character. Mills (ibid) asserts that this kind of language is not only representative of social setup but also of mind-makeup of the author as well. Contrastingly, adjectives used for males by male authors are associated with their characteristics rather than body parts. For example, in his short story, Mueenuddin compares the smile of Harouni with a crocodile through a female speaker.

‘Your crocodile smile, the one I like’ (Mueenuddin, 2009).

Mills (1995) points out that fragmentation is not for male body parts but it is a concept associated with female body. Even the image of crocodile has a sense of superiority as a hunter and ultimate power over other reptiles of its kind. The superiority and domination of males over females is maintained even in the selection of vocabulary and images for both genders.

One example of overt sexism in language is the use of word ‘mistress’ by Husna for Husna herself in the short story by Mueenuddin. She wanted to be supported financially and to have high status by becoming his mistress by her own will. She seems to have no regrets for losing her virginity for these materialistic purposes. This androcentric perspective of representing an educated female is disgusting

and false to its core. Exceptions are allowed but Pakistani women cherish and protect their self-esteem.

### **Jokes.**

Mills (2008) explains how jokes are deliberately incorporated in conversations by males to humiliate women in sexual terms. An example of covert sexism is finely illustrated in the conversation of Hassan (the cook) and Saleema which has humorous coloring by the male author to sugar coat the sexist attitude of males towards females:

“I need to flatten you up, I like them plump” (Mills, 2008; p. 31).

The drivers talk about Saleema in a humorous way:

“Give us some of that black mango. It’s a new variety! No, it’s smooth like ice cream, I swear to God my tongue is melting. You can wipe your dipstick after checking the oil! One of them pretended to be defending her, “How dare you say that” (Mills, 2008; p. 32).

This disgusting conversation is sexist in its very nature. Even a woman of low moral values- Saleema gets offended. The female body is the object of humor and sexist jokes. Crawford (1995) presents the real situation like this: “...men control public spaces and women’s bodies are acceptable objects for public denigration”. Mueenuddin in his other story “In Other Rooms, Other Wonders” cast a joke on female body from a female character:

“My hands are so tiny, I can’t reach the keys. But then all of me is small”. She wore a fitted kurta, showing the cleft of her breasts, which jutted out from her muscular youthful torso. Their eyes met; they both saw the joke, and he allowed himself a tight-lipped smile...” (Mueenuddin, 2009).

A female is insulting her own self for some financial aid because it has become the custom in the male dominated society; for cheap and easy money, ignorant and illiterate women degrade themselves. Mills (ibid) maintains that such jokes and humor reminds females that men control public

spaces and women's bodies can be treated as objects by men either for sexual pleasure or verbal denigration.

**Androcentric perspective, endearment terms.**

Mills (1995) is of the view that men in most societies control public spaces and there are some female experiences which are not lexicalized at all. The concept "sexism" is one example of such experience that was recognized in 1960s. The problem of 'lexical gaps' is also partly due to only availability of male perspective for most experiences of women's life. The language of the short story 'Saleema' represents androcentric perspective. Rafik addressed Saleema throughout the story by "little girl". She has a name but it is her relation to him that became her name for him. The use of the word 'girl' is derogatory. Similarly, in the story entitled "In Other rooms, Other Wonders", Harouni calls Husna his 'little one'. In the story "Rubies for a Dog: A Fable", the word daughter is used as a derogatory term. Consider this listing from the Macquarie Australian Dictionary for the word 'woman', where none of the definitions is coded.

Woman:

1. Female human being (distinguished from man).
2. An adult female person (dist. For girl).
3. A mistress or paramour.
4. (Formerly) a female personal maid.
5. Feminine nature, characteristic of feelings.
6. A wife.
7. A kept woman, a girl maintained as mistress.
8. Scarlet woman; a prostitute, a woman whose sexual relations with a man are considered scandalous.
9. Old woman, a woman who is pedantic or tends to fuss, gossip, etc.

Here, the reader is obliged to supply the background knowledge for the text; for example, when the definition states ‘etc.’ as if definitions were self-evident. In these explanations for the word ‘woman’, nothing positive is associated, every single word has negative connotation and is made explicit through a comparison with its opposite sex (man). Certain words for women are used in different ways as compared to words specific for males and dictionaries may affirm that difference. Fahmida Riaz uses the word ‘daughter’ in clear opposition to male conception of daughters as frail, delicate, vulnerable and foolish. The opposite of the word ‘girl’ (i.e. boy) has no such negative and immoral connotations associated with it. The world is defined by an androcentric perspective. Endearment terms also reflect inferiority of females as compared to ‘big ones’ (males) of the society.

Ovid says ‘what one beholds of a woman is the least part of her’. A clear difference between the male and female representation of female body is evident in the following lines...a difference in the gender of author makes the difference in female portrayal in any work of art. Fahmida Riaz present women as:

“Their heads were covered with green, blue, orange tie-dye chunries...me, looking at their dark feet, their thick silver anklets, arms full of clinking glass bangles, and the glimmering, glinting nose-pins and heavy nose-rings” (Mueenuddin, 2009).

Contrastingly, Mueenuddin presents his female characters as immoral, vulgar and devoid of any self-esteem:

“She bent down on purpose to pick up her shirt, letting him see her. She saw reflected in his eyes the beauty of her young body” (Mueenuddin, 2009).

The androcentric perspective is illustrative of the fact how men see women. They always think about women sexually. Mills (1995) points out that language representing females or female experiences often includes sexist undertones.

### **Semantic derogation.**

The words or terms associated with women or femininity have historically become pejorative, according to Schulz (1975), who argues that there is semantic derogation of women. Mills (2008) explains “semantic derogation” as a systematic process by which words and phrases associated with women become negatively inflected. Schultz (ibid) points out three origins of this pejoration; a) associations with a contaminating concept, b) euphemism, and c) prejudice. Prejudice also serves as primary motivator in semantically derogating the opposite sex.

The use of the word ‘menstruation’ in “Daughters of Aai” is evident of the presence of a female author. Because menstruation in many cultures is a tabooed subject, surrounded with special rituals and language-use, and sometimes involving a menstruating woman in physically distancing herself from the rest of the community during her periods. When menstruation is discussed, Holder (1989) shows that there is a full range of euphemistic terms to avoid mentioning it directly. Euphemism tends to describe menstruation negatively. This tabooed treatment of female experience is essentially from a male point of view. Fahmida Riaz being the ‘second’ sex directly employs the actual word without euphemism and tabooed collocations associated with the word which is a purely female experience and represents typical male attitude in these words:

“The men would see her soiled clothes; they would laugh their obscene laughter, point to her and look at other women meaningfully. This would humiliate all of them” (Holder, 1989).

According to Cameron (1998) many languages of the world carry an underlying semantic or grammatical rule where male is positive and female is negative, so language is also male chauvinist as most societies in the world.

### **Stereotyping.**

Mills (2008) define stereotypes as set of behaviors or features which have acquired prototypical status. Further, she explains how these forms of female stereotypes are created and mediated by those

in power such as media, news, advertisements, etc. Similarly, women in typical Pakistani society are considered to be of low moral values. This is a typical male perspective to describe women. Mueenuddin does the same in his short stories; his female characters belong to poor families and almost all are immoral women. In “Saleema”, three women from lower classes are portrayed: Saleema, her mother and sweepress. All are described as having low moral values. Mueenuddin states in Saleema:

“Her mother slept around for money and favors”.

“She had been a maidservant in three houses so far...and in every one she had opened her legs for the cook” (Mueenuddin, 2009).

Animal imagery is frequently used for Saleema. The words like ‘mice and sheep’ are employed for representing characteristics of her personality. And words with positive connotations are used for male characters by the male author. For example, Rafik is portrayed as a child despite his oral flaws and weakness:

“He smiled, not as a grown-up does, but like a child...”

Similarly, Harouni compares Husna in “In Other Rooms, Other Wonders” with a horse in a way of complementing her:

“Well done! I’ve had ponies that couldn’t do as well” (Mills, 2008).

Mills (2008) maintains that these stereotypes are not fixed or permanent but these are discursive structures which undergo change or challenges on a daily basis. There are some stereotypical notions that are considered to be stable or permanent mainly because they have endured over a long period of time, so is the case with stereotypical female representations.

### **Presuppositions.**

Presuppositions about women are often sexist in language and limited to their bodies in majority of the cultures. As the merchant of Nishapur in “Rubies for a Dog” expresses these presuppositions of a male mind about females:

“You combine wisdom and courage with a soft heart and single-minded dedication. I didn’t know women like you existed” (Mills, 2008).

Mills (2008) explains that presuppositions are very hard to challenge as these make sexist comments covert and allow speakers to deny sexism in their conversations.

### **Generic nouns and pronouns.**

Generic nouns and pronouns are also examples of sexism in language as these present male-oriented experiences as the norm. Mills (1995) explains that gender specific pronouns are used when the sex of the person is not known and it is assumed to be a male. The irony is that the generic pronoun can stand for both male and female. So is the case with generic nouns but a close scrutiny of the usage illustrates that these are not at all generic in nature but rather as gender-specific entities. The following excerpt from ‘Rubies for a Dog’ illustrate both false presuppositions about women and use of generic nouns and pronouns for maintaining male superiority and sexism for females:

“You have nurtured in me the creativity and determination of a woman and a heart as brave as a she-lion’s. In archery and swordsmanship, I was the best among companions. But people think a woman’s body is frail and vulnerable- I concede that ... isn’t it ironic that I have to dress like a man in order to discover my potential?” (Mills, 1995).

There is no alternative of the word ‘swordsmanship’ for a woman because ‘swords’ are associated only with males.

### **Lexical gaps.**

The word ‘pregnant’ associated with women’s experience is an example of ‘lexical gaps’ in the language.

‘Fatimah is pregnant’ (Mills, 1995).

This expression is in direct contrast with the male perspective of the same phenomenon ‘to get someone pregnant’ and a passive representation. In sexist style, it is according to the stereotypical views of pregnancy and fertilization when the egg is seen as static and the sperm as active element. Mills (1995) reviews the semantic field of women’s genitals and more broadly sex, reproduction and the representation of women in order to illustrate how a language can have lexical gaps (i.e. no informal non-offensive words for female genitals) and can name objects and actions (i.e. the vagina as a sheath or birth canal, sex as an active action for males and females as mere receptive beings). It is androcentric way of describing things and experiences of women which is sexist in its representations. Usually women are not sexist in their representation of men.

The patriarchal tradition is so inculcated in women from the very beginning of their lives that they themselves are not aware of its presence, they unconsciously support men to be oppressors. The village women in “Daughters of Aai” need men who would help them in their destruction. It is ironical because Fatimah is raped by a man twice. Woman is a sex symbol for majority of men in Pakistan. Fahmida Riaz quotes Leo Tolstoy in her story to show how the psychology of the whole world is almost on the male side...sexist against females (Mills, 1995).

“He was a great writer. What difference does it make that before turning to religion...he had sexually exploited a serf woman in his house, made her pregnant and abandoned her, completely destroying her life? On this subject, he has written a heart-rending novel which is now a world classic” (Mills, 1995).

### **Social Roles.**

An overt description of dichotomy between male and female social roles and their status in the society is commented upon in “Rubies for a Dog”. Mills (2008) discusses in detail how public spaces are occupied by males and how certain fields of work are only for males and women are considered too inferior to do work in a field associated with males only. The fable is relevant to our social scenario as well. Samira-the daughter wanted to help her father but he refused to accept her help:

“...if I had a son he would do what is necessary to clear my name. But I cannot send a daughter. When Samira’s father refused her help because she was a woman, she felt humiliated and useless. She crept back to her castle and wept, and cursed the narrow vision of men who bound women in their homes, then considered them incapable of achieving anything outside” (Mills, 2008).

The division between social roles based on gender discrimination and unequal power relations is illustrated in “Daughters of Aai”:

“Madam, the men halal the chickens”. Women could not perform this important religious task (Mills, 2008).

But the scenario is changing in current times. Women are conquering fields that were formerly considered to be male property and right such as pilots, doctors, and engineers, etc. Now the boundary between social roles assigned to both sexes is getting blurred with the progress in education, science, technology, and media awareness.

### **Findings and discussion.**

The women represented in these stories show clear influence of the gender of the writer on the selection of particular sexist vocabulary. Men are more sexist in their representation of female characters as compared to female writers. These stories indicate sexism in language through dictionaries, use of generic pronouns and nouns, semantic derogation, naming process, etc.

Adjectives are used for women in sexist terms; for example, the use of haughty, proud and coquettish, for women by the male author. The use of the words ‘she-lion and swordsmanship’ in ‘Rubies for A Dog: A Fable’ is illustrative of the social practices which are sexist towards women and their abilities. The semantic derogation of the word ‘girl’ is prominent in the two stories by Mueenuddin. The word ‘daughter’ is used as a derogatory term by one of the male characters in “Rubies for a Dog”. The names of the main female characters such as Saleema, Husna, and Samira are exemplary of overt sexism which shows women as diminutive forms, as derived from the male form. These are words which show activity on female side but of course in negative sense, these words show as if women are driving men in illicit relations and men are innocent. When it comes to sex, women become passive and men become active. It is prejudiced language. These can be discussed under direct sexism. And the indirect sexism in these stories comes under the guise of humor, presuppositions, collocations and androcentric perspective about females (Mueenuddin, 2009).

The use of humorous language to be obscene allows one to deny the responsibility of being sexist. It is evident in “Saleema” that male characters use sexist language to humiliate Saleema. Her body is the object of the drivers’ sexist jokes and ominous humor. In “Rubies for a Dog”, the merchant mentions accurately the false presuppositions about women prevailing in the society, women are supposed to be timid, weak, frail, foolish, and passive. This is a form of covert sexism which is now part of the most male-dominated societies in the world. As the author belongs to Pakistan, this situation is more clearly observed in Pakistan where women are “the other”. Connotations of words associated with women and also their collocations may represent sexism in language choice.

The connotations of ‘menstruation and pregnancy’ reflect disease and uncleanliness in women as if these are not natural phenomena. The word ‘woman’ has certain collocations which are not positive in their meaning. In the stories “Daughters of Aai” and “Rubies for a Dog”, the female authors bring this use of female terms to light. The words like “menstruation and pregnancy” as used in everyday

language and in the two stories by women writers show the fact that there exists a great number of words in English language which etymologically display a male perspective at work.

So, there is a clear difference in ways of males and females' writers in their portrayal of females in their writing. Besides, Pakistan is a country where women are taught to not use bad words for anyone and males are neglected in this phase of upbringing. The difference in attitudes is because of society, power relations and educational background. Moreover, many Anglophone writers now-a-days use obscene language and open treatment of issues like sex to gain world-wide acknowledgement and money. This is a new trend which is in clear contrast to traditional Pakistani community where customs and culture are different from West. One reason might be the 'ambivalences' of these postcolonial writers, they may find it difficult to identify themselves with colonizers and colonized simultaneously. The other reason might be that in our society, men are considered superior as they are the earning hands and because they are the "majazi khudas" as husbands. So, women are dependent upon them. They are either forced to be submissive and respectful-verbally and physically- or willingly accept their role as "the second sex" ---a concept presented by Beauvoir (1989). Moreover, Power relations are also of utmost importance in studying sexist attitudes of one sex towards other; men in Pakistan are supposed to be superior as compared to females and so they have every right to talk about females in sexist, vulgar and sexually.

So, gender is constructed by the society with the help of different individuals, groups and social institutions. Language is the basic tool to construct identities. Individuals are changed into subjects and identities made by powerful groups and are changed into ideologies through complex social system of knowledge which takes it basis in "common sense". Gender is constructed with the support of family, social institutions (like law, religion, family, education, etc.) and cultural norms, beliefs and values and in modern age it can be helped by the media. According to Lerner (cited in Butler

1990), gender is the costume, a mask, a strait jacket in which men and women dance that unequal dance.

## **CONCLUSIONS.**

By comparing two stories by male authors and two by female authors for sexist representations of major female characters, it is indicated that gender differences do have impacts on the particular choices of vocabulary by any writer. These choices are also influenced by the values with which the writer has been brought up. Because these stories have been consciously selected for finding out differences in Pakistani society, it is demonstrated that males in Pakistan mostly consider and treat females as inferior and other.

Males are mostly more sexist in representation of the opposite sex as compared to females. In fact, women are brought up with patriarchal traditions so that they themselves are unaware of these gender differences. They usually do not recognize these sexist discriminations in the language used by the opposite gender. They have been made immune to react to these practices. Showalter (1979) differentiates between the terms 'female, feminine and feminist' to illustrate this point that in the world which is male dominated, women are conditioned and programmed to be inferior and marginalized consciously or unconsciously. Beauvoir (1989) states, "One is not born a woman, one becomes one." However, one thing which is noteworthy is that female writers try to use gender free language or neutral terms (e.g. she- lions and womankind in 'Rubies for a Dog').

In these four stories by four different authors-male and female, compared by using Sara Mills' theory of feminist stylistics and framework presented in her book "Language and Sexism" it has become evident that males are sexist in their representations of women while women mostly are not prejudiced against men.

In two stories by Daniyal Mueenuddin, language used for women is predominantly sexist in its essence; for example, the names of the main female protagonists are diminutives...Saleema and Husna. "Saleema" is derived from male name 'Saleem' and so is the derived form of male name and is considered to be subjective to male members of the society. She is treated as the property of males around her. The other protagonist named "Husna" shows how male members of the society name females on the basis of their physical characteristics such as their beauty and sexual appeal (Mills, 1995; Mills, 2008). Mueenuddin reflects his mind makeup through his lexical choices for female representation. Furthermore, words such as proud and haughty are used to describe females in these stories which carry negative connotations. Even when described in dictionaries, these words are explained through sentences having female nouns or pronouns which illustrate how sexist vocabulary is supported and maintained on institutional level as well. Another example of sexist attitude towards women in language is expressed through jokes or humor through male voices.

Mainly jokes are directed on female body with sexual undertones. Mueenuddin explicitly makes fun of female breasts by comparing them with mangoes. Such conversation by males reflect how females are considered to be male property and their bodies are object for verbal denigration or actual physical pleasure of males around them. This type of behavior also represents the typical patriarchal environment of most Pakistani societies (Mueenuddin, 2009).

Fahmida Riaz, a female author, portrays females in her stories as..."Their heads were covered with green, blue, orange tie-dye chunries...me, looking at their dark feet, their thick silver anklets, arms full of clinking glass bangles, and the glimmering, glinting nose-pins and heavy nose-rings" (Mueenuddin, 2009).

In contrast to this description, Mueenuddin, a man, represents women in sexual terms:

"She bent down on purpose to pick up her shirt, letting him see her. She saw reflected in his eyes the beauty of her young body" (Mueenuddin, 2009).

These examples clearly illustrate how gender of the writer is influential on the selection of particular sexist vocabulary. Future researches can explore the same data following the remaining two strands: sentential and discourse of Mills' model (1997). The present study can also be extended for comparing two gender types as writers by the future researchers.

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#### **DATA OF THE AUTHORS.**

1. **Asmat A. Sheikh.** The Women University Multan, Pakistan.
2. **Fatima Ali.** Ph.D Scholar, The Women University Multan, Multan, Pakistan.
3. **Nazia Suleman.** COMSATS University Islamabad, Vehari Campus Punjab, Pakistan.
4. **Hira Ali.** Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.
5. **Haniya Munir.** The Women University Multan, Pakistan.

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