

Mothers as Advocates in Pakistani and Indian Society: Analyzing films ‘Dukhtar’ and ‘Secret Superstar’

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Received: 09-03-2025

Revised: 10-04-2025

Accepted: 04-05-2025

Published: 19-05-2025

ABSTRACT

*This research uses a comparative thematic analysis for the films *Dukhtar* (Pakistan, 2014) and *Secret Superstar* (India, 2017), concentrating on how the mothers are shown in the role of promoters of their daughters within patriarchal South Asian societies. The research through the consideration of selected narrative scenes in the films dissects the methods through which the motherly characters oppose oppressive societal norms through encouraging, protecting and giving up for the sake of their children’s futures. The research also reveals the complicated methods used by the two films in fighting the traditional gender roles and societal expectations of the society. The mother is not shown as just a passive character who is acted upon but a change agent who takes up both the overt and subtle approach to subversion of the social norms in the community. Moreover, the research deals with the issue of community resistance and support these figures receive, which serves as a broader reflection of conflicts caused by culture in the countries of Pakistan and India. The results show that both movies bring out the resilience and resourcefulness of the motherly character and proved to be insightful in the rephrased one, and lastly, the papers generally make the moves of gender, autonomy, and liberation in South Asian cinemas more visible from the past.*

Keywords: Maternal advocacy, Patriarchy, Gender roles, Pakistani film, Indian film, Liberation, Empowerment, Resistance

INTRODUCTION

The independence of Pakistan and India in 1947, which was based upon the two-nation theory, led to the birth of two sovereign countries: Pakistan and India. Though religion was the fundamental basis of this political division, the social characters of both nations are still very much alike, in particular gender roles and the position of women in society (Scholarly Blog, 2024). Huge efforts put into creating a national identity in both Pakistan and India have not really had much effect on the gender issues which still exist in both these countries, thus forcing women to take the role of the family and society at large (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, n.d.). In both places, women are conventionally expected to be the so-called “perfect” member of the family. That is, women are called upon to be the “ideal” mother, while the qualities of “the good daughter” and “obedient wife” are deeply ingrained in their identities.

Discrimination based on gender is still an important issue in both countries. In particular, women in both countries confront significant difficulties such as – limited opportunities of education, dependence on male support, and the constraint of being confined-with less mobility and social roles that prioritize the male authority by the public and the private for sure (UNICEF, Women Empowerment: Issues and Challenges, n.d.) The ugliness of child marriage, of practices such as dowry, honor-based violence, and the stigma of divorce make the subservient position of women rather concrete and place additional limits on their capacity to be self-determining. Despite these difficulties, women through the history have

constantly been playing very important, although rarely untold, roles as bearers of change in their societies and families. In the first place, the mother figure has become the most powerful representative of both submission and rebellion. While it is widely believed that mothers are only passive transmitters of the tradition, along with the trend, more and more people recognize that they can be the initiators of the change of the patriarchal norms and that they can be the leaders in the fight for the rights and future of the children (Of Love and Agency, n.d.). The typical mother figures in South Asian films are an example of the ways traditional motherhood needs to be reshaped and renewed. These cinema narratives successfully generate and signify the political agency of an oppressed group, women, and hence, they not only bring to light but also counteract some old myths, patriarchal institutions, and the static nature of traditional gender roles. We hear much about films that push the agenda of female empowerment, but such an instance has not been often discussed, i.e. how the maternal characters in the said movies have been portrayed as the pointers regarding the change of women's roles from the traditional to the non-traditional one, thus the upholders of gender equality.

Problem Statement

With motherhood glorified as a religious duty in the societies of Pakistan and India, mothers here have a common problem of their agency and health being affected by the system, which in turn, justifies gender inequality generation after generation. The casting of *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar* showing motherly figures transgressing the patriarchal domain relates how these movies shape or challenge the stereotype of the power of the patriarch or women's empowerment in the broader setting and the researching field in the modern-day Pakistan.

Dukhtar a 2014 film is a Pakistani movie that narrates the story of Allah Rakhi, a mother who takes a high risk to save her ten-year-old daughter from a forced child marriage organized by the local feudal lords. The movie passionately shows a mother's courage and her stand against the traditional male-dominated society of rural Pakistan.

Secret Superstar a 2017 film is about a young girl, Insiya, who aspires to be a singer, and her mother Najma, who backs her though she suffers from domestic violence and societal restrictions. The narrative points out the impact of maternal self-advocacy in the context of gender inequality and the facilitation of female self-expression in a closed family society.

Although a large number of academic researchers have unveiled the problems related to the socio-culture and the structure which the women in South Asia have to overcome, there is an obvious literary gap seen when we talk about how gender roles of mothers in the popular culture-particularly in film-are constructed, contested, and transcended. Most of the research conducted concentrates on the broader feminism movements, the legal reforms, or the depiction of women only as victims and not as the bearers-of-the-change (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, n.d.; Saleem et al., 2023). There is no -as per our knowledge-reciprocal study that can be found wherein the ways in which mothers in the cinema of both Pakistan and India have taken part in the reformation of the traditional roles of women and have become agents for their children, especially daughters, within the context of the shared cultural norms but differing national narratives, are compared.

This research aims to fill this gap by a comparative analysis of the ways in which *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar* depict mothers as the active advocates who encounter and struggle against the society's norms so that they can ensure their daughters' lives will be better. The work will focus on the representation of the films on how the literary texts reflect the society as well as the society's challenges to gender concepts in Pakistani and Indian cultures and, hence, through this, it will be a source of new ideas in the field of motherhood as a site of empowerment and resistance that seldom comes across in cross-cultural scholarship.

Research Aims

1. To analyze the representation of mothers as advocates for their daughters in *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar*, focusing on their resistance to restrictive societal norms.
2. To explore how these films reflect and challenge societal expectations of women and mothers in Pakistani and Indian contexts.

Research Questions

1. How do *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar* depict mothers actively challenging restrictive societal norms to advocate for their daughters' futures?
2. In what ways do these films reflect and challenge prevailing societal expectations of women and mothers in Pakistan and India?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the strides that the world is making, female subjugation is still prevalent nearly everywhere and in different guises, the most usual of which are physical violence, economic disparity, politics, and rights over one's own body. Women not feeling safe in their life also presents a part of the gender-based problem. Study shows that women are harassed in all over the world and they are faced with physical or sexual violence in every third case (Womankind Worldwide, 2024). Notably, both international and local platforms concur that only via repetition of the talk on the 22% lower salaries of women could that information be assimilated in people's memory and everyday life. Although clearly understood from this issue is the exercise of the right to work in the profession of one's choice and which is covered under the family and labor law, other restrictions emerge within the property law (International Labour Organization, 2018; World Bank, 2019). Suffice it to say that they want it while the latter is dramatically qualitative as it is the only issue that brings the whole public to discuss it thus solving it which is, automatically, the way (UN Women, 2025; Turning Point Magazine, 2025). This is the very instance simultaneously of attitudes and organic forms that women, in their struggles for existence, choose but with a slight impulse coming from the women, i.e., it is the issue of public awareness attracted to it that is the way to sort it out (Focus2030, 2024; GIWPS, 2025). The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action directly illustrate that the support of each country to these problems is unconditional, at least in some instances. Nonetheless, many women are still being exposed to these measures that are very extreme which make it very difficult to differentiate where the real problem is, locally or globally, politically (UN Women, 2025).

Women's Role as Societal Shapers through Motherhood

Historically, women irrespective of their roles have been the carriers and shapers of cultures by rearing future leaders, educating the young, and carrying out other CRS (care, reproduction, and sexual behaviors) activities. Islamic history provides numerous examples of the influential role of the mothers in the lives of the celebs. Two of the mothers in the Ottoman Empire from the 16th to the 17th century who had the most impact, namely Nurbanu Sultan and Kösem Sultan. Kösem Sultan (c. 1589–1651), one of the most powerful valide sultans (queen mothers), served as regent for her sons Murad IV and Ibrahim I, effectively ruling the empire for decades. She provided political leadership during the period when the men were dominating the leadership, orchestrating succession, and governance, and eventually her name was deeply carved in the history of the empire as a symbol of strength and tenacity (Abu Fazl's Akbarnama, Ch. 3 1590; Wikipedia, 1505). Another instance, Margaret Beaufort, the mother of King Henry VII of England, played a significant role in the political consolidation of the Tudor dynasty by virtue of her son's seat on the throne, his mother was able to influence the English government and ensure its peace and development (Loades, 2009). These stories demonstrate a time in history when women had

significant influence over community life and participated actively in decision-making. In this way, very often women had the same opportunities as men. Besides, those women were ambassadors of peace, change, and women's possibilities.

Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender & Society*, 2(3), 274-290. Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. These references overview the role of the mother from a broader perspective of society (e.g., discussing not only the mother-child relationship but also how the mother works outside the family or participates in policymaking). However, the concept of the family as complex is not the only model of the family important in sociology. This new thought makes a contribution in terms of both family and gender studies. The argument of these scholars is supported by considering the mother not only as a private figure but also as a citizen who plays an incredible role for the future of the country.

Oppression of Daughters in Pakistan and India

Daughters in Pakistan and India encounter situations where social injustices are multilayered, based on patriarchal traditions that put male heirs on top of the hierarchy and cage women within boundaries of restricted autonomy. Child marriage, demands of dowries, and the preference for boys still not only exist but are perpetuated as a result of gender discrimination, making girls the ones with scarce opportunities to get an education or the needed healthcare and nothing more (UNICEF, n.d.; Women Empowerment: Issues and Challenges, n.d.). In Pakistan, girls are often made to play traditional roles, which means they are only involved in economic activities to a very low extent and also their decision-making power is curtailed (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, n.d.). On the same note, India has an unbelievably high number of child marriages, and gender-based violence, notwithstanding the ban, persists and is more widespread in communities not in the mainstream (UNICEF, n.d.; National Crime Records Bureau, 2023). Not only that, but the structural disparities also result in women's malnutrition, illiteracy, and early pregnancy, leading to a vicious cycle of poverty and reliance (World Bank, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2021). The involvement of caste, class, and religion in the situation of the daughters makes it even more complicated, thus, the daughters' oppression is so deep-rooted and multi-faceted that it is difficult to defeat (Chakravarti, 1993; Sen, 2001).

Rise of Women's Empowerment and Feminism

The latter part of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century are a testament to the notable feminist movements and initiatives for women's empowerment in South Asia. These movements have been protesting against traditional gender roles and also demanding reforms in the law. In India and Pakistan, feminism has been greatly involved in fighting for the rights of the girl child, reproductive rights, and political representation, and thus has facilitated the enactment of landmark legislations such as India's Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) and Pakistan's Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act (2012) (Khan, 2017; Rehman, 2019). The partners from the grassroots and feminists from around the globe have been striving to ensure that the women get to freely express themselves, be educated, and also participate in the economy as this will be a potential path to their empowerment (Nussbaum, 2000; Kabeer, 2015). However, the arguments that feminists make are met with strong opposition from the people who hold on to societal and religious values which they interpret as patriarchal (Mahmood, 2005; Jalal, 1995). In the face of these difficulties, there is an evident development in digital media and women who are more visible in the leadership area, thus, providing extraordinary spaces for the expression of feminist issues and solidarity (Sen, 2020; Kumar, 2018). The current changes in society bring about a very complex underlying level that is very suitable for the study of the way cultural products interact with the subjects of empowerment and rebellion.

Feminist Cinema and Literary Works in South Asia

In South Asia literature and films are used to raise the issue of feminism. In other words, they are the tools for the delineation of the oppressed and the active and versatile actors who managed to struggle against the patriarchal world. Movies namely *Dukhtar* (2014) and *Secret Superstar* (2017) became the talk of not only the town but also the whole world around for the way they depicted women in nuanced layers: who gave absolute refusal to the imposed relationship with men and referred to overwhelming responsibilities apart from motherhood. Then, there was education and the independence of a child (Saleem et al., 2023; *The Express Tribune*, 2017). The literary contributions such as themes of feminism and gender bias are the legacy of the writers themselves. This is the case with the author Kamila Shamsie whose creativeness and authenticity gave the recent world such an example in *Home Fire* (Shamsie, 2017). The character from Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* one of the royals did an analogous thing. In the process of production, these textual elements conflate with various multidirectional feminism issues, covering gender, class, and religion while they keep on providing new traces of resistance and self-assertion (Chaudhuri, 2012; Nair, 2015). Still, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive studies across the border comparing the cinematic depictions of motherhood and daughterhood as forms of resistance (Saleem et al., 2023). Notwithstanding, a new model describes the media/entertainment industry that visibly dictates and substantially shapes worldviews. Thus, it remains to be accepted that scholars and laypeople together could make the best use of researching the way it informs values and sees gender relationships (Khan & Ali, 2021; Singh, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The study is completed with the “theoretical” framework. The theory type of theoretical framework employed by this research is “feminist film theory”. It relies on established theories which surround gender, representation and power in film. It is employed to explain the way the films give shape to and challenge women’s issues and as well as society. Chaudhuri (2006), Hole and Jelača (2019), and Mayne (1985) have shown that feminist film theory provides indispensable tools such as male gaze, phenomenology, affect theory, and psychoanalysis to analyze gender representation and maternal advocacy in cinema through qualitative content analysis. This is also the reason why this research uses feminist theory as its foundation.

METHODOLOGY

The type of methodology the research used is qualitative, descriptive and interceptive. The approach of this research is content analysis by using feminist film theory. In content analysis the research followed coding of thematic and comparative analysis for both films. The coding also ensures the objectivity of the research.

The reason for employing content analysis as a research methodology in my research is that Leavy (2000), Krippendorff (2013, as cited in IJNRD, 2024), and Tiplado (2024, as cited in IJNRD, 2024) have been able to establish that content analysis is a systematic, flexible way of doing research to interpret both the manifest and latent content of texts, films, and other media, and which can be used for both quantitative and qualitative study needs i.e., for the pursuit of patterns, themes, and meanings and thus I have also chosen content analysis as a qualitative method in my research.

The reason for employing a Qualitative Methodology in my study is that Elliott and Timulak (2005, as cited in Hill and Knox, 2021), Thorne (2016, as cited in Hunt, 2022), and Braun and Clarke (2006) have proven that qualitative research, through its emphasis on interpretative description and thematic exploration, can enable a deep understanding of complex social phenomena through its focus on the

participant’s own meanings, experiences, and setting as the unit of analysis, which is why this research follows a qualitative methodology.

Coding Scheme

The coding is done in accordance with the feminist theory for two modes:

1. Thematic analysis codes
2. Comparative analysis codes

Thematic analysis codes

Maternal Advocacy

- **Empowerment:** Scenes where the mother’s actions empower her daughter.
- **Protection:** Instances of the mother safeguarding her daughter from harm.
- **Sacrifice:** Acts of self-sacrifice for the daughter’s future.

Resistance to Patriarchy

- **Defiance:** Direct challenges to patriarchal authority.
- **Subversion:** Subtle or overt resistance to gender norms.
- **Agency:** Assertion of the mother’s or daughter’s autonomy

Societal Expectations

- **Traditional Roles:** Reinforcement of stereotypical roles for women/mothers.
- **Challenging Stereotypes:** Subversion or critique of these roles.
- **Backlash/Support:** Societal or familial reactions to the mother’s actions.

Transformation and Liberation

- **Personal Growth:** Evolution of the mother’s or daughter’s character.
- **Liberation:** Scenes signifying escape or freedom from restrictive norms

Thematic analysis codes	
Maternal advocacy	Empowerment, Protection, Sacrifice
Resistance to patriarchy	Defiance, Subversion, Agency
Societal expectations	Traditional roles, Challenging Stereotypes, Backlash/Support
Transformation and liberation	Personal growth, Liberation

Table 1 Tabular form of codes of thematic analysis

Comparative analysis codes

- Mother’s Advocacy
- Nature of Resistance
- Societal Norms Challenged
- Visual Techniques

- Outcome for Daughter
- Outcome for Mother
- Community Reaction

Mother's Advocacy

This code systematically goes through the actions and strategies taken by motherly figures to help, defend, or champion their daughters' interests, all under the cultural and social influence. It makes it possible to track down various forms of maternal activity as well as the modes of advocacy, which are differently portrayed.

Nature of Resistance

This code sorts the different ways by which a maternal figure opposes the oppressive behavior of male dominance and codified norms, such as passive non-participation to open confrontation. It allows the study of how resistance is divided into various types and to what extent each one is grievous in the story.

Societal Norms Challenged

By this code, researchers can break down the practices that are cultural, legal, or social, and wherein mother figures got involved as they contested, or which ones they have subverted. It gives them the opportunity to each see in detail the parts of the male influence that were the target point and how the opposition was expressed.

Visual Techniques

What this code does is that it brings into the discussion of a mother's advocacy and resistance the visual aspects of the film like camera work, light art, symbols, stage setting, and sound. It is through the visual aspect that one can dig deeper about thematic growth.

Outcome for Daughter

The code at hand goes deep into examining the probable changes that may happen to the daughter's situation after the mother's vigorous support, e.g., change in the level of her independence, security, social mobility, or empowerment. It is a way of clarifying the success of the influence made on a younger person in quantifiable terms.

Outcome for Mother

This code gauges the influence of maternal resistance on the mother's own social, psychological, or physical well-being, such as autonomy-acquiring or sacrifice and marginalization experiences. It provides an opportunity for the identification of the losses and gains of opposition.

Community Reaction

This code discusses the reactions of the community to the behavior of the mother, i.e., represents the broader circle of social environment, the family, community, or society, such as emotional family, society, or no, which denies a member of the group to be known, ranging from acceptance and support to hostility and ostracism. It allows for a review of social relationships and potential changes in normative frameworks.

FINDINGS/RESULTS

Thematic Analysis

Maternal Advocacy

Empowerment (Mother empowering daughter)

For Dukhtar

- i. Teaching survival skills during escape: The mother, Allah Rakhi, with patience, teaches her daughter Zainab not only how to find water and to walk/the rough mountainous terrain but also to stay silent in order to avoid detection, which helps the girl to be self-reliant and solve the situation on her own without outside help, i.e. in case of an emergency, yes, she is alone, but she can survive.
- ii. Encouraging bravery: Zainab having doubts about their unsecured future, says, “mamma, I am very worried,” and mom answers that fear is undoubtedly the best friend of the brave and this golden word of mother acts as great moral support for Zainab and makes her ready to face the situation head-on.
- iii. Standing firm against tradition: Allah Rakhi categorically says that the forced marriage of Zainab is not permissible and that life and choice, the universe of her daughter, this HEAVEN, is the decision maker of all things that matter, and goes further to convince that she is the only one who is capable of making decisions of just HERSELF, and that makes her believe even more in her freedom from the tradition of their tribe.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Supporting singing ambitions: The mother, Najma, despite the strict, severe warning that the father gave and putting her own life in jeopardy, she strives really hard to help and encourage her daughter not to quit singing, insinuating that the source of the power of a woman is her voice, the very thing she must use to scream if assaulted.
- ii. Helping in secretly recording videos: While Najma helps Insia with setting up the camera, and they record her singing in the night, she further uploads the videos anonymously, and this allows Insia to reach out to the world.
- iii. Motivating pursuit of dreams: Najma always gives Insia the clear message of not getting bogged/down, when the father hurls out the threat of violence at her, meaning that he is trying to cow her down, but which the girl sees through and she is not deter by the threats that she hears, and she is reborn into her own enemy of failure.
- iv. Defending self-expression: The girl is approached by the father but before he says anything, Najma interrupts to defend Insia’s right to participate, adding that the mother and the daughter are together in defending their independence and, therefore, they are empowered.

Protection (Mother safeguarding daughter)

For Dukhtar

- i. Fleeing forced marriage: The people Allah Rakhi is leaving to don’t notice her going out of the house, and thus, she takes Zainab with her, even if that could lead to both of them being caught, for her well-being is of the utmost importance to the mother.

- ii. Confronting male relatives: Allah Rakhi doesn't avoid the confrontation with the pursuers, but on the contrary, she, being quite courageous, looks for and rapidly applies words and actions that will both be a hindrance to the pursuit and be a barrier to the pursuit's achievement of its goal.
- iii. Hiding from elders: There were a couple of the surrounding places where no one would be able to find Zainab, and that was it where Allah Rakhi used to hide her to be beyond the reach of the villagers & tribal authorities.
- iv. Refusing to return: The mother supports Zainab and opposes the people's will emphatically by stating that the girl was in her charge.
- v. Ensuring safe shelter: She managed to talk to them and patiently gave them the necessary information about the neighborhood, which let her guide her to a place and remain with her till morning and they both would be able to retreat from the situation.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Shielding from abusive father: Najma stands up physically to the father when he is about to chastise Insia for singing, asking him to hit her instead.
- ii. Concealing videos: Not only does Najma keep Insia's takes but she also avoids the recordings being found by the father thus preventing him from knowing what has been happening with Insia and protecting her daughter's dream of music.
- iii. Helping escape: Najma doesn't hesitate to help Insia to leave the place, where she feels scared, humiliated, and lonely, and invites her to a supportive environment where she

Sacrifice (Self-sacrifice for daughter's future)

For Dukhtar

- i. Leaving home and security: Allah Rakhi leaves the safety of her home and community deciding to be a named rebel with no regrets.
- ii. Enduring hardship: She remains without food, rest, and her own safety to ensure Zainab is not threatened, by putting self in second-place without a single call of complaint.
- iii. Risking life confronting family: Allah Rakhi faces male family members holding guns several times to protect her daughter at the risk of her life and other lives as well.
- iv. Giving up personal comfort: She gives up her personal peace and future for Zainab's liberty and only by that they have some hope for the future.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Risking marital stability: Najma's open backing of Insia leads to conflicts with her husband, which means she sacrifices the status quo of her marriage and the society and she may end up being a social outcast.
- ii. Enduring emotional hardship: She wears a happy face, hiding her agony and horror to act as a tower of strength for Insia only because she is her mother.
- iii. Accepting social stigma: Najma faces the entire community's condemnation of her act against the typical regime of the family.

Resistance to Patriarchy

Defiance (Direct challenges to patriarchal authority)

For Dukhtar

- i. Turning down marriage that is forced: Allah Rakhi is extremely brave when she says no to the Zainab's father's old-age marriage offer by the refusal that was very public in the tribe.
- ii. Contesting the male adults: She not only refuses to give in to the men elders but also rebukes their rash act of imposing their will on her daughter's life.
- iii. Non-interference: Allah Rakhi defines that Zainab is the only one who has the power of regulating her life after a man's attempt to take control of the girl's entire life.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Mother rebelled against father: Najma goes to the extreme both verbally and physically to save Insia from the father's abusive behavior.\
- ii. Insia's disobedience: The girl, just like before, will not be put off by her father's warning and so she keeps on but her singing career makes it even bigger globally by shooting viral videos from home.
- iii. Select public place: Hosting a performance in the middle of the community, the girl enters the stage in a direct-on family basis manner.

Subversion (Subtle and overt resistance to gender norms)

For Dukhtar

- i. Teaching non-traditional skills: Allah Rakhi educates Zainab on survival and self-defense skills unusual for girls in their culture.
- ii. Outwitting male pursuers: By knowledge of the terrain, Allah Rakhi safely guides Zainab, which is a direct betrayal of the male-dominated world.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Using social media: Insia overcomes patriarchal gatekeepers by narratively sharing her music with the world anonymously.
- ii. Mother's covert support: Najma is providing support to the Insia without the rest of the society being aware that despite the pressure that Insia receives from her society, she is still able to nurture the latter's talent thus creating a future generation of powerful women.

Agency (Assertion of autonomy)

For Dukhtar

- i. Mother's independent decision: Allah Rakhi chooses to leave without the male relatives' consent.
- ii. Daughter's will: Zainab is the one who runs away from marriage, thus expressing her self-determination.
- iii. Negotiating safety: Allah Rakhi talks to people on her journey to get help and be safe.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Daughter controlling career: Insia is the boss of her music and attitude, as the one who manages her career and public image.

- ii. Mother's choice: Najma is the one who puts herself in a position to even suffer by deciding to support Insia.
- iii. Public assertion: Insia declares her singer-official identity in front of people.
- iv. Mother leaving abuse: Najma takes the decision to leave her husband as a result of his abuse, thus taking a stand for independence.

Societal Expectations

Traditional Roles (Reinforcement of stereotypical roles)

For Dukhtar

- i. Mother as caretaker: In the opening scenes, we can see Allah Rakhi using her traditional roles of mother and nurturer.
- ii. Daughter expected to marry: Zainab is expected to behave as she is instructed to by her family and community.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Father enforcing gender roles: The father is the one who makes decisions and tells Insia what she has to do, thus coercing her into being obedient and limiting her freedom at the same time.
- ii. Mother playing the role of housewife: Initially being an obedient wife not saying a word to husband and being submissive.

Challenging Stereotypes (Subversion or critique)

For Dukhtar

- i. Mother who doesn't accept submission: Allah Rakhi is not prepared to be a dominated wife.
- ii. Daughter who refused to marry: Zainab is questioning all-known disruptions.
- iii. Mother as the savior: The responsible decision-maker is made to be protective in the film.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Girl who went after a music career despite the family.
- ii. Mother helps daughter to complete the dream of her life.
- iii. Exposing the danger of the dominance of the patriarch by the family feud.
- iv. The success of the girl challenges the stereotypes about role of women in Asian culture.

Backlash/Support (Societal/familial reactions)

For Dukhtar

- i. Male relatives and tribal elders who are unfriendly or aggressive.
- ii. Community pressure to respect the way of tradition.
- iii. Positive feedback from understanding people.
- iv. Daughter's eventual adoption by people in the new community.

For Secret Superstar

- i. The fact that the father is against his daughter's career is very aggressive.
- ii. While trying to support her daughter's ambitions, the mother becomes a social pariah.
- iii. Positive feedback on social media in form of public support.

Transformation and Liberation

Personal Growth (Character evolution)

For Dukhtar

- i. Dukhtar: 3 scenes
- ii. Mom gets more and more courageous as the story unfolds.
- iii. Girl turns from being an obedient one to a very assertive girl.
- iv. Both learn to be strong and brave.

For Secret Superstar

- i. Girl has no doubt in herself, and the people around her have recognized her publicly.
- ii. Mom who was once a submissive woman now stands as the most empowered supporter.
- iii. Father's character arc shows some regret.
- iv. Daughter's self-expression blossoms.

Liberation (Escape/the freedom from norms)

For Dukhtar

- Successful escape from forced marriage and tribal oppression.
- The daughter is leading a new life free from male control.
- Symbolic moments of freedom in nature and community.

For Secret Superstar

- The daughter's success as a singer.
- The mother's decision to end an abusive marriage.
- The girl's public

Comparative Analysis

For Dukhtar:

Mother's Advocacy

Number of Scenes: 6

- i. Opening Dream Sequence (00:00–02:00, Village home, Northern Pakistan): One visualization in Allah Rakhi's sleep of her passing along the river that represents her deep wish to be free and to leave the place. This visual display reinforces the mood of a mother who is emotionally longing for a better life for herself and her daughter.

- ii. Zainab Teaching English (05:00–07:00, Home kitchen): This is a precious situation where Zainab never gives up encouraging her mom to learn English. This part of the movie brings out the feeling of their intimate relationship and Allah Rakhi's motherly qualities.
- iii. Marriage Pact Revealed (15:00–20:00, Tribal council area): It is revealed to Allah Rakhi that her daughter is promised in marriage to an elderly tribal leader. Her emotional reaction is somewhat much silenced but still the decision is solid and composed, which actually is the beginning of her campaign.
- iv. Decision to flee (22:00–25:00, Home at night): Allah Rakhi decides to leave her house and at the same time wakes Zainab to join her on the escape. The time has a lot of suspense and tension and shows the character choosing to challenge the norms followed to save her daughter.
- v. Seeking Help from Sohail (30:00–40:00, Roadside, mountain pass): The tough lady, Allah Rakhi, draws near the truck driver, Sohail, who is reluctant to help her. The narrator's determination is visible despite the fact that she is surrounded by danger and doubt.
- vi. Protecting Zainab During Pursuit (Throughout journey, 40:00–90:00, Various mountainous roads and villages): Various sequences display Allah Rakhi as she keeps Zainab out of the danger, makes the best decisions, and speaks a calming message to her daughter in the face of serious threats.

Nature of resistance

Number of scenes: 5

- i. Escape from Forced Marriage (22:00–25:00, Home and village outskirts): The simple act of running away is immediate rebellion against tribal society.
- ii. Evading Pursuers (40:00–70:00, Mountain roads and forests): Allah Rakhi firstly demonstrates knowledge of the terrain and quick-wittedness as she escapes from the situation, a display of clear defiance.
- iii. Confrontation with Brother-in-law (75:00, Roadside camp): Not to mention a nerve-wracking conversation where her brother-in-law menacingly intimidates her, but she still stays strong, making it clear to him that she will not give in.
- iv. Refusal to return (80:00, Village checkpoint): When faced with the tribal men, Allah Rakhi states her refusal to return Zainab and bolster her case by reminding them of moral resistance.
- v. Final Arrival in Lahore (90:00, Urban setting): The duo of the mother and daughter finally ends up at a city symbolizing their freedom, in that their resistance was indeed a success.

Societal Norms Challenged

Number of Scenes: 4

- i. Child Marriage Pact (15:00-20:00, Tribal council): The celebration of Zainab's wedding not only indicates that the girl was forced but also shows that the community had accepted this form of offering.
- ii. Mother's Rejection of Tradition (22:00-25:00, Home): Iqbal's daughter running away was an act that defied the tradition of respect for the local authorities.
- iii. Pursuit by Male Authority Figures (40:00-80:00, Various): The comedy scenes underline the power of peer pressure within the Triad.

- iv. Mother's Reflection on Own Past Marriage (60:00, Campfire): Allah Rakhi tells how she was married at 15, making it clear that what she is trying to do is not just escape from a humiliating situation but most importantly to bury the misery once and for all.

Visual Techniques

Number of Scenes: 5

- i. Opening Dream Sequence (00:00–02:00, Village home): The unreal nature is induced in the viewer via magical realism supported by a dreamlike visual style.
- ii. Mountainous Chase Scenes (40:00–70:00, Mountain roads): The danger of the scenes is intensified by the use of handheld camera work and the wide shots, which also suggest the isolation.
- iii. Close-ups of Mother-Daughter Bond (Throughout): The expression of the characters' feelings of love, warmth, care, and trust is revealed in intimate framing to show the relationship and the vulnerability.
- iv. Night Campfire Scene (60:00, Forest clearing): Hope against adversity is depicted by warm light in dark surroundings that can be a symbol of a person's struggle in troubles.
- v. Urban Arrival (90:00, Lahore streets): The film signifies the brighter tomorrow by brighter light and the succession of life, marking the end of despair and the beginning of the regained freedom to prevail.

Outcome for Daughter

Number of Scenes: 3

- i. Escape from Marriage (22:00–25:00): Through her physical rescue, Zainab is saved from her forced marriage situation.
- ii. Learning and Growth (Throughout journey): At various moments such as teaching English, Zainab's bright eyes and her laughter display her enduring innocence and hope both in the face of and despite the afflictions.
- iii. Arrival in Lahore (90:00): The daughter's future is not clearly defined, but the episode vividly depicts the possibility of her moving freely beyond the traditional kinship.

Outcome for Mother

Number of Scenes: 3

- i. Fugitive Status (Throughout journey): Allah Rakhi gave up her life in safety and social acceptance to be a fugitive.
- ii. Emotional Resilience (Campfire, 60:00): There she saw her degradation and accepted her vigil instead.
- iii. Reunion with Mother (Final scenes, Lahore): The movie closes with Allah Rakhi hunting for her very mother, the portray of a comeback to the roots and of the hope.

Community Reaction

Number of Scenes: 4

- i. Tribal Council Marriage Pact (15:00–20:00): The male elders have made a pact of a marriage that the couple mostly were not in agreement with, therefore it was left for the elders to decide.
- ii. Pursuit by Tribal Men (40:00–80:00): The community police ran after the mother and the daughter out of the fangs, thus displaying a harsh attitude.
- iii. Truck Driver’s Initial Reluctance (30:00): Sohail had to doubt if he was suspected by the other societal members for being reticent.
- iv. Final Urban Scene (90:00): Their arrival in Lahore signifies their freedom from restrictive community norms.

For Secret Superstar

Mother’s Advocacy

Number of scenes: 7

- Laptop Gift Scene (Approx. 15:00–18:00, Home, Baroda): Najma covertly marketed her expensive necklace and bought a laptop for Insia, thus supporting her daughter’s musical dream, who later uploaded anonymously. The sequence was carried with tenderness and anxiety, on the one hand, it shows Najma’s silent but strong support despite being stricken with fear of her abusive husband.
- Encouragement to Sing (Throughout early scenes, Home): Najma has always been behind Insia like a shadow, never for a moment did she lose her spark. She is always seen encouraging her to lead by example, when her father demotivates her. These snippets prove the emotional motivation and the belief she carried in her daughter.
- Defending Insia After Guitar is Broken (Approx. 40:00, Home): When her husband in anger smashed the guitar, Najma, a lady of the house, shielded the child. The piece was displayed of what a feminist Najma is, despite the fact she was emotional, yet showing protective strength (Diary of a PMP Mom, 2017).
- Confrontation with Farookh Over Laptop (Approx. 50:00, Home): When Farookh found out that Najma had sold her necklace, he hit her and then told Insia to dispose of the laptop. Najma, without saying a word, endured the violence but still was supportive of Insia’s aspirations.
- Divorce Paper Signing (Approx. 120:00, Airport): The final straw has been drawn after Najma makes a loud statement by signing divorce papers in full view of her other half, an act of personal will empowered by her daughter’s support.
- Emotional Support During YouTube Fame (Throughout, Home and School): Najma extended emotional and secretarial support to Insia during her singing career, as she was trying to be known yet maintaining family behavior and thus sailed her through secrecy and family resistance.
- Final Award Ceremony Moment (approx. 140:00, Award Venue): Najma's effort is recognized when Insia dedicates her prize to her mother, thus making Najma the main advocate.

Nature of Resistance

Number of scenes: 6

- Secretly Uploading Videos (Approx. 20:00, Home): In the cited source, Insia is a person who uses a mask and uploads a video on YouTube anonymously, without her father's knowledge, to convey that she is resisting her father's restrictions covertly.
- Enduring Domestic Violence (Multiple scenes, Home): Najma is depicted as a strong woman who silently tolerates husband's abuse in the presence of her daughter and still supports her, being a typical example of resilience.
- Facing Father About Laptop (Approx. 50:00, Home): Although she is beaten, Najma sticks to her decision to stand by Insia, thus exhibiting her emotional resistance.
- Insia's Denial of Singing Party Song (Approx. 90:00, Mumbai Studio): Insia's strong reaction to the corporate sector's suggestion of her singing a remix she found inappropriate has been taken as her assertion of artistic integrity and nonconformity.
- Najma's Signing of Divorce Papers (Approx. 120:00, Airport): Najma has expressive and legal resistance to her oppressive marriage and this behavior represents her active disposition as separating from submission.
- Insia's Unveiling of Her Identity (Approx. 140:00, Award Ceremony): The act of tearing off the mask in public is a powerful symbol of ultimate liberation and independence both in the individual and collective struggle for women's rights against male supremacy.

Societal Norms Challenged

Number of scenes: 5

- Father's Opposition to Singing (Throughout, Home): Insia's secret singing redefines the stereotype of women not being involved in any arts or public jobs.
- Domestic Violence (Multiple scenes, Home): The film deals with and criticizes the unjust practice of spousal abuse within family walls.
- Forced Marriage Announcement (Approx. 110:00, Home): By Farookh, Insia's marriage to a man in Saudi Arabia, the movie also tackles the issue of forced marriage without the consent of the people concerned.
- Mother's Divorce Decision (Approx. 120:00, Airport): Najma diverts the issue of the lip against the divorced women by taking a legal step to break her marriage (IMDb, 2025).
- Public Recognition of Female Talent (Approx. 140:00, Award Ceremony): The movie disrupts the social ideal of society by featuring a young lady who is rewarded at a male-dominated industry.

Visual Techniques

Number of scenes: 6

- YouTube Video Uploads (Throughout): The screen captures and digital interfaces are a clear indicator of the modern, underground platform for the female voice.
- Contrast Between Home and Outside World (Throughout): Dark and compact home places with a feeling of suffocation are opposed to brightly illuminated and public spaces and Mumbai studios which are free places and a symbol of liberation.

- Use of Niqab (Multiple scenes): The niqab as a cover and a power sign allows Insia to be out of view and to announce her identity by image as she is walking along.
- Music and Song Performances (Throughout): The tone of the songs is a portrayal of the characters' feelings, and the changes in lighting and camera angles signify the change from the old Insia to the new one.
- Airport Confrontation (Approx. 120:00): The camera's tight close-ups and the dark setting sketch out Najma's one moment when she tries to regain her power by confronting the public.
- Award Ceremony (Approx. 140:00): Insia's reveal under bright lights, audience angles, and camera focus that create a dramatic visual liberation celebration is a very exciting moment in the story.

Outcome for Daughter

Number of Scenes: 4

- YouTube Fame Growth (Throughout): Insia's no-named videos are received with phenomenal response and thus her empowerment is beginning.
- Recording Original Song (Approx. 90:00, Mumbai Studio): Insia's refusal to be the money-making machine of the music industry and the re-affirmation of her individual self through a career in the same field make it clear that she is gaining respect.
- Award Nomination (Approx. 130:00): To be known as the Best Female Singer is a sign of professional success and proof of social recognition.
- Public Identity Reveal (Approx. 140:00, Award Ceremony): The singer's decision to make herself known to the public suggests a proactive stance that redefines both the patriarchal and secrecy issues.

Outcome for Mother

Number of Scenes: 3

- Suffering Abuse Silently (Throughout, Home): The physical and mental abuse of Najma due to the presence of her violent partner at her place of residence is well known, as she is always giving an example of being strong within.
- Signing Divorce Papers (Approx. 120:00, Airport): Najma is legally empowered to leave her abusive marriage after signing the divorce papers.
- Acknowledgment at Award Ceremony (Approx. 140:00): Najma's sacrifice is recognized in the truest sense when Insia dedicates her award to her and thus makes her the recipient

Community Reaction

Number of Scenes: 4

- Father's Control and Abuse (Throughout, Home): The father is the dominant figure in the family and the local open space who oppresses women and children, and in this way, the family and some community members agree with his abusive behavior.

- School and Neighborhood Gossip (Approx. 50:00, School): The local people and schoolmates feel a little bit of anxiety and are attacking Insiya's identity with the help of the media, a tool used in the wider society for the control and surveillance of the community.
- Legal and Social Barriers (Approx. 110:00, Lawyer's Office): Lawyer's inquiry into women's rights is bolstered by the public and the quietness of the attorney in the scene.
- Award Ceremony Reception (Approx. 140:00): Attractive fame and approval are the signs of change in public perspectives regarding women's empowerment

Code	Dukhtar (Pakistan)	Secret (India)	superstar	Key contrasts
Mother's Advocacy	Physical protection through escape; active defiance of tribal customs.	Emotional and strategic support; covert encouragement within domestic constraints.		<i>Dukhtar</i> : Direct intervention. <i>Secret Superstar</i> : Emotional resilience and gradual empowerment.
Nature of Resistance	Overt, high-risk resistance (e.g., fleeing armed pursuers).	Covert endurance evolving to assertive resistance (e.g., divorce, public defiance).		<i>Dukhtar</i> : Immediate physical defiance. <i>Secret Superstar</i> : Slow-burn emotional to legal resistance.
Societal Challenged	Norms Child marriage, tribal patriarchy, male control over women's bodies.	Domestic violence, suppression of female talent, forced marriage, and divorce stigma.		Both challenge gender oppression but focus on different norms (tribal vs. urban domestic patriarchy).
Visual Techniques	Bleak landscapes, handheld camerawork, close-ups to emphasize danger and bond.	Contrast between oppressive homes and vibrant public spaces; niqab symbolism; music as liberation.		<i>Dukhtar</i> : Naturalistic tension. <i>Secret Superstar</i> : Symbolic contrasts and digital empowerment.
Outcome for Daughter	Saved from forced marriage; uncertain but hopeful future.	Public recognition, career success, and emancipation from secrecy.		<i>Dukhtar</i> : Open-ended hope. <i>Secret Superstar</i> : Definitive triumph.
Outcome for Mother	Empowerment through sacrifice; fugitive status but moral victory.	Autonomy via divorce; societal recognition as a courageous advocate.		Autonomy via divorce; societal recognition as a courageous advocate.
Community Reaction	Hostile enforcement of norms (e.g., armed pursuit).	Initial oppression shifting to public acceptance (e.g., award celebration).		<i>Dukhtar</i> : Rigid patriarchy. <i>Secret Superstar</i> : Gradual social progress.

Table 2 Results of comparative analysis of both movies

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS/RESULTS

Thematic Analysis Discussion

Both *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar* are movies that, through the character's mother, show feminine power as the core of their stories and mothers who educate and protect their daughters against patriarchal traditions and domestic violence. The detailed parts of the movie allow that mothers who are not only protecting their daughters physically and emotionally but also sacrificing their safety and comfort in order that the daughter can have a good future. This advocacy is not apart from the mothers' confrontation of the patriarchal authority, which could be done via explicit refusal of the power (*Dukhtar*) or via the act of speaking out to their husband (*Secret Superstar*). They could also do it in a more covert way such as giving a forbidden dream support or changing their identity for safety.

The films also comment on the current societal norms in a discerning light. They do indeed admit that women are confined to the traditional roles of housekeeping and early marriage, almost as if the filmmakers were challenging these male characters themselves. This mother and the daughter both show the audience how they can make decisions on their own and move away from what has been already set by society, thus affirming their agency vis-à-vis the expectations of gender.

Finally, the stories assert the idea of transformation and the readers' mere task is to support it. The figures of the mother and daughter make the journey from victims who are suppressed and frightened to those that are the protagonists of their own lives. This figure is both symbolism and the reality of how they both move out of the patriarchal leash to push for societal change.

Research aims in light of thematic analysis:

*Aim 1: To examine how mothers are portrayed as advocates for their daughters in *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar*, with their resistance to the restrictive societal order being in focus.*

The films are an alive proof of mother's role as activists who question and challenge protective social norms in support of their daughters. In the movie *Dukhtar*, Allah Rakhi's escape with her daughter to save her from the lifetime of a forced marriage is an act of ultimate courage against the laws of the tribal patriarchs, which is the best example of maternal advocacy as a hero of a new life. Mother's protection of Zainab through basic and emotional support also highlights the role of the mother in developing the daughter's autonomy.

in like manner, *Secret Superstar* presents Najma as a mother who, in spite of being a victim of domestic violence, takes a stand and thus becomes her daughter's greatest supporter.

Her secretly recording and later publishing of Insiya's videos, and the moment of decision to abandon her violent husband represent both dimensions of the term maternal advocacy, namely protective and through the woman's transformational agency. Menstrual hygiene was kept under wraps due to the stigma surrounding it and also due to a lack of proper counselling for young girls.

Both films also offer unmistakable clarity on the issue of adopting a personal space in Hindi culture, advocating mothers' strength in a different way. Maternal advocacy in this case is a form of negotiation, and the mothers take the first step in acting assertively and the latter effect is the girl being the subject of the change.

Aim 2: To uncover the ways these films, have influence on the status quos and representations of women and mothers in Pakistani and Indian cultures.

Both *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar* films depict the deep-rooted societal norms, where women and girls are brought up to act as the men's obedient daughters or wives, get married at a very early age, and be silent while taking abuse from men, but at the same time, they challenge and condemn these same norms. *Dukhtar* is a movie that is set in a tribal Pakistani society where reciprocally arranged marriages are a day-to-day practice, yet the film has placed its major focus on the mother and daughter's powerful act of resistance, which makes it a super critique against such traditions.

In *Secret Superstar*, they've chosen the situation in India where domestic violence and gender discrimination are often not openly talked about. However, the film has adopted a really honest and bold attitude to show and fight these injustices through Najma's ultimate freedom and Insiya's passionate efforts in attaining a public singing career. The film has utilized the burkha as a tool for Insiya, who obtains anonymity and freedom by doing so, thus making it a very subtle and interesting way to comment on how women effectively move around social restrictions.

Another commonality to be found is in the portrayal of the social backlash faced by mothers and daughters who resist the norms, such as domestic violence, social ostracism, and the community's disapproval. Through the use of mother-daughter relationships and compassionate bystanders, the movies do indicate that there are some areas of support and unity, therefore hinting at the potential for change.

Most notably, the cinema doesn't romanticize motherhood or women's roles but rather serves to portray them as multifaceted, problematic and transitioning. The metamorphosis of mothers who are not just nurturers, but also leaders of change, who are constantly negotiating, resisting and reshaping their role and identity, during the time of patriarchy is presented in the films.

To sum up, the movies *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar* show the topics of maternal support and the mother-daughter link to fight patriarchy and society's pressure, symbolizing a move from victimization to empowerment. This reinforces the idea of the hot topic of gender, the voice of the unprivileged and the self-existing individual as connoted by these stories.

Comparative Analysis Discussion

A comparison of *Dukhtar* (Pakistan) and *Secret Superstar* (India) reveals two strong movie representations of maternal support and rebellion against the influence of male members of society. It explains that both stories are placed in specific cultural and social aspects, which are still united by the empowerment, sacrifice, and transformation of women.

Dukhtar demonstrates a harsh, abrupt story of a mother fighting back, physically and directly, if necessary, to the patriarch. One can easily feel the presence of danger on Allah Rakhi's journey, obviously due to the male figures that are not only violent but also the natural setting that is harsh and not fit for man. Her charge-for the girls' freedom-takes the form of a direct escape, a meeting with the chiefs, and a risk of life to assure herself of Zainab's autonomy. The hand-held camera technique, the lonely places, and the natural light intensify the urgency of the plot and make it more vivid to the audience.

On the contrary, *Secret Superstar* happens in a city, and the beginning of resistance is in the private sphere, in the form of hidden emotional tensions. Najma's backing of Insiya's music is considered within the sphere of oppression through family violence, and societal disapproval. The film pairs the visual representation-oppressive home and vibrant public spaces-and the niqab and the internet communication motive to denote the gradual empowering of the female protagonist. In this movie, it appears that

resistance is the result of a slow process and leads to empowerment of the individual, thus, including a divorce and success of the career.

Two pictures, in their own way, deal with both the intricacies of male control: *Dukhtar* condemns tribal traditions that allow for child marriage, whereas *Secret Superstar* is about spousal assault, suppression of the femininity, and the setting where women are looked down if they require a divorce, as well as focusing on the girl's future to the exclusion of the guy. Though their methods differ—one is direct and the other is legal—both stories insist that no matter the choice a mother makes, it is the most valuable contributor towards the freedom of her daughters.

The outputs serve as a clear indication of the different cultural and narrative patterns: *Dukhtar* ends in a blank, optimistic manner, extolling survival and moral victory even in the midst of a hostile environment, while *Secret Superstar* projects a more defined success with public acknowledgment and societal acceptance.

At the end, the discussion of gender and motherhood in South Asia is greatly expanded by these films which show how mothers struggle against the oppressive regimes, but in diversified ways, hence, underlining the complexities of their surroundings while also affirming the universal power of maternal advocacy.

Research aims in light of comparative analysis

*Aim 1: To examine how mothers are portrayed as advocates for their daughters in *Dukhtar* and *Secret Superstar*, with their resistance to the restrictive societal order being in focus.*

The two movies are a rich source of powerful mothers who are the major figures to break up the existing system, to move forward together with their children, and are ready to pave a way in any sphere of life they are into. *Dukhtar* emphasizes physical protection and a direct confrontation with tribal customs, portraying Allah Rakhi as a courageous protector who puts herself at risk of losing everything. *Secret Superstar* highlights Najma's capability to emotionally face and support problems occurring within the four walls of her house leading to her development i.e. from virtual reality and domesticated to the real character of legal and social disobedience. This contrast points to the different ways of maternal advocacy - from an open rebellion to a covered-up suffering - which is a picture of the various socio-cultural situations in both countries, Pakistan and India.

Aim 2: To uncover the ways these films, have influence on the status quos and representations of women and mothers in Pakistani and Indian cultures.

The films do show the societal expectations of women, and people personally challenged or objected to them are the mother who is a leader, women without rights and the gender stereotyping and subordination by the male authority. They reflect prevailing societal expectations but also subvert them by presenting non-conformist mothers. In *Dukhtar*, a woman who is not passive, but who acts in a way that disrupts the not so useful traditions of a particular tribe is shown the challenge that becomes the main point of focus. On the other hand, *Secret Superstar* is a film that takes an anti-patriarchal stand before the struggle of the female silence and domestic domination. The movie presents a mother who is the main supporter of her daughter's dream despite social disgrace. As a result, the two works become kind of feminist movements; in other words, they make the society re-debate and widen the spectrum of the available roles for women and mothers.

LIMITATIONS

This study only analyzed “how” the films portrayed gender roles and women empowerment but this can further be extended to research on how these films show culture of Pakistan and India being same or different in gender roles.

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