

# **Language and Construction of Gender: A Feminist Critique of Sms Discourse**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of the present study is to determine the use of language, especially SMS discourse, to construct stereotypical female identities. Feminism and constructionism provided the theoretical perspective. For this analysis 400 messages were collected from different people belonging to both genders. Content analysis and feminist criticism were used as methods. It is found out from the critical analysis of the data collected that Pakistani females are portrayed in derogatory and deprecating terms and content. Female portrayals in SMS discourse do not show compatibility, with our religious and social values and norms. But at the same time this portrayal is reinforcing derogatory and negative stereotyping of females in print and electronic media. Gender sensitive language must replace this disparaging discourse to meet the increasing demands of gender parity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Introduction**

Gender is constructed by the society with the help of different individuals, groups and social institutions. Language is the basic tool to construct identities. RSA (Repressive State Apparatus) and ISA (Ideological State Apparatus) both work together to implement the process of 'interpellation'. Individuals are changed into subjects and identities made by powerful groups are changed into ideologies through complex social system of knowledge which takes its basis in 'common sense'. Gender is constructed with the support of family, social institutions like law, religion, family, education, law etc, and cultural norms, beliefs and values and in the modern age it can be helped by the media. Magazines, newspapers, TV, films, theatre and music have performed a substantial role in how we see, perceive, understand and construct gender.

The negative effects of female stereotypes in media have been expressed by the feminist scholars, political activists, socially conscious consumers and media practitioners too. Media does not portray women's diverse personalities and their active role in the changing world. It even reinforces the stereotypical image of women as sex objects, consumers and slaves.

The use of SMS or texting has been increased since the late 1990s. According to an estimate 280000 SMS are sent every hour in Norway. That is more than 6.7 million per day and in a country with only 4 million inhabitants. (Sanduin, Dogfinrund and Saether 2002) Messaging is now a living medium. It also serves the social and entertaining purposes. Messages are used mostly by teens and women particularly, in spite of the fact that men were the early users of mobile phones. (Ling 2000). When considering gender differences, the data shows that 36% of the men reported daily use, while more than 40% of women said that they send messages on daily basis. The messages like other types of media are a powerful weapon of socialization. They are playing an important role in the spread of information and thus can affect people's beliefs, perceptions and attitudes. An analysis of the content and language of SMS will enable us to understand its contribution to gender construction.

Research Questions:

1. How stereotypical female identities are being constructed through SMS discourse?
2. What ideological constructions have been created about females in SMS discourse?

The objective of the present study is to explore the compatibility of female portrayals in the SMS language, with our religious and social values and norms. This research will also try to establish whether the images of women in SMS language are traditional or modern. The research at hand will examine the appearance of women in SMS language that how stereotypical portrayal of Pakistani women in SMS discourse influence or effect the perception of Pakistani people in interpersonal contexts.

Content analysis and Feminist criticism are used as methods to analyze these messages forwarded by both men and women. Mostly content analysis is used for descriptive research but it is also used for exploratory and explanatory research. (Krippendroff, 2004)

The present study focuses on the messages of mobiles from people belonging to both genders. The sampling technique is purposive, that is, the messages are selected randomly from the personal collection of the researcher being a female, from more than 400 messages in which females were talked about or were referred to in one way or the other.

Theoretical perspective was provided by Feminism and Constructionism.

## **Literature Review:**

Feminist and constructivist theoretical lenses provided the theoretical perspective to conduct the present study. The queer theoretical assertion that language is non-transparent, not

neutral or innocent also provided the platform to this research. Theorists like Michael Foucault (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) and Judith Butler (1990) have put forward that language prefers sameness to homogeneity. While taking in view general identities it is language which offers some points to how to describe ourselves and others. Butler (1990) has presented the idea of 'instable identity'.

The concept of identity implies who or what a person or thing is. Identity requires people, animals, and things... to be recognized in some form created by the language in order to let us know what they are.

According to Gerda Lerner (cited in Butler 1990), gender is the costume, a mask, a strait jacket in which men and women dance that unequal dance.

Gender as a social institution is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and duties. As part of a stratification system, gender is a major building block in the social structures built on these unequal statuses. (Butler 1990, p 145)

A stereotype is a view of a person based upon narrow assumptions. It is used by those who don't notice properly what a person really is (Femiano & Nickerson, 2000). Almost all groups of people suffer from stereotyping and men are not remote from it. Stereotypes affect our perception about a person. They are damaging as they affect our notions and narrow them.

Judith Lorber (1991) in his article "The Social Construction of Gender" has asserted that in our society gender is thought to be bred into our genes. It is hard to believe that it is created out of human interactions, social life and is a structure of that society. Gender is a human production like culture and is dependent on everyone constantly "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987)

The exploitation of women and social domination of men has social functions and a social history. It is not the result of sex, philosophy, structure or hormones. It is created by identifiable social processes. (Butler, 1990, p36)

Michael Foucault's (1990) *The History of Sexuality* presented theories about discourse, sexuality and knowledge. Foucault has stated a discussion about sexual identities and gender and how both of them are related to language. *Gender Trouble* by Butler (1990) uses the perspective presented by Foucault on sexual identities and gender as socially constructed phenomenon and as fluid in nature, not static. Butler said that, "Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed". (278)

Harold Grafinkel's (1967, 1989) work on the societal construction of gender proved to be groundbreaking and entitled him as the founder of ethno methodology. A branch of feminist theorizing took its grounds in Grafinkel's writing and this branch is influencing increasingly all the social sciences, within a discursive and post modern comprehension of gender as an enactment, performance and a social; construction which is dynamic not static. (Butler, 1990; Kessler and McKenna, 1978; West and Zimmerman, 1987).

The major goal of feminist movement was to get equality for both the genders. Three waves of this movement started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first wave paid attention to women's suffrage, education, employment and laws related to marriage. The second wave tried to end the differentiations of females both in private and public sphere. The third wave wanted to struggle the inequalities. Many feminist critics have reported that in famous culture, gender is created in a wrong and derogatory way.

As a result, feminist researchers may use conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA, c.f. Sacks, 1992) to dig out the creation, construction and reproduction of gender in everyday life. (Stokoe, 2003). CA pays attention to sequencing which

is turn by turn and the conversational communication which is organized, while MCA pays attention to members' categories in utilization.

Pnelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (1992a,1992b) have stated in *Constructing Meaning, Constructing Selves*, people use language as a basic tool to construct themselves and others as "kinds" of people so that characteristics, attributes, duties and participation in social practice can be regularized. Constructivist paradigm believes that these categories and characterizations are social and human productions and creations: the images attached with them are not ready-made and pre-formed; rather they are constructed, created, maintained and transmitted by social procedures that specifically include 'labeling' also. Complex activity of sociolinguistics take labeling as a part that plays its role in constructing social categories and power based relations among members of a group, community or society.

Conversations done by the scholars about these topics often overlap, despite the outer differences. It is more evident while talking about language, gender, identity and discourse. Gender signals and signs exist everywhere in a way that we usually fail to notice them, unless they are vague or missing. But gender and sex differentiate from each other and gender does not flow automatically from reproductive organs. In making of these social statuses, physiological differences such as sex, stage of development, color of skin and size are not refined signs. They are not the source of social statuses: of gender, age and race.

Social statuses are carefully constructed through the process of teaching, learning and enforcement. Whatever genetical, hormonal and biological changes are contributed to human social institutions, these are transformed by social practices materially as well as qualitatively. Every social institution has a material base but that base is transformed in some different patterns by culture and social practices.

In the same way gender cannot be equated with biological and physiological differences between human males and females. The building blocks of gender are socially constructed statuses. As Simon de Beauvoir said "One is not born, rather becomes a man...; it is civilization as a whole that produces this culture." (1952.p267)

One gender, according to society's point of view is usually the dominant and the other is subordinate. The further dichotomy between the race and class constructs the gradation of a heterogeneous society's stratification scheme.

When gender is a major part of structured inequality, the subordinate genders have less power, prestige and economic rewards than the valued and dominant gender. In the countries where the gender discrimination is discouraged, women do most of the domestic labor. Even while doing full time paid work, women and men are isolated on the job and they are given the work which is appropriate for them. Women are paid less than men in spite of all the work she does, and which is equal to that of men. Men dominate the positions of authority and leadership in government, law and the military. Cultural productions, religions and sports also reflect men's interests.

In an article named "*Beauty and the Patriarchal Beast: Gender Role Portrayals in Sitcoms*"; feminist criticism is applied to analyze how gender is portrayed in popular TV shows. It is mentioned that in a number of sitcoms, attractive, smart and witty women are coupled with overweight, inept and immature males. This is a way of confirming male superiority over females despite having nothing notable except their male identities. Walsh (2008) said that even withi9n sitcoms dominant patriarchal ideology is protected by the use of discursive devices which are hegemonic.

Nicola Dibbon (1999) asserts that femininity is constructed in patriarchal ways in music where females are presented as childlike, innocent, submissive, yet physically available sexual objects. Calhoun (cited in Dibbon 1999) has discussed five ways in which this hegemonic patriarchy is constructed in our social set up: a) by performing physical power and control over submissive bodies (i.e., females); b) by achieving professional success; c) by conducting familial masculinity; d) by displaying frontierism; e) by enacting heterosexuality.

Campbell (cited in Dibbon 1999) says, "Men are male humans whereas women are human females, as is 'I now pronounce you man and wife'". They used the term 'wife' instead of 'woman', which refers to a status of ownership.

In another article "*Feminism for Stupid Girls: A feminist Rhetorical Critique of a popular Song*", the Leonardi and Dickenson (2007) asserted how masculinity and patriarchy are reinforced in songs. They said, "Females are constructed and portrayed through various negative strategies to be passive, shallow, unengaged and disempowered creatures." Nicola Dibbon (1999) argues in her article, "*Representations of Femininity in popular music*" that music contains social content and it can also promote the listener to espouse a position towards its content.

Songs in our society also depict women as property, things, sex objects and lack of honor for females as human beings. Many of them use derogatory names to show their submissiveness and subordination to males. Female adultery and faithlessness is the theme of many of them.

Lorber and Farrell (1991) have described these strategies to construct, reproduce and perpetuate gender as subordinate sex and inferior objects, as "doing" gender. They observed that "doing" gender was prevalent in all aspects of life and took multiple shapes. Fiction writers in Urdu press are doing gender in a continuous and subtle way through the use of language and content. Many researchers have demonstrated that the mass media and press are playing an active role in the construction of gender and continuation of traditional negative and derogatory portrayal of females. (Culley & Bennett, 1977; Ceulemans & Fauconnier, 1979; UNESCO, 1980; Joliffe, 1986; Bhardwaj & Kumar, 1987; Fernandez, 1987; Greenwald, 1989; Coffey, 1991; Mabala, 1995; Pandian, 1997).

Advertising is an essential part of peoples' social settings. It is not surprising that this medium tries to define women in relation to men while men are defined in relation to their work, their productivity or their role. Media describes women to serve male goals. The commercialization of media on a large scale is responsible for stereotyping women and it has spoiled the image of women within society.

The media use different gender based stereotypes to educate, to entertain and to sell a product. The roles assigned to women are fixed by the images that depict them within a known culture. (Neelam And Nasrren 1991) The media uses an image of inferior, crushed, suppressed and emotionally dependent women. Though they are the central character of the fiction, in most of the cases they have no real human value.

Women presented in fictional plays on TV are traditionally depicted in female occupations and men are shown in high prestige. The problems, activities and domestic set up of women indicate their restricted and family bound orientation. (Buonanno 1991, 1992; McNeil 1975)

Margaret Gallagher (1978 & 1979) noted that the image given by media of women can be best described as 'narrow'. Women are hardly portrayed as independent, active or decisive. The main theme of most of the plays presented on TV is to show the suppression of women. It defines women as perfectly good wholly evil, mother or whore, virgin or call girl, even traditional or modern. Kunchenhoff (1992) stated "Women primarily appear on TV in a narrow social context

of interpersonal relationship” “Women are negatively portrayed in Mass Media.” “Females are most often victims, while males are most violent.”, Durkin (1985).

Women are depicted in media mostly as daughter, wife, mother, girl friend or as working in traditional female jobs (secretary, receptionist, and nurse) or even as sex object. Moreover they are usually young and beautiful but not very well educated feminists.

Innumerable media advertisements portray women as shy, passive, unintelligent and helpless creatures. According to these ads her body language depicts her submissiveness and supplication. (Brown 1998)

Ortner (1974) described that the fixed image of females, advertised by media exists in culture and almost in every culture. According to Tiongson (1999), though there are different political, economic and cultural systems in Asia, yet the image presented by Asian media has been “characteristically consistent” across the region. He asserted that women are depicted as victims, subservient, dependent, nurturing, selfless, sacrificing mother and wife, heterosexual sex object, prostitute, mistress.

Sexual stereotyping is being done from the beginning of men’s social life. Boys learn from family and peers that what it means to be a man. In fact in his analysis of gender Professor Steve Craig (1992) argues that women are tending to be presented as ‘rewards’ for men, who choose the right product. When he focused on beer commercials specifically he found that men were ‘virile, slim and white and the women are always eager for male companionship. Craig further asserts that women have been portrayed as housewives, dependent on men and attractive objects in commercials.

The woman is used as a body rather than ‘somebody’. Women are being used in ads as a tool for the promotion of commercial products, even those products which has nothing to with females i.e. shaving blades, motor bikes, pesticides etc. It was observed during 1990s that there was a change in media portrayals and this change might reflect the societal change. Here the women were projected as ‘liberated’ young, upward and mobile professionals who remain devoted to their reproductive duties and roles. In spite of the societal changes in the roles of women over time, gender role research indicates that stereotyping of females persists. Advertising may be the most famous form of communication, but it also contributes to gender role socialization in the culture of Pakistan. Although it is common to find images of females that portray them in demeaning ways, Pingree, Hawkins, Butler and Paisley (1976) recognized this range of potential offensiveness through the creation of a Consciousness Scale that measures sexism in ads on five levels. Level I presents women as sexist, while at level II they are depicted as domestic, Level III features women as professionals but their first place is still at home. At Level IV, ads avoid stereotypes and recognize women as equal to men. At Level V women are viewed as “superior to each other in some respects, inferior in other respects.” Butler and the colleagues argue that at Level V women rise above ‘dogmatism’ and it communicates a message that women should be equal. “Level V is mentioned because the Consciousness Scale logically requires it, not because Level V images can be found easily in media.”

It was proved that gender stereotypes in ads cultivate among viewers the most traditional attitude towards gender role. Research suggests that while stereotypical images may not increase the purchase but they do effect in spreading the socially constructed image of females presented in ads. (Joyce Jennings, Walsledt, Florence, L. Geis and Virginia Brown, 1980). So viewers form their views about women in the light of these ads and then generalize it to all the women present around them. (Susan T. Fiske & Shelley E. Taylor, 1984)

The standards of thinking towards females, their roles and status have also been changed by the change in certain trends of advertising.

Kilbourne (1999) has asserted “the women are portrayed in advertisements only as object of beauty and sex by highlighting certain parts of her body, and this fake image of women persuades other women in society to buy certain beauty products” In this regard Barbara (2005) claimed that Media presents women as men like to see them: beautiful, submissive and efficient. Women are viewed as objects of male sexual; desires. The exposure of females’ bodies and the frequency of these ads have increased at an alarming rate. According to Rasul (2000), in order to sell certain products the women are used as models. The analysis of ads reveals that gender is being used in stereotypical way of portrayal.

Another genre of female portrayal is in animated films, where they are portrayed as hyper-sexualized and thin creatures. Hyper-sexuality refers to over emphasis on attractiveness and sexuality by way of clothing and hour glass figure. It has been discussed that depiction of a thin, attractive and sex saturated women has a negative effect on youngsters. So a child viewer watching these films may learn that beauty is an essential part of a female. Social presentation and extreme makeover tells that in films appearance is valued.

Swilla in her article “*Voluptuous Vacuous Vamps: Stereotypical Representation of Women in Press*” observed that there are conflicts among females provoked by jealousy and competition for men. Detailed physical descriptions of females were a necessary part of stories. Women are depicted as careers of evil. Derogatory language coupled with sexual connotations is used. Attributes and names used for women by authors refer to dissoluteness, treachery and promiscuity. Women are presented as drunkard, loquacious, quarrelsome and talkative. An increase was also observed in the use of obscene language and derogatory cartoons about females.

Bettina L. Raman asserts in “*Composing, Gender, and Composing Gender: The Construction of Gender*” that “Gender is constructed and reconstructed to fit societal standards..... Construction of identity is a process done by cultural values and norms.” Ndulute (1996) analyzed from the stories that beauty in a female is both a virtue and a vice in depicting females as either lethal attractions or enticing demons. The use of diminutives, compliments and self-incrimination are tools to portray women in stereotypical derogatory image.

Baltzer’s (1978) English German studies and those of Schulz (1990) observed the widespread utilization of sexual and derogatory linguistic terms for females. Schulz (1990) observed similar representation in English, referring that “pig” and “dog” were insulting lexical items used for both genders but are connotated with females. “I have located roughly a thousand words and phrases depicting females in sexually derogatory ways. There is nothing approaching this multitude for describing males”

The present study will try to determine whether SMS discourse is functioning in the same line of action to portray females stereotypically or otherwise.

### **Data Analysis and discussion:**

Women are portrayed in message discourse, specifying and stressing different negative, insulting and derogatory stereotyping. Following are some of the examples a detailed analysis of the data collected from 400 mobile messages:

### **Illogical:**

*Math and women are the most complicated things in the world...but math at least has some logic.*

**Dubious and enigmatical:**

- a) *Understanding a girl is like downloading a 1GB file with 2Kbps speed... and when u have downloaded 95% u2ll get an error.*
- b) *Women: If u advise them, they think u r dominating them and if u don't, they think u r indifferent. If u agree to all their likes, u r sweet, and if u don't, u have a bad taste, If u agree with their excuses, u r wonderful, and if u don't u r not understanding. If they ask u anything, its their right, and if u do, u r imposing. If they care u, they love u, and if u care for them u r possessive. So hats off to all the 'males' for keeping up with such strange creatures.*

**Perpetrators of evil:**

*Nek r sharif larkiyan dunya k hr koney me mil jati hen, magar masla ye he k dunya ka kinara nhi milta.*

**Liers:**

*Women have mysterious ability of communication...They listen half, understand quarter, but can tell double.*

**Talkative:**

- a) *Women's tongue and men's eye....relaxes only when they die.*
- b) *Husband: Archeologist found a hundred thousand year old jawbone of a female. Wife: How do they know it was a women's jaw? Husband: It was still moving.*

**Immoral and adulterous:**

- a) *Boy: I love u. Girl: Meri mangni ho chuki he, or mera ek boy friend b he, aur mera ek class fellow se chakar bhi chal raha he. Boy: Teri mehrbani, menu v kitey adjust kr ley.*
- b) *Sardar: Abba mein apni bv nu sms kita c k rati awan ga. Me gaya ty o kisi horn al suti c, me onu talaq deni aa. Abba: Chal rehn de puttar, ki pata sms na milya howe.*

**Prefer outer appearance:**

- a) *The minimum area with maximum number of color paints... A Girl's face.*
- b) *Female criteria for life partner? They expect their men to look like Mr. Universe, earn like Bill Gates and obey like Ramu Kaka.*

**Satanic:**

- a) *When women talk to each other, the devil sits in the corner quietly... listens & learns.*
- b) *Devil says "I cannot be everywhere, so I sponsored mother in law"*

**As Sexual and Disposable Objects:**

- a) *Quiz men final sawl poocha gaya... 'tm kisi bohat khoobsurat larki k andr kya dekhna chahte ho? Award winning answer was " apna bacha"*

- b) *Love never dies. It remains forever, forever, forever and forever. Only partner changes, so love the latest versions.*
- c) *Girl friend: Promise karo k muje kbhi touch ya kiss k lie majboor nhi karo ge... Boy friend: Chal meri pein nikal shabash! Menu turdi phirdi nazar aa*

**As Cruel and Callous wives:**

- a) *Wife: Me ne suna he k Jannat me mardon ko hooren milen g, to aurton ko kya miley ga? Husband: Kuhn nai. Yeh offer sirf mazloomon k liye he.*
- b) *Teacher: BV, begum aur wife me kya farq he? Pathan: Kuch khas nahin, ye bhi india, Bharat aur Hindustan ki tara ek hi dushman k 3 naam hen.*
- c) *Adhi rat ko toofan me ek admi pizza lene gaya. Shopkeeper ne pucha: R u Married? Admi bola to aur kya is toofani rat me meri maa ne muje pizza lene bhejha he?*

**Unintelligent:**

- a) *BV shohar se: Apko mera bnaya hua halwa pasand nhi aya? Bachay to 3 platein kha chukey hen. Andar se awaz ai 'Mama 1 or plate dena, 1 kitab ki jild reh gai he'*
- b) *Khoobsoorat larkiyan ziada nhi parhti q k wo janti hen k dunya k kisi koney me koi bewaqoof un k lie doctor ya engineer bn raha ho ga.*

**As a property:**

*Question: University me sari larkiyan k kitney naam hoty hen?????1. Meri wali, 2. Teri wali 3. Meri bhabi 4. Teri Bhabi*

**Greedy and Cunning:**

- a) *Boy asked a girl: Pyar ho jata he ya krna parta he? Girl: Larka handsome ho to ho jata he, ameer ho to krna parta he*
- b) *Luteron ne 1 larki ka zewar loot liya. Log boley shukr kro tmhari izzat bach gai. Larki boli: Kanjro! Izzat vech vech k te zewar jama kita c.*
- c) *Larki: me kal tm se milne nhi a skti. Larka: Chal me tmhara gift kisi or ko de deta hun. Girl: Mera mtlab tha kal nhi a skti, abi kaha ho?*

**Valued only for outer Beauty:**

- a) *Man: Yar men 2 mushkilaan vich phans gayan. Friend: oh kerri? Man: BV make up kare te khrcha brdasht nai hunda, na kre te BV brdasht nai hundi.*
- b) *Nikah k baad Dulha molvi se: Fees? Molvi: BV ki khoobsoorti k mutabiq de do. Dulhe ne 10 rupey diye. Achanak hawa se larki ka ghoonghat uth gaya. Molvi: Bqaya to le lo.*

**Terrifying and Horrifying:**

- a) *Wife: Suniye mujhe dar lag raha he meri taraf muu kr k so jaen..Husband: Acha men beshak dar dar k mar jau?*
- b) *Husband: Begum tmhari garden per ek ajeeb c chiz he, jisey dekh k khof ata hey. BV: wo kya? Husband: Tmhara muu.*
- c) *A man threw his wife in a pond of crocodiles. He is now on trial for being cruel to animals.*

**Adopt Fashion Blindly:**

*Boy tmhari qamiz phati hui he. Girl: nahi ye to fashion he. Boy: Wah g wah, khud pharo to fashion, hum pharen to police station.*

**Distrustful:**

*Husband: I will love u for 1000 years. BV: Us k baad kis maa k pas janey ka irada he?*

**Materialistic:**

*Little girls want Barbie dolls and boys want cars. But when they grow up, they exchange wishes.*

**Make Fool of Boys and People around:**

*a) Why Pakistani girls are not in sports? Only 10% are playing hockey, tennis and cricket bcz other 90% are bz In playing with boys. Janu ye, Janu wo< Janu esa, Janu wesa, Janu hen na, Janu nohi na, Janu balance, Janu, Janu, Janu...Jan le lo Janu ki Churrailo.*

*b) BV: I'm pregnant. Husband: Wo kesy? Me to 3 sal se England me tha. BV: apki tasvir thin a pas. Husband: mujhe ullu mat banao wo to siraf tunni tak thi.*

**Conspiring:**

*a) Ladies ko petrol pump k bahir q utar dia jata he?? Q k petrol pump k bahir likha hota he, aag lgane wali chizen door rakhen.*

*b) Only two types of communications are fastest in the world. E.mail & Female.*

**Control Husbands:**

*a) Husband: Hypnotize karna kya hota he? Wife: kisi ko apne control me kr k apni marzi k kam krana. Husband: chal jhooti, usay to 'shadi' kehte hen.*

*b) ! admi bus driver se: Kitne ghante bus me rehte ho? Driver: 24 ghante. Admi: wo kese? Driver: 8 ghnte is bus me, 16 ghante BV k bus me.*

*c) Husband is the head of the family. Then what is wife? Wife is the neck of the family which can turn the head anywhere she wants.*

**Heterosexual:**

*Wife: Aj 3 dakuon ne meri izzat loot li. Husband: tm ne roka nhi? BV: me ne roka lekin wo kehne lage ab hum thak gae hen hame jane do.*

**Irritating:**

*a) Teacher: BtaoDog shadi q nahi krta? Student: Miss wo pehle hi kutton wali zindagi guzar rah hota hey.*

*b) Purani kahawat he k sotay waqt koi b tention le kr nhi sona chahie...phir bhi akser log apni BV k sath so jatey hen.*

**Uncontrollable:**

*a) Height of confidence...A man marrying his own secretary and thinking she will follow orders as before.*

*b) A husband was searching these words on Google "How to control a wife?" Google replied "We are also searching"*

- c) *What did the cockroach say to the man who was about to kill him... "you're just jealous that I can make ur wife scream louder than you can"*

### **Men are fed up of Wives:**

- a) *A woman was kidnapped. The kidnapper cut off her finger and sent to her husband and demanded money. Husband replied: I want more proof, Zuban bhejo Zuban.*
- b) *Admi ka hont jala hua tha, kisi ne poocha: kese jala? Wo bola: BV meke ja rahi thi. Station chorney gaya. Khishi k mare engine choom lia.*
- c) *Husband: meri BV gum ho gai he. Postman: Andhey ye post office he police station nai. Husband: Maf kijie ga, khushi me kuch samajh nai a raha.*
- d) *Ek admi ki BV coma me chali gai. Shohar murda smjh k dafnaney chala. Raste me janaza khambey se takra gaya, aurat ko hosh a gaya. ! haftey baad aurat phir chal basi. Sb log kalma parhte hue ja rahey they lekin shohar ki zuban per ek hi baat thi. "Khamba vekh k mera veer, khamba vekh k."*

### **Discussion of Findings:**

The feminist and content analysis of SMS discourse revealed that females are talked about and referred to from a 'male gaze' in a very derogatory and negative way as: satanic, dubious, enigmatical, perpetrators of all evil and vice, liars, capricious, castigating, sarcastic, whimsical, deceivers, loquacious, immoral, adulterous, unfaithful, cruel, callous, gluttonous, cunning, horrifying, materialistic, heterosexual, conspiring, unmanageable, irritating, and uncontrollable. Females are valued only for their physical attractiveness not for their talents and potentials and not for their morality and sacrificing natures. They are portrayed as a body rather than 'somebody'. The most recurring theme in these SMS was that men are fed up of females and want to get rid of them as soon as possible, by hook or by crook.

The researcher remembers *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, where the writer has portrayed man very pessimistically having all the vices that are possible and in an extreme degree. While analyzing these messages, it is felt that those vices are attributed with females only in our society and men are descendants of Prophets having nothing negative or evil in their natures.

The frequency of such messages depicts the hidden and exposed negative, insulting and derogatory attitude of the people and society at large, about females. As Cameron (1996, 16) asserted "...our ways of talking about things depict attitudes and assumptions we might well consciously disown, thus testifying to the deep rootedness of sexism." The messages interpret, inform, educate and entertain people about what is 'out there', and for young generation, these messages are mirrors of 'reality'. (Leitner, 1997). Schlenker, Caron & Haltman (1998) described that the media and society exerted pressure on young females to match to stereotypical portrayal of females struggling to be beautiful and attractive at the price of personal progress and academic development. This negative and derogatory linguistic portrayal of females presented in messages reflects stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about females and they are participating in the construction of gender and continuation of unequal relations.

These messages support patriarchy. When women also enjoy these messages and never hesitate to forward them to their fellows and friends, they are reinforcing those gender roles and characteristics established in these mobile messages. In most of the cases they have no real human value. So the image portrayed by SMS discourse is best described as 'narrow'.

It is terrible, horrible and deplorable that we are constructed in such a way to be alright with males referring to females in a negative and derogatory way and as a source of all evil hence 'devilish'.

A big impact is being made by these popular messages on the style in which gender is being created and constructed in our society and culture. If a message is being forwarded again and again by both the genders, it is bound to effect their beliefs, views and attitudes about opposite sex and about themselves if they are females. Women are portrayed as vamps, voluptuous, vacuous, sex objects and disposable things. These messages have strength to shape people's thoughts about themselves and how they view others. By analyzing popular messages and their impacts, it appears very easy to perceive and foresee how these messages can enact a role in the way we construct gender identities and ideologies.

Women are presented in messages as in all other media as if they use their sexuality to trap males for monetary purposes. The depiction of females as sex objects, as useless as agent of development and progress and monetarily dependent on males portrays evidently that there is a lack of acknowledgement of females' contribution in development and progress of nations. Although less in percentage than men, females are working as chief executives, cabinet ministers, judges, doctors, directors, principals, and professors etc. Reality is misrepresented in media. These omissions of productive roles of females from all the media have perpetuated stereotypical portrayal of females.

Interpletion, a process of making subjects, is seen when female mobile users are reproducing what society and culture has accustomed them to think and believe about 'females' and their attitude is as negative and derogatory as those of male mobile users. It seems as if these negative and derogatory messages are about some third gender, not about females themselves. Negative and derogatory stereotyping of females has deep roots in social structure and the way females are conversed about, even by females themselves, is the best example of persistent and constant stereotyping (Sadiqi, 1995)

It is important to inquire why derogatory language and content is being used and produced about females. What does such depiction of females portray about the attitudes and beliefs of people and society at large, towards them? What are the potential and possible effects of this perpetuate and constant negative and derogatory portrayal of females in message discourse?

The answer to these questions is double standards are practiced by society: it criticizes females but bears males when both indulge in the similar socially banished actions. Stereotypical images of females get started in the very childhood and it is reinforced by socializing agents such as media, press and social institutions etc. Jaworski (1992) asserted that negative and derogatory stereotyping is an active way of making and creating an image of inferior group. Schulz (1990) also stated that language reflects the attitudes, beliefs, thoughts and culture of the people who made and utilized it. Words having deep emotional connotations, taboos or distaste not only present the culture which utilizes them but also educate and reinforce the attitudes which produced them.

Although it is not easy to determine the effect of these negative and derogatory portrayals of females in message discourse, no one can negate their harmful and hazardous impacts on readers, resulting from a unending contact and exposure to unconstructive and diminutive language and content about females. The effect of this negative stereotyping can be damaging on females as it is damaging their self esteem. It also perpetuates the negative and derogatory stereotypes among men of all ages.

### **Conclusion:**

The linguistic and content analysis of more than 400 mobile phone messages revealed that more than 90% of the messages portrayed women in a pessimistic and deprecating way by using linguistic devices and content, such as disparaging terms with sexual connotations, similes, metaphors, compliments, diminutive forms and self-incrimination by females and cartoons. Reproachful and negative language and content of these messages show and reinforce the negative attitudes and beliefs about females in our society; they are counterproductive and perpetuate low self respect in females. These messages are a reflection of overall unfavorable status of females in our society and culture. Such stereotyping in all types of media stops females from recognizing their full potential and abilities in the social, economic and political spheres. The message senders and receivers and society at large must sensitize about how these messages are creating and reinforcing unequal gender relations. Gender sensitive language is the need of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to meet the increasing demands of gender parity. The messages along with other stakeholders must effort to develop and promote a representation of females which is gender-sensitive.

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