

Constructing Gender in Hollywood and Lollywood Film Posters: A Comparative Critical Multimodal Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines how femininity(ies) and masculinity(ies) are visually and textually constructed in film posters, comparing Pakistani (Lollywood) and Hollywood cinema. Sixteen posters, eight from each industry, were purposively sampled from the highest-grossing releases of the last decade, drawing on official studio promotional releases archived on IMDb and verified entertainment press coverage. The posters were analysed using the multimodal discourse analytic framework of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) in combination with Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis, which situates the visual text within its conditions of production and its broader ideological context. The analysis attends to processes (action, reaction, and classification), gaze, social distance, framing, salience, colour symbolism, and the information value of composition. Findings show that Lollywood posters increasingly depict women as resilient and socially defiant figures confronting patriarchal constraint, while largely withholding the sexual objectification associated with the male gaze; Hollywood posters, by contrast, more often foreground women in professional and adventurous roles yet routinely subordinate them compositionally through reduced salience, spatial marginalisation, and oblique framing. Across both industries, action-genre posters remain the site of the most persistent gender asymmetry, with men consistently occupying superordinate positions in the visual taxonomy. The study contributes a comparative, cross-cultural application of multimodal discourse analysis to film marketing materials and offers a framework for future research into gendered visual ideology in global cinema.

Keywords: Femininity(ies); Masculinity(ies); Male gaze; Film posters; Cinematic representation; Multimodal discourse analysis; Hollywood; Lollywood

I. Introduction

Films are one of the most powerful types of mass media, shaping public perceptions, reinforcing cultural values and reflecting the social realities of societies in which they are produced. Beyond entertainment, films function as cultural texts that convey ideological meanings concerning identity, gender, power, class, and ethnicity. These meanings are not only encoded in dialogue and narrative, but also visually constructed in promotional materials such as film posters. Film posters are multimodal texts, drawing on visual imagery, typography, colour, composition and language to produce meanings

which shape audience expectations before a film is seen. Hence, film posters offer important insights into the cultural ideologies and gender discourses that are circulating in a society.

Gender representation is one of the most discussed issues in media and communication studies. The media's repeated portrayal of some behaviours, appearances, occupations and relationships as desirable or socially acceptable is a major contributor to the construction of social understandings of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity are not biological imperatives, but social and cultural constructions of identity which are continually being produced, negotiated and transformed through discourse. The way films and their marketing materials reinforce, or disrupt, dominant ideological beliefs is thus an important factor in shaping public perception of gender.

Traditionally, the film industry has tended to depict men as characters who are leaders, protectors, professionals and action figures, and women as passive, emotional, dependent or romantic characters. Feminist scholars have argued that visual media frequently privilege masculine perspectives by positioning women as objects of visual pleasure through the operation of the male gaze. Although contemporary cinema increasingly presents women as professionals, leaders, and independent decision-makers, questions remain regarding the extent to which these representations genuinely challenge patriarchal ideology or simply reproduce traditional gender hierarchies in more subtle forms. Understanding these evolving representations has therefore become an important area of research within media, gender, and discourse studies.

Among the various forms of media texts, film posters offer a particularly rich site for investigating gender representation because they condense a film's narrative, themes, and ideological messages into a single multimodal composition. Through the strategic use of composition, salience, gaze, colour, spatial organisation, body language, and textual elements, posters construct particular identities for male and female characters and communicate assumptions about power, authority, relationships, and social roles. Examining these visual resources enables researchers to identify how gender ideologies are encoded and communicated through promotional discourse.

Both Hollywood and Lollywood have experienced significant changes in their portrayal of gender over the past two decades. Hollywood has increasingly introduced female protagonists occupying positions traditionally associated with masculinity, including scientists, military officers, political leaders, and superheroes. Similarly, contemporary Lollywood has expanded its representation of women through narratives addressing gender-based violence, honour, marriage, education, and women's autonomy while continuing to reflect the cultural values and social realities of Pakistani society. Despite these developments, both industries continue to negotiate between traditional gender expectations and emerging representations of female agency. Consequently, a comparative examination of film posters from both industries provides valuable insight into how gender identities are visually constructed across different cultural contexts.

Previous studies have extensively examined gender representation in films, television, advertisements, and digital media using feminist, semiotic, and discourse-based approaches. However, comparatively limited research has focused specifically on the multimodal representation of masculinity and femininity in contemporary film posters. Furthermore, few comparative studies have analysed selected Lollywood and Hollywood film posters through the combined application of Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. Existing research has often concentrated either on textual narratives or on individual film industries, leaving a gap in understanding how visual and linguistic resources jointly construct gender ideologies across different cinematic cultures. This study addresses that gap by undertaking a comparative multimodal analysis of selected Lollywood and Hollywood film posters.

The study employs Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design to examine representational, interactive, and compositional meanings embedded within the selected posters. These visual findings are further interpreted using Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the broader ideological and sociocultural meanings conveyed through the posters. The integration of these theoretical frameworks enables a comprehensive examination of how visual design choices contribute to the construction and reproduction of gender identities within contemporary cinematic discourse.

By analysing selected film posters from Lollywood and Hollywood, this study seeks to explore how masculinity and femininity are visually represented and how these representations reflect broader cultural ideologies concerning gender, power, and identity. Rather than assuming that one industry is inherently more progressive or more traditional than the other, the study investigates the similarities and differences in the ways both industries negotiate changing gender roles through multimodal discourse. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of research in multimodal discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, feminist media studies, and Pakistani cinema by providing a comparative understanding of gender representation within contemporary film promotion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender, Representation, and the Screen

Media scholarship has long treated cinema as a site where gender is not simply reflected but actively produced. While women in mainstream film are still almost exclusively portrayed in a relational way, as daughter, wife, mother, rather than by their occupation, they are portrayed younger than men, and rarely situated at a formal position of authority (Lauzen, 2015). This is not only a 2010s trend. The most recent installment of the *It's a Man's (Celluloid) World* study, which has been released every year since the early 2000s tracking the top 100 U.S. grossing films, revealed that the percentage of top-grossing films starring with a female protagonist dropped from 42% to 29% in 2025, and the percentage of top-grossing films with major female characters declined from 39% to 36% over the same span (Lauzen, 2026a). Lauzen's companion study of behind-the-camera employment, *The Celluloid Ceiling*, corroborates this: across the 250 top-grossing U.S. films of 2025, women made up just 13% of directors and 7% of cinematographers, and only 7% of films employed ten or more women in key crew roles compared with 75% of films employing ten or more men (Lauzen, 2026b).

Parallel work from the University of Southern California's Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, tracking director gender and race across roughly 1,800 top domestic films released between 2007 and 2024, reports a similarly persistent gap in access to the director's chair (Smith et al., 2025). Read together, these datasets indicate that on-screen and behind-the-camera gender asymmetry in Hollywood is not a residual, historical problem but a live and in places worsening one, which sharpens the relevance of a poster-level analysis: promotional materials for an industry whose underlying output remains male-dominated behind the camera are unlikely to be gender-neutral by default. Feminist media scholarship situates this asymmetry within a broader visual economy of looking. Berger (1972) framed the underlying dynamic in terms of an asymmetry between men's social presence as agents who act and women's social presence as objects to be looked at, an observation extended into film theory by Mulvey's (1975) concept of the "male gaze" — cinema's habitual positioning of the female figure as spectacle for a presumed male viewer rather than as the bearer of narrative agency. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) later operationalised this dynamic empirically within objectification theory, treating skin exposure and the fragmentation of the body into isolated parts as measurable indicators of objectifying representation, a framework that has since been widely adopted in content-analytic studies of advertising and film promotion.

2.2 Content-Analytic Evidence on Film Posters Specifically

The poster is a form of study apart from the film itself, as it is a "marketing address" put into one frame. Using a content analysis of posters for 152 children's animated films released during the period ca. 1940-2018, Aley and Hahn (2020) were able to conclude that male characters dominated the representation of an exclusive solo lead, in addition to being more likely to be featured with functional clothing, weapons, and bodies in motion, while female characters were more likely to be posed statically. A recent large-scale computational analysis of almost 125,000 movie posters from popular films reveals that demographic bias is embedded in the very structure of movie posters, not just within a single genre (Kagan et al., 2022). The study builds upon methodological precedents from the multimodal discourse analysis of film poster corpora by Chen and Gao (2014), who demonstrated that the concepts of representational meaning and compositional meaning, as outlined by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), can be directly applied to the analysis of film posters.

There is also some recent (poster-specific) work on South Asian cinema and this is relevant. Using a semiotic analysis, Jha (2020) found that a common visual lexicon exists in Bollywood film posters, in which women are often presented as objects of address, even in posters for films featuring female protagonists. More recent still, but it does seem as if there is a contradiction in the assumption that the Pakistani film posters produced in 2019, from which the present study draws its sample, are all "post-patriarchal" in the sense suggested by Machin's (2007) multimodal approach, because of the more resistant, agentive femininities seen in the posters of *Baaji*, *Dukhtar*, and *Verna*, which can be read as a genre- and period-specific counter-trend to the consistently dominant male figures and independent characters of the Pakistani film posters examined by Sheikh and Nadeem (2024).

2.3 Gender Representation in Pakistani Cinema

Since 2020, scholarship in the area of Lollywood has increased significantly from the earlier notion that Pakistani cinema is an unquestioning transplant of male-dominated norms. In a trilogy of women-centred blockbuster Lollywood films, Saleem, Mian, Ishaq, Ahmed and Rana (2020) suggest that these films enact female transcendence over the constraints of patriarchy, but remain nonetheless recognisably film genre and commercially viable. A similar tension can be found in Saleem, Mian, Ishaq, Ahmed and Rana's reading of a trilogy of women-centred Lollywood blockbusters, where a sense of transcendence for women is performed over the constraints of patriarchy while simultaneously operating within the recognisably commercial frames of film genre. Other studies, which also adopted a quantitative content analysis of Lollywood films that incorporate gendered narratives, have reported that although the overarching message of such films is toward empowerment, the female characters in these films are largely stereotyped as domestic and follower characters (Saleem et al., 2020).

More recently, Sadiq, Saleem, and Mian (2025) examined the depiction of women in modern Pakistani movies and found that their roles have been growing in the past decade though slowly and incrementally from the sphere of home to the work environment, as this study's poster analysis shows in the movies, *Dukhtar*, *Verna*, and *What Will People Say*, in comparison to *Yalgaar*. In contrast to film, the multimodal discourse analysis of Toor, Kashif and Alvi (2023) reveals that, on this occasion, the media images of women were perceived as a contested "false reality" rather than a true reflection of women's realities, although this was not tested by the analysis itself, it points towards the extension of the multimodal analysis which is audience-receptive, as proposed in the section of Limitations. Studies of masculinity in Pakistani cinema remain comparatively scarce; recent work analysing *Zindagi Tamasha* (2019) and *Joyland* (2022) has begun to address this gap (Noor et al., 2024), examining contemporary and queer masculinities against dominant Pakistani gender ideologies, suggesting that future poster-level research could usefully extend beyond the hegemonic-masculinity/resistant-femininity binary this study and most of its predecessors rely on.

2.4 Multimodal and Critical Discourse Approaches to Visual Gender

The analytic framework that will remain most prominent in this literature is that of Reading Images (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006), which builds on categories for verbal language, such as transitivity, mood and modality, and applies them systematically to visual composition for a corpus, enabling systematic comparisons of gaze, framing, salience and process type between visual and verbal language. There is an alternative toolkit closely related to Multimodal Analysis for advertising and promotional imagery, developed by Machin (2007) and directly used for Pakistani poster corpora (Sheikh & Nadeem, 2024). It is Fairclough's three dimensional model, as outlined in Discourse and Social Change (Fairclough, 1992) and re-stated in The Critical Study of Language (Fairclough, 1995), not the treatment of language and power in Language and Power (Fairclough, 1989/2001), that is conventionally cited when researchers combine Fairclough with Kress and Van Leeuwen for poster or advertisement analysis and it is the correct citation for the analytic apparatus this study applies. The combination of the two frameworks, that is, visual grammar for the "text" dimension and Fairclough for placing the text in the context of its production and its wider ideological work, is not a mere option, but has been a common combination in recent multimodal gender studies of South Asian media (Toor et al., 2023; Sheikh & Nadeem, 2024).

2.5 Positioning the Present Study

Taken together, this literature establishes three things clearly: first, that quantitative industry data through 2025–2026 shows Hollywood's gender gap, both on screen and behind the camera, persisting and in some measures widening rather than closing, which cautions against reading any single poster's progressive framing as evidence of structural change; second, that poster-specific content-analytic work consistently finds compositional bias favouring male figures even where explicit sexual objectification is largely absent, aligning with this study's own finding that Hollywood posters withhold overt objectification while still subordinating women compositionally; and third, that Hollywood scholarship since 2020 is actively contested, with some studies finding genuine resistant femininity in women-centred films and others finding that empowerment narratives still resolve into domestic and follower roles (Sheikh & Nadeem, 2024; Saleem et al., 2020; Sadiq et al., 2025). What remains genuinely underexamined is a poster-level, cross-industry comparison that applies the same multimodal and critical-discourse apparatus to both Hollywood and Lollywood corpora side by side, rather than treating each industry's poster culture as a separate literature. This is the specific gap the present study addresses.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by three complementary theoretical perspectives: Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design, Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Mulvey's (1975) Male Gaze Theory. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for examining how Hollywood and Lollywood film posters construct gender through visual and textual resources while reflecting broader cultural ideologies.

Kress and Van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design serves as the primary theoretical framework for understanding how visual meaning is created through representational, interactive, and compositional structures. Since film posters combine images, typography, colour, and layout to communicate meaning, this framework facilitates the examination of how multimodal resources construct representations of femininities and masculinities.

Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis complements this perspective by situating visual representations within their broader social and ideological contexts. His three-dimensional model enables the analysis to move beyond describing visual features to interpreting how film posters reproduce, negotiate, or challenge dominant gender ideologies in Hollywood and Lollywood.

Finally, Mulvey's (1975) Male Gaze Theory provides a feminist perspective on gender representation in visual media. In *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey argues that mainstream cinema reflects and reinforces patriarchal power structures by positioning women as objects of visual pleasure for a presumed heterosexual male viewer. According to her, women are "the bearer of meaning and not the maker of meaning" (Mulvey, 1975), as they are presented primarily to be looked at rather than to exercise agency. As Sampson (2015) explains, this mode of looking rarely challenges patriarchal assumptions and instead reinforces traditional gender hierarchies. Although developed for cinema, the theory remains equally relevant to film posters, which similarly shape viewers' perceptions of gender through visual representation.

4. Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are femininities and masculinities constructed in Hollywood and Lollywood film posters?
2. Which multimodal resources are employed to construct these representations of gender?
3. What similarities and differences exist in the construction of gender across Hollywood and Lollywood film posters?

5. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design using Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA) to examine how gender is constructed in Hollywood and Lollywood film posters. The analysis is informed by Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) *Grammar of Visual Design* and Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis. Together, these frameworks facilitate both the systematic analysis of multimodal features and the interpretation of the ideological meanings embedded within visual texts.

The data comprise sixteen official film posters, consisting of eight Hollywood and eight Lollywood posters selected through purposive sampling. The posters were chosen based on three distinct criteria: (a) they were official theatrical release posters, (b) they prominently featured central gendered configurations, ranging from solo protagonists to co-gendered and multi-character ensembles, to isolate diverse visual treatments of masculinity and femininity, and (c) they represented diverse genres to capture a broad range of gender portrayals. This comparative corpus enables the study to explore similarities and differences in the construction of femininities and masculinities across the two film industries.

The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, each poster was examined using Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, focusing on representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. Particular attention was given to visual elements such as gaze, body positioning, social distance, framing, salience, colour, typography, and layout to identify how gender identities were visually constructed. Second, the findings were interpreted through Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis by considering the poster as a text, its production and reception as discursive practice, and its relationship to broader sociocultural and ideological contexts as social practice. Mulvey's (1975) *Male Gaze Theory* further informed the interpretation of representations involving visual objectification, spectatorship, and gendered power relations.

The findings from both film industries were then compared to identify recurring patterns, similarities, and differences in the multimodal construction of gender. This integrated analytical approach enables the study to examine not only how gender is visually represented but also how these representations reproduce, negotiate, or challenge dominant cultural ideologies within Hollywood and Lollywood.

6. Data Collection

The corpus for this study comprises sixteen film posters, eight drawn from Lollywood and eight from Hollywood. The posters were chosen from the sixty most successful films produced by each industry in the past ten years, with IMDb serving as the main source of data, supplemented by official studio promotional materials and confirmed reports from the entertainment press when it was necessary to verify details about the composition. Sixteen of these posters were then selected using purposive sampling, the criterion being the variety of genres represented (including romance, drama, films dealing with social issues, and action) and the degree to which gender is portrayed in the poster's composition. Since film posters are by their nature multimodal — incorporating image, typography, and layout — the study makes use of Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodal framework to analyse the visual-textual structure of the posters, while also applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model to place each poster in the context of the values and production conditions of its industry.

7. Data Analysis

7.1 Lollywood Film Posters

Baaji



Figure 1. *Baaji* Film Poster

The official poster of *Baaji* foregrounds a female participant who occupies the centre of the composition while four supporting characters are positioned behind her, immediately establishing her as the most salient represented participant. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the image depicts a non-transactional reactional process in which the participants function as Reactors, directing their gaze towards an unseen phenomenon beyond the frame. The absence of the Phenomenon shifts attention from physical action to the emotional and psychological state of the characters, while the protagonist's fashionable attire and confident posture symbolically construct her as an ambitious and independent woman within the film industry. The participants' direct gaze creates a demand image that invites viewers to engage with the protagonist, while the medium-long shot and eye-level frontal angle establish a relationship of equality and encourage empathy rather than distance. Compositional meaning further reinforces her dominance through central placement, brighter lighting, larger pictorial space, and sharp focus, whereas the remaining participants occupy the background and receive comparatively less salience. The bold title *Baaji* together with the tagline, "*Every dream has a price*," strengthens the discourse of ambition, perseverance, and personal sacrifice associated with success in the entertainment industry. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster challenges conventional representations of women in Pakistani cinema by positioning the female protagonist as the narrative centre rather than an object of visual pleasure. The recontextualisation of the title *Baaji*, a term often associated with ageing women, alongside a confident and glamorous protagonist contests age-based stereotypes and reflects the gradual transformation of gender discourse in contemporary Lollywood, where women are increasingly represented as professionally ambitious and socially visible despite the challenges posed by patriarchal expectations.



Figure 2. *What Will People Say* Film Poster

The official poster for *What Will People Say* shows a young woman as the only person depicted, thereby making her the main focus of the image. She is looking upwards towards some unseen event, which sets up a reactive rather than a transactional situation and invites the viewer to consider her emotional and psychological state rather than to see her carrying out a physical action. The simple clothes, the fact that her face is uncovered, and the lack of any elaborate styling all serve to represent an ordinary young woman whose identity is determined by the social expectations that apply to her. The way she is looking up suggests hope, uncertainty and a desire for freedom beyond the kind of limitations implied by the title. Unlike images in which women are shown as passive objects for others to look at, this poster brings her inner struggle to the front and prompts viewers to become involved in her emotional experience rather than just look at her appearance. The close-up view creates a sense of intimacy and the frontal angle at eye level places the viewer on an equal footing with the woman, encouraging empathy instead of giving a sense of authority. The meaning of the composition is further strengthened by the central position and sharp focus given to the participant, which ensures that she stands out clearly. The bright purple and orange sky in the upper part of the poster contrasts with the darker area below, visually showing the difference between aspiration and actual reality. This contrast is also made clearer by the layout of the text: the review descriptions at the top give an idealised view of courage and resilience, while the phrase "*Sent to a country she's never known, she must risk everything to break free*" ties the story to the real experiences of displacement and restriction. The title *What Will People Say* acts as the main ideological symbol, highlighting the influence that social judgment has on women's lives. From Fairclough's (1995) point of view, the poster creates a discourse based on honour, patriarchy and female autonomy by showing how women's identities are controlled through societal expectations while at the same time presenting resistance as something that is possible. Instead of promoting a submissive idea of femininity, the composition challenges patriarchal beliefs by showing the female protagonist as thoughtful, resilient and determined to shape her own future in the face of the pressures from both family and society.

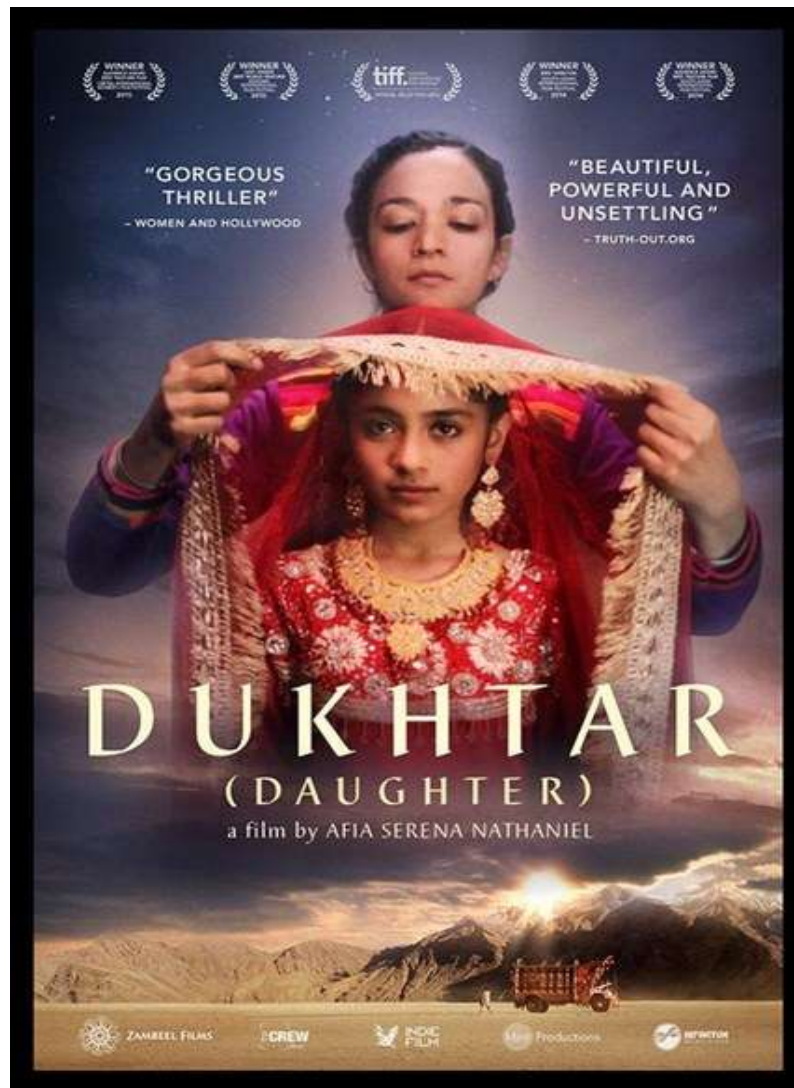


Figure 3. *Dukhtar* Film Poster

The official poster of *Dukhtar* presents a woman carrying a young girl through a rugged mountainous landscape, constructing a transactional action process in which the woman functions as the primary Actor while the child becomes the Goal of her protective action. The strong visual vector created by the woman's movement and embrace directs attention towards the child, symbolising care, responsibility, and determination. Rather than portraying women as passive participants, the composition positions the female protagonist as an active agent whose actions drive the narrative. Neither participant establishes direct eye contact with the viewer, creating an offer image that encourages the audience to observe and reflect upon their circumstances rather than engage directly with them. The medium-long shot captures both the protagonists and the vast mountainous environment, while the frontal eye-level angle establishes equality between the represented participants and viewers, fostering empathy with their journey. Compositional meaning reinforces the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship through their prominent placement, sharp focus, and greater salience against the muted natural landscape. The expansive mountains dominate the background, symbolising both the physical obstacles and the patriarchal social structures confronting the protagonists, while the realistic colour palette enhances the image's modality and emotional authenticity. The title *Dukhtar* ("daughter") further anchors the narrative around the value and protection of the girl child. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse of resistance against patriarchal traditions by representing motherhood as an act of courage rather than passive caregiving. Instead of accepting oppressive cultural expectations, the female protagonist actively safeguards her daughter, challenging practices such as child marriage and asserting female agency. Consequently, the poster reconstructs femininity through resilience, sacrifice, and protection, presenting women as active agents capable of confronting deeply rooted social inequalities.



Figure 4. *Yalgaar* Film Poster

The official poster of *Yalgaar* presents an ensemble cast dominated by male military characters, with women occupying comparatively smaller and peripheral positions within the composition. The image primarily represents a conceptual classificational process, grouping the participants according to their military and civilian roles rather than depicting a single continuous action. The male characters, dressed in combat uniforms and holding weapons, function as the dominant represented participants, symbolising authority, bravery, and national defence, whereas the female participants are positioned in the background with fewer symbolic attributes associated with power or leadership. Most participants do not establish direct eye contact with the viewer, creating an offer image that encourages observation of the military hierarchy rather than personal engagement. The medium and long shots allow viewers to perceive both the characters and the battlefield setting, while the eye-level frontal angle creates a sense of realism and involvement without assigning superiority to the audience. Compositional meaning reinforces masculine dominance through the central placement, larger pictorial space, and greater salience of the male protagonists, who occupy the upper and central sections of the poster. The women receive comparatively less visual prominence through their smaller size and peripheral positioning, reflecting a clear hierarchical organisation of gender. The dark colour palette, military costumes, smoke, and weapons enhance the modality of the image and construct an atmosphere of conflict and patriotism. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster reproduces a discourse of militarised masculinity in which courage, leadership, and national responsibility are primarily associated with men. Although women are included within the visual narrative, their limited visibility and subordinate placement reinforce conventional gender hierarchies by positioning them as secondary to male heroism. Consequently, the poster reflects the persistence of patriarchal representations within action cinema, where masculine authority remains central while female participation continues to be comparatively marginal.



Figure 5. *Verna* Film Poster

The official poster of *Verna* foregrounds a single female participant whose face occupies most of the composition, immediately establishing her as the central represented participant. The image primarily depicts a non-transactional reactional process, as her intense gaze is directed beyond the frame towards an unseen phenomenon, encouraging viewers to focus on her emotional and psychological state rather than physical action. The visible injuries, bruises, and determined facial expression function as symbolic attributes that construct the protagonist as both a survivor of violence and a woman resisting oppression. Unlike conventional portrayals that reduce women to passive victims, the poster emphasises resilience and inner strength. The participant does not establish direct eye contact with the audience, creating an offer image that invites viewers to observe and reflect upon her experience rather than interact with her directly. The close-up framing significantly reduces the social distance, allowing the audience to recognise subtle facial expressions and emotional intensity, while the eye-level frontal angle positions the viewer as an equal witness to her struggle. Compositional meaning further enhances the poster's impact through the protagonist's central placement, sharp focus, and greater salience, with the dark background ensuring that attention remains fixed on her face. The high-contrast lighting and muted colour palette create a realistic and emotionally charged atmosphere, while the title *Verna* and the tagline reinforce themes of resistance, justice, and survival. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that challenges patriarchal violence by refusing to represent the female protagonist solely as a victim. Instead, it foregrounds her determination and resilience, exposing gender-based violence as a broader social issue rather than an individual tragedy. Consequently, the poster challenges dominant patriarchal ideologies by portraying femininity as courageous, resistant, and capable of confronting injustice, reflecting the growing tendency of contemporary Lollywood to address women's rights and social inequality through powerful female-centred narratives.

Punjab Nahi Jaungi



Figure 6. *Punjab Nahi Jaungi* Film Poster

The official poster of *Punjab Nahi Jaungi* presents a male and a female participant standing prominently against a rural landscape, constructing a conceptual symbolic process in which meaning is conveyed through their appearance, posture, and symbolic attributes rather than through physical action (The Express Tribune, 2017). The male participant, dressed in traditional rural attire, represents conventional masculinity, while the female participant, wearing contemporary clothing and confidently holding a gandasa, appropriates an object traditionally associated with male authority and power. Their direct gaze towards the viewer creates a demand image, inviting the audience to engage with both characters and recognise the contrast between tradition and modernity. The medium-long shot enables viewers to observe their clothing, posture, and expressions, while the eye-level frontal angle establishes equality between the participants and the audience, encouraging involvement without suggesting dominance. Compositional meaning reinforces this ideological contrast through the balanced placement of both characters, who occupy the centre of the frame and receive comparable salience through their size, sharp focus, and colourful costumes against the muted rural background. However, the female participant's possession of the gandasa becomes the most visually salient symbolic element, challenging conventional expectations of feminine behaviour within a rural setting. The vibrant colours and realistic landscape

enhance the modality of the composition while simultaneously reflecting the coexistence of traditional and contemporary cultural identities. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that negotiates changing gender roles in contemporary Pakistani society. Although the female protagonist is visually associated with confidence, independence, and symbolic authority, her representation remains embedded within a romantic narrative that ultimately frames gender relations through heterosexual partnership rather than complete social transformation. Consequently, the poster neither fully reinforces nor entirely rejects patriarchal ideology; instead, it reflects a transitional discourse in which women's empowerment is increasingly acknowledged while remaining closely connected to culturally acceptable notions of romance, family, and tradition.

Teefa in Trouble



Figure 7. *Teefa in Trouble* Film Poster

The official poster of *Teefa in Trouble* presents the male and female protagonists as the dominant represented participants, constructing a conceptual symbolic process in which their posture, expressions, costumes, and positioning communicate identity rather than a specific action. The male protagonist occupies the foreground with a confident stance, while the female protagonist stands alongside him displaying a similarly composed and self-assured expression, suggesting that both characters possess agency within the narrative (The News, 2018). Their direct gaze towards the viewer establishes a demand image, inviting the audience to engage with the characters and anticipate their adventurous journey. The medium-long shot allows viewers to observe their body language and fashionable attire, while the eye-level frontal angle creates a relationship of equality and familiarity, positioning the audience as participants rather than distant observers. Compositional meaning emphasises the two protagonists through their central placement, larger pictorial space, and greater salience, making them the immediate focal point of the composition. The vibrant colours, urban backdrop, and dynamic typography contribute to the high modality of the poster, reflecting the film's action-comedy genre and youthful energy. Although both protagonists receive substantial visual prominence, the male character occupies slightly more pictorial space and is positioned in a manner that subtly reinforces his role as the narrative's primary hero, while the female character complements rather than overshadows his presence. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse of contemporary gender relations in which women are represented as confident, modern, and independent rather than passive or dependent. However, this representation remains negotiated within a conventional commercial framework where masculine heroism continues to structure the narrative. Consequently, the poster reflects a transitional model of gender representation in contemporary Lollywood, acknowledging greater female visibility and agency while simultaneously preserving traditional masculine centrality within the action-comedy genre.

Load Wedding



Figure 8. Load Wedding Film Poster

The official poster of *Load Wedding* presents the male and female protagonists as the dominant represented participants, constructing a conceptual symbolic process in which their clothing, posture, and expressions communicate social identities rather than depicting a specific action. The female participant appears in elaborate bridal attire adorned with jewellery, symbolising culturally valued ideals of femininity, marriage, and beauty, while the male participant's comparatively simple dress and confident posture signify responsibility and determination. Both characters establish direct eye contact with the viewer, creating a demand image that encourages audience engagement and invites reflection on the social issues embedded within the narrative. The medium-long shot allows viewers to appreciate their attire and body language, whereas the eye-level frontal angle positions the audience as equals, fostering involvement rather than detachment. Compositional meaning reinforces the prominence of both participants through their central placement, large pictorial space, and greater salience against the colourful festive background. The vibrant colours, wedding decorations, and celebratory visual elements create a high-modality representation of marriage, while the contrast between the female participant's elaborate appearance and the male participant's simpler presentation subtly reflects culturally prescribed gender expectations associated with weddings (Reviewit.pk, 2018). The title *Load Wedding* functions symbolically by hinting at the social and economic burdens surrounding marriage in Pakistani society, extending the meaning beyond the celebratory imagery. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that simultaneously reproduces and questions traditional gender roles. While the visual emphasis on the bride's appearance reflects conventional expectations linking female identity to marriage and beauty, the equal visual prominence of both protagonists and the film's thematic focus suggest a broader critique of societal practices such as dowry and marriage-related pressures. Consequently, the poster negotiates patriarchal ideology by presenting marriage as a shared social responsibility rather than an issue affecting women alone, reflecting contemporary Lollywood's growing engagement with gender equality and social reform.

7.2 Hollywood Film Posters

Legally Blonde



Figure 9. *Legally Blonde* Film Poster

The official poster of *Legally Blonde* foregrounds a single female participant walking confidently while accompanied by a small dog, constructing a transactional action process in which her forward movement serves as the primary vector, symbolising purpose and determination. Her upright posture, confident smile, and fashionable pink attire function as symbolic attributes that initially align her with conventional femininity, while simultaneously challenging stereotypes by presenting confidence and ambition alongside traditionally feminine aesthetics. The participant looks directly towards the viewer, creating a demand image that establishes an immediate interpersonal connection and invites the audience to engage with her character. The full-body medium-long shot enables viewers to observe her movement, posture, and costume, while the eye-level frontal angle positions the viewer as an equal, reinforcing accessibility and confidence rather than superiority. Compositional meaning further emphasises her dominance through her central placement, greater salience, and bright pink clothing, which sharply contrasts with the lighter background and immediately attracts visual attention. The uncluttered composition ensures that the participant remains the sole focal point, while the title *Legally Blonde* reinforces the central theme of challenging assumptions associated with femininity and intelligence. The high colour modality creates an energetic and optimistic visual atmosphere that reflects confidence, individuality, and self-belief. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that questions stereotypical associations between physical appearance and intellectual capability. While the protagonist embraces conventional markers of femininity, these visual choices are not presented as limitations but as compatible with ambition, education, and professional success. Consequently, the poster challenges patriarchal assumptions that equate femininity with incompetence, reconstructing female identity as both fashionable and intellectually capable, thereby promoting a more inclusive understanding of women's roles within contemporary society.

Hidden Figures



Figure 10. *Hidden Figures* Film Poster

The official poster of *Hidden Figures* presents three female participants walking side by side, constructing a transactional action process in which their forward movement functions as the primary vector, symbolising progress, determination, and professional purpose. Their coordinated movement and formal attire represent them as competent professionals rather than passive observers, while the absence of a dominant male participant shifts the narrative focus entirely to female achievement. The women look ahead instead of directly at the viewer, creating an offer image that encourages the audience to observe and reflect upon their journey rather than engage in direct interaction. The medium-long shot captures both the participants and the surrounding environment, while the eye-level frontal angle positions viewers as equals, reinforcing respect and identification with their accomplishments. Compositional meaning strengthens the representation through the central placement and balanced arrangement of the three women, who receive equal salience through comparable size, spacing, and visual prominence, symbolising unity and collaboration. The NASA facility and spacecraft in the background provide symbolic context for scientific innovation, while the warm colour palette and high modality create an authentic historical setting that reinforces the realism of their achievements. The title *Hidden Figures* further highlights the historical invisibility of these women despite their significant contributions to space exploration. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that challenges both gender and racial exclusion by repositioning women, particularly African American women, as central contributors to scientific progress. Rather than reinforcing traditional assumptions that science and technology are male domains, the composition foregrounds female intelligence, professionalism, and collective achievement, exposing the historical marginalisation of women's contributions while promoting a more inclusive understanding of leadership, expertise, and success in contemporary society.

Widows



Figure 11. *Widows* Film Poster

The official poster of *Widows* presents four female participants standing together in a unified composition, constructing a conceptual classificational process in which the women are represented as members of a collective rather than through a specific action. Their serious facial expressions, dark clothing, and confident posture function as symbolic attributes that communicate determination, resilience, and shared purpose. The absence of visible male participants shifts the visual narrative entirely towards female solidarity and agency. None of the women establishes direct eye contact with the viewer, creating an offer image that encourages observation and interpretation of their identities rather than direct interaction. The medium shot enables viewers to recognise each participant's facial expressions and body language, while the eye-level frontal angle positions the audience as equals, fostering respect rather than dominance. Compositional meaning reinforces equality among the participants through their balanced arrangement, comparable size, and equal salience, ensuring that no single woman visually dominates the composition. The dark background and subdued colour palette create a high-modality atmosphere associated with tension, determination, and realism, while the title *Widows* symbolically reframes a traditionally passive social identity into one associated with courage and collective action. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that challenges conventional representations of widowed women as dependent, vulnerable, or socially marginalised. Instead, it reconstructs widowhood as a source of resilience, leadership, and independence by positioning the women as capable individuals confronting adversity together. Consequently, the poster contests patriarchal assumptions that female identity is defined by male presence, presenting women as autonomous actors whose strength emerges through solidarity, shared responsibility, and the ability to reshape their own circumstances.

Star Trek Into Darkness



Figure 12. *Star Trek Into Darkness* Film Poster

The official poster of *Star Trek Into Darkness* presents an ensemble cast organised around the central male protagonist, constructing a conceptual classificational process in which the participants are visually grouped according to their narrative importance rather than through a single action. The male protagonist occupies the foreground and receives the greatest visual prominence, while the female participant is positioned slightly behind him, partially obscured by surrounding male characters. Although she is portrayed in a professional uniform similar to her male counterparts, her placement and comparatively smaller pictorial space reduce her narrative visibility. Most participants direct their gaze beyond the viewer, creating an offer image that invites observation of the team and the unfolding conflict rather than direct interpersonal engagement. The medium shot and eye-level frontal angle establish a realistic relationship with the audience, allowing viewers to recognise each participant while maintaining equal social relations. Compositional meaning reinforces the hierarchy through the central placement, larger size, and greater salience of the male protagonist, whose position immediately attracts the viewer's attention. The female participant occupies a secondary position within the visual taxonomy despite being part of the central cast, while the dark colour palette, futuristic setting, and dramatic lighting enhance the image's high modality and communicate themes of danger, heroism, and sacrifice. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that continues to privilege masculine leadership within the science fiction genre. Although women are represented as capable members of the professional team, their reduced visual prominence reflects persistent gender hierarchies in which authority and heroism remain primarily associated with male characters. Consequently, the poster illustrates how contemporary Hollywood increasingly includes women in professional and action-oriented roles while simultaneously maintaining traditional patterns of masculine centrality through visual composition and hierarchy.

The Hunger Games

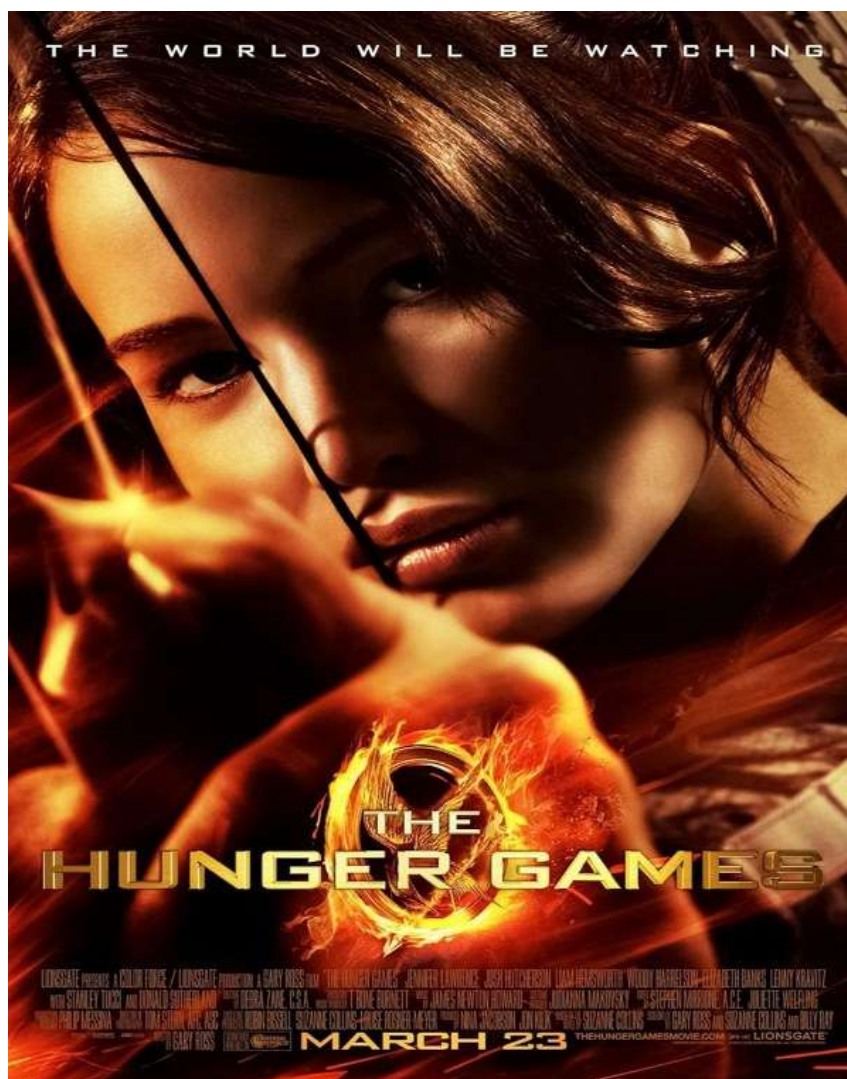


Figure 13. *The Hunger Games* Film Poster

The official poster of *The Hunger Games* foregrounds a single female participant, Katniss Everdeen, with her face framed tightly alongside her arrow, constructing a conceptual symbolic process in which her posture, weapon, and expression communicate identity, strength, and leadership rather than depicting an ongoing action. The bow functions as a symbolic attribute of survival, resistance, and authority, while her determined facial expression reinforces resilience and self-reliance. Katniss establishes direct eye contact with the viewer, creating a demand image that invites engagement and positions her as an active protagonist rather than a passive observer. The close-up shot enables viewers to appreciate both her stance and symbolic weapon, while the eye-level frontal angle establishes equality between the participant and the audience, encouraging identification with her struggle. Compositional meaning reinforces her dominance through her central placement, greater salience, and sharp focus against the darker background, ensuring that attention remains fixed on the protagonist. The mockingjay emblem and fiery colour palette function as symbolic elements representing rebellion, hope, and transformation, while the high modality enhances the realism and emotional intensity of the composition. The title *The Hunger Games* further anchors the image within a narrative of survival and resistance against oppression. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that challenges traditional gender ideologies by representing a woman as the principal symbol of leadership, courage, and political resistance within an action narrative. Rather than associating heroism exclusively with masculinity, the composition positions femininity alongside physical capability, strategic intelligence, and moral determination. Consequently, the poster redefines conventional representations of female action heroes by portraying women as central agents of social change, reflecting contemporary Hollywood's increasing acceptance of female leadership within genres historically dominated by male protagonists.

Wonder Woman



Figure 14. Wonder Woman Film Poster

The official poster of *Wonder Woman* foregrounds the female protagonist as the sole dominant represented participant, constructing a conceptual symbolic process in which her posture, armour, shield, and sword function as symbolic attributes of strength, leadership, and heroism rather than depicting a specific action. Standing firmly at the centre of the composition, she embodies confidence and authority, challenging conventional associations of physical power with masculinity. Her direct gaze establishes a demand image, inviting viewers to engage with her as an equal and recognise her determination. The medium-long shot allows the audience to observe her stance, costume, and symbolic weapons, while the eye-level frontal angle creates a relationship of equality that encourages admiration rather than submission. Compositional meaning reinforces her dominance through central placement, greater salience, and sharp focus, making her the immediate focal point against the dramatic battlefield backdrop. The warm golden tones of her armour contrast with the darker background, enhancing her visual prominence and symbolising courage, hope, and justice. The high modality, achieved through realistic lighting and detailed visual effects, strengthens the authenticity of the heroic representation while the title *Wonder Woman* anchors the image within a discourse of female heroism. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that challenges patriarchal assumptions by positioning a woman as the central protector and leader within a genre traditionally dominated by male superheroes. Rather than presenting femininity as incompatible with strength, the composition integrates physical power, compassion, and leadership into a single identity, reconstructing heroism as gender-inclusive. Consequently, the poster reflects the evolving discourse of contemporary Hollywood, where female protagonists increasingly occupy positions of authority and agency without abandoning traditionally feminine characteristics, signalling a significant shift in the visual representation of women in mainstream action cinema.

Mad Max: Fury Road



Figure 15. *Mad Max: Fury Road* Film Poster

The official poster of *Mad Max: Fury Road* presents the male and female protagonists in a hostile desert landscape, constructing a conceptual symbolic process in which their costumes, weapons, and determined postures communicate survival, resistance, and authority rather than a single unfolding action. Although both participants occupy prominent positions, Furiosa's intense expression, mechanical arm, and firm stance function as symbolic attributes of resilience and leadership, challenging conventional representations of women in action cinema. Neither participant establishes direct eye contact with the viewer, creating an offer image that invites the audience to observe the characters and the harsh environment rather than engage directly with them. The medium-long shot captures both protagonists and the desolate landscape, while the eye-level frontal angle positions viewers as equals, encouraging them to interpret the shared struggle for survival. Compositional meaning reinforces the importance of both characters through their central placement, large pictorial space, and strong salience, while the fiery orange sky, damaged vehicles, and desert backdrop create a high-modality representation of conflict and danger. Although Max remains visually prominent, Furiosa occupies comparable compositional space and visual emphasis, signalling a departure from traditional action posters in which female characters are relegated to secondary roles. The title *Mad Max: Fury Road* anchors the narrative within the action genre, yet the balanced composition suggests that heroism is shared rather than exclusively masculine. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that redefines gender roles by presenting female leadership and physical capability alongside masculine heroism instead of beneath it. Rather than reinforcing patriarchal assumptions that action and survival are predominantly male domains, the composition positions Furiosa as an equally capable protagonist, reflecting contemporary Hollywood's growing recognition of women as central figures in narratives of resistance, leadership, and social transformation.

Captain Marvel



Figure 16. *Captain Marvel Film Poster*

The official poster of *Captain Marvel* foregrounds the female protagonist as the sole dominant represented participant, constructing a conceptual symbolic process in which her upright posture, military-inspired suit, and luminous energy function as symbolic attributes of power, leadership, and heroism rather than depicting a specific action. Standing confidently at the centre of the composition, Captain Marvel embodies authority and self-assurance, while the glowing aura surrounding her signifies extraordinary strength and resilience. Her direct gaze towards the viewer creates a demand image, inviting the audience to acknowledge her confidence and engage with her as the central heroic figure. The medium-long shot allows viewers to observe her stance, costume, and symbolic details, whereas the eye-level frontal angle establishes an equal relationship with the audience, reinforcing admiration without implying dominance. Compositional meaning further strengthens her representation through central placement, greater salience, and sharp focus, ensuring that she immediately attracts visual attention. The radiant blue, red, and golden colour palette contrasts with the darker cosmic background, creating a high-modality image that symbolises hope, determination, and limitless potential. The surrounding spacecraft and celestial imagery situate the protagonist within a technologically advanced universe while reinforcing her role as its most significant visual element. From Fairclough's (1995) perspective, the poster constructs a discourse that challenges the traditionally masculine ideology of the superhero genre by positioning a woman as its unquestioned centre of authority and action. Rather than defining femininity through dependence or physical attractiveness alone, the composition associates female identity with military competence, courage, and leadership. Consequently, the poster reconstructs conventional notions of heroism by presenting women as autonomous protectors capable of occupying positions of power traditionally reserved for men, reflecting the broader transformation of gender representation in contemporary Hollywood cinema.

8. Discussion and Conclusion

The research examined how masculinity and femininity are portrayed in a selection of film posters from Lollywood and Hollywood, applying Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar and Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings reveal that both film industries employ visual and textual resources to construct gender identities in ways that simultaneously challenge and reproduce traditional gender ideologies. Instead of clearly distinguishing between progressive and patriarchal forms of representation, the posters present a transitional discourse in which traditional gender norms coexist with new representations of female agency and empowerment.

In both industries, women are becoming the main figures portrayed, taking up a great deal of visual space and having considerable narrative importance. In a number of posters such as *Baaji*, *Dukhtar*, *Verna*, *Legally Blonde*, *Hidden Figures*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Hunger Games* and *Captain Marvel*, female protagonists achieve the highest level of prominence because of their central position, the amount of pictorial space they occupy, strong lighting, and the symbolic features linked with leadership, resilience and professional competence. Such visual decisions go against the traditional cinematic practices which have usually kept women in supporting or decorative roles. Rather than being shown as passive participants, women are often depicted as Actors, decision-makers and agents of change, with their identities going beyond those of a domestic or romantic type. The findings thus indicate a steady move towards more empowered portrayals of femininity in both Lollywood and Hollywood.

The analysis also shows that the way female empowerment is portrayed is different in the two industries. In Lollywood women are mainly shown in stories that deal with socially specific cultural issues such as honour, child marriage, gender-based violence and family expectations. Posters like *Dukhtar*, *Verna* and *What Will People Say* depict femininity in terms of resilience, resistance and survival as a response to patriarchal social structures. Even in commercial films such as *Punjab Nahi Jaungi* and *Load Wedding* the female characters are shown as confident and independent yet still closely linked to family relationships and cultural traditions. On the other hand, Hollywood more often links female empowerment with professional achievement, scientific expertise, political resistance, military capability and leadership as a superhero. Posters such as *Hidden Figures*, *Captain Marvel*, *Wonder Woman* and *The Hunger Games* show women as scientists, leaders, soldiers and revolutionaries, mirroring the wider ideas about individual autonomy and professional success. These differences indicate that even though both industries tend to bring women to the fore, the way they represent women is influenced by different cultural and social contexts.

Even though such advances have taken place, traditional gender hierarchies still have an effect on the way things are represented visually. Posters that focus on action, for example *Yalgaar* and *Star Trek Into Darkness*, still give masculine authority greater prominence by using more pictorial space and a hierarchical arrangement. The male protagonists are often placed in central positions and are linked with physical strength, leadership, and the role of protection by means of military uniforms, weapons, and dominant postures. Women who appear in these posters are given considerably less visual emphasis even though they are shown as competent professionals or as active members of a team. This indicates that even though women have become more visible in modern cinema, masculine centrality still remains deeply rooted in film genres that have historically been dominated by male protagonists.

The study also shows that masculinity is portrayed in rather similar ways in both industries. Male characters are usually linked with courage, physical strength, leadership, and a sense of responsibility. This is reinforced in their visual depiction by means of a central composition, a larger body size, a direct posture, the presence of symbolic weapons, military costumes, and a dominant position in the space. These features reflect the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in which authority and heroism are still strongly tied to male identity. At the same time, the research finds that modern female protagonists are increasingly taking on the visual roles which have in the past been reserved for men, especially in Hollywood action films. For example, the posters for *Wonder Woman*, *Captain Marvel*, and *The Hunger Games* show that heroism, leadership, and physical ability are no longer seen as qualities that should be exclusively associated with men. A key observation relates to the way the male gaze functions.

Unlike previous studies which have stressed the sexualisation of women in promotional material, the posters under consideration display only a limited amount of obvious objectification. The female participants are usually shown in their whole bodies rather than in separate body parts, and their identities are developed via their profession, their struggles, their leadership roles, or through personal agency rather than by means of sexual attractiveness. Yet the lack of obvious sexualisation does not necessarily mean that there is full gender equality. In many of the ensemble and action posters, women still hold secondary positions within the composition or are given less visual prominence than men, indicating that visual hierarchy still serves as an important means of reproducing patriarchal ideology. It shows that the visual decisions involved here are not simply matters of taste but have an ideological character. The posters create discourses which show the evolving cultural perceptions of gender while at the same time retaining certain aspects of the traditional social structure. In Lollywood women's empowerment is generally dealt with within the framework of the family, honour, marriage and the community, while Hollywood tends to present empowerment in terms of individual achievement, professional identity and leadership. Although there are these differences in context, both industries show a continuing negotiation between traditional patriarchal values and the current expectations regarding gender equality. Although female agency is being recognised more and more, it often coexists with visual conventions that still give priority to masculine authority in certain genres and narrative situations.

In summary, the results indicate that the way gender is represented in film posters today is more complex than the earlier views of simple female objectification or male dominance would suggest. In both Lollywood and Hollywood there is clear evidence of a gradual change, with women taking on more central roles in both the narrative and the visual aspect of the posters, although traditional ideas about masculinity still exert an influence. The study therefore finds that film posters from both industries at the same time question and reinforce the dominant gender ideologies, mirroring the wider social changes involved in the redefinition of conventional gender norms rather than their total replacement.

9. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The sample used in this study is small: although sixteen posters are enough to carry out a detailed qualitative and multimodal analysis, they are not sufficient to enable any kind of statistical generalisation regarding the entire output of either industry. If a larger body of material had been used, it would have been possible to make genre-by-genre comparisons with greater confidence. The analysis was carried out by one coder alone, using Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) framework, and this does involve a certain amount of interpretive subjectivity, something that could be reduced by employing a multi-coder approach together with inter-rater reliability checks. In future research it would be advantageous to extend this kind of comparative study to other national cinemas that are also addressing issues of gender representation, for example Bollywood, Nollywood and Iranian cinema, and also to combine multimodal discourse analysis with methods relating to audience reception in order to find out whether viewers interpret these compositional imbalances in the way that this analysis suggests.

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