

*Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>

**The Weaponized Psyche: A Psycho-Feminist Study of Trauma  
and Agency in *Muammar***



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## Abstract

This research examines how female agency is portrayed in the Pakistani television show *Muamma* through the character of Jahanara. The study looks at how childhood trauma affects Jahanara's identity, behaviour, and resistance tactics in a patriarchal setting using Luce Irigaray's feminist psychoanalytic theory. The research examines her use of emotional control, manipulation, and silence as modes of agency using qualitative textual analysis. Additionally, it examines the visual representations of her psychological state. According to the findings, *Muamma* presents female agency as a complicated and psychologically motivated process, challenging conventional depictions of women as helpless victims. By emphasising the connection between trauma, identity, and resistance in current Pakistani television programs, the study advances feminist media critique.

**Keywords:** Female agency, feminist psychoanalysis, trauma, Pakistani drama, resistance

## Introduction

### 1.1: Background of the Study

The portrayal of women in the teleplays of Pakistan has been an area of scholarly research for a long time owing to its influence on societal notions about gender roles and identities. The representation of women in Pakistani dramas plays a pivotal role in shaping society's perceptions about gender roles. Conventionally, patriarchal concepts that highlight submission, sacrifice, and morality have been employed to represent women. Women have been shown either as idealized persons upholding family values or as rebels defying social norms and facing their consequences. Rather than depicting women as complicated individuals with autonomous objectives and experiences, they have been restricted to stereotypes and simplistic notions of themselves (Tyson 85).

Nevertheless, more complicated female figures whose sense of self is shaped by psychological events and inner conflicts are beginning to emerge in Pakistani television dramas. They portray different forms of resistance and conflict in the restrictive framework of society, moving away from the old paradigm of victim and villain. In the views of feminists, the female agency may be displayed even in patriarchal cases by more subtle ways of negotiation, adjustment, and defense rather than direct confrontation (hooks 19). It has generated new possibilities for

investigating the psychological complexity and individuality of women in contemporary media narratives. The portrayal of Jahanara in the drama *Muamma* is one of the examples of such a depiction.

As compared to traditional female heroines, the decisions and actions of Jahanara are highly influenced by the experiences of emotional psychology and psychological trauma in her childhood. The persona of Jahanara acts as an illustration of the influence that identity, behavior, and survival strategies might undergo due to emotional psychological pressure. Maintaining the pretense of being obedient while maneuvering the position in a patriarchal system, she keeps silent, controls her emotions and makes decisions consciously. An important theoretical tool for interpreting such behavior can be provided by the concept of imitation from the feminist psychoanalytic theory by Luce Irigaray, where it is described how women can perform assigned gender roles consciously, while at the same time opposing patriarchal dominance inwardly (Irigaray 76). Hence, this study will focus on the link between female agency, psychology and trauma in *Muamma*. Analyzing the persona of Jahanara, it will focus on the impact of psychological incidents on the development of identity and on how internal resistance acts as a form of self-empowerment. Through highlighting the psychological side of female agency and showing that resistance can occur in complicated ways apart from the acts of rebellion, the study aims to contribute to the field of feminist media studies.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

To achieve the purpose of this research, the following questions have been formulated:

- Which defence strategies does Jahanara use in *Muamma*?
- How does trauma influence Jahanara's agency?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, the following research questions have been developed.

- To identify Jahanara's psychological defence strategies.
- To analyse the role of trauma in shaping Jahanara's agency.

## **1.4: Significance of the Study**

The development in the psychological complexity and depth of characterizations of women in current Pakistani television dramas is not matched by academic scholarship. The formation of trauma-based identity, resistance, and female agency through trauma in recent Pakistani television narratives has been studied very little

despite the fact that feminist scholarship has thoroughly analyzed and evaluated the social oppression of women. This research attempts to fill this gap and contribute to the growing body of literature on psycho-feminism, trauma theory, and gender representation in South Asia by focusing on Muamma. Hence, the importance of this research lies not only in the analysis of a contemporary drama but also in the endeavor to introduce a new critical perspective on the potential use of psychological experiences as weapons of female resistance within patriarchal structures.

Moreover, through providing a comprehensive psycho-emincentist analysis of a modern Pakistani TV drama, this research is expected to contribute to and improve the fields of feminist literary criticism, media studies, and trauma studies. The research demonstrates how trauma can change women's identity and transform psychological pain into a strategic form of agency within a patriarchal society in terms of character analysis of Jahanara. Through employing well-known theories of feminism and trauma to modern Pakistani literature which has been overlooked by scholars in research so far, it also broadens the scope of contemporary research. The outcomes of this research could serve as a very useful and helpful resource for future scholars and students who are engaged in the study of gender studies, modern Pakistani theater, and interdisciplinary approaches to literary and media analysis.

The paper has relevance due to the fact that by analyzing and evaluating the psychological aspects of how women are represented in Pakistani TV plays, this work makes a contribution to the growing field of feminist media studies. Fewer attempts have been made to study the psychological tools that women employ in dealing with power and developing agency while previous research was focused on portraying women either in stereotypical roles or as victims of patriarchy. The importance of psychological complexity in studying modern female characters is highlighted in this study by examining the character of Jahanara in Muamma.

The research is vital due to the fact that it contributes a new perspective to the relationship between trauma, identity and resilience by employing the feminist psychoanalytic theory of Luce Irigaray to a Pakistani media text. It shows that female agency can be achieved by subtle psychological techniques, emotional regulation and flexibility rather than resistance all the time. The findings can contribute to future research on Pakistani plays, feminist criticism and media representation.

### **1.5: Thesis Statement**

On the other hand, unlike in direct contradiction, this study seeks to assert that

Jahanara's presence in the film, *Muamma*, signifies an example of female empowerment that results from psychological adjustment. Drawing from the psychoanalytical feminist theory of Luce Irigaray, particularly her concept of imitation, the research examines how Jahanara's sense of self is developed from the experience of traumatic childhood events, which shape her survival skills in a patriarchal environment. Moreover, the study also posits that Jahanara's planned behavior, emotional restraint, and silence form an example of inner defiance through which female empowerment can be portrayed.

### **7: Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This research project will focus on the character Jahanara and will be confined to a textual analysis of the Pakistani drama serial *Muamma*. The research project will seek to identify how early traumatic experiences shape the psychological development of the character and, in a patriarchal society, become a factor in creating female agency through psychological transformation. With the use of feminist theories by Bell Hooks, patriarchal power by Kate Millett, and a few principles of trauma theory, the research will be carried out in a psycho-feminist paradigm.

The research project will not try to evaluate *Muamma* in terms of its technical, commercial or cinematic value, nor is it going to investigate the audience reactions to the show or make a comparison between *Muamma* and other Pakistani dramas. In the same manner, since the research project is confined to the chosen text only, the generalization of results to other Pakistani plays will not be made. Consequently, the results of the research will be confined to the analysis of *Muamma* within the boundaries of its own context.

### **Literature Review**

The drama on Pakistani TV has always been considered to be one of the most influential types of popular culture in Pakistan, affecting people's perceptions about gender roles, family relationships, and societal norms. The drama serials have been a source of entertainment and, at the same time, a means through which social and cultural norms have been navigated and reinforced ever since the establishment of Pakistan Television in 1964. Through the depiction of some images of womanhood, morality, and family life, it is argued by the scholars that television dramas mirror and construct contemporary attitudes toward women (Afzal-Khan 41). Due to their influence on the perception of women's roles in society and at home, the depiction of women in Pakistani dramas has become a prominent research area.

Previous literature about Pakistani TV drama series, feminist literary theories, trauma theories, and psycho-feminism lays down an important base regarding the interconnection between gender, psychology, and power. Past research has mostly focused on the depiction of women under the construct of patriarchy, domesticity, and social constructs, while feminist researchers have focused on the role of gender inequality in determining the identity of a woman and her experiences. Likewise, the trauma theorist have concentrated on the long-term psychological impacts of trauma, whereas psycho-feminists have looked into the link between psychological developments and patriarchy. While past research is very useful in feminist literary and media studies, there has been little academic focus on the representation of psychologically complex women characters in modern Pakistani TV dramas from a psycho-feminist angle.

### **1: Representation of Women in Pakistani Television Drama**

The depiction of women in Pakistani television dramas is an area of scholarly debate due to its influence on people's perception of gender roles. Women have been depicted traditionally as obedient and subservient daughters, self-sacrificing wives, and devoted mothers whose identity revolves around their role in the house and family honor. These depictions, which show women as submissive beings whose main aim is maintaining peace and harmony in society, mostly uphold the conventional patriarchal notions. Tyson suggests that the general beliefs about gender roles that shape women's image in society are often reiterated through literary works (Tyson 86).

There are two common depictions of an ideal woman and a fallen woman in many Pakistani dramas, according to the literature. The idealized woman is depicted in most cases as submissive and tolerant, whereas those women who do not meet traditional expectations are depicted negatively. Critics argue that these depictions only limit women to symbolic figures rather than complex beings (Zubair 48). For this reason, women characters tend to be judged not so much on their experiences but rather according to how well they conform to the established conventions of society.

Various critics have noted that in Pakistani dramas women tend to be put into the context of a moral framework that does not encourage independence and tends to promote obedience. For example, according to Rubina Saigol, "the patriarchal narrative defines women as 'guardians of family honor' and gives them the central responsibility for the maintenance of social/cultural norms" (Saigol 102). Along the same lines, Amina Yaqin has found that the representations of various identities of

women are limited because women in the narratives of South Asia cultures tend to be associated with self-denial, dignity, and domestic obligations (Yaqin 67). It appears that gender inequality is promoted by such drama shows as opposed to being criticized.

Nonetheless, there is a rising trend of complicated female characters driven by psychological experiences, emotional struggles, and personal problems in Pakistani TV dramas in recent times. This trend signifies an increasing academic interest in the analysis of women's psychological life and their reactions to social constraints. Such depictions provide possibilities for feminist interpretations of the contemporary media products and enable scholars to explore the question of female agency from beyond gender stereotypes. In order to further examine how psychological experiences affect the identity and resistance of women, this essay explores the relationship between trauma and female agency.

Nonetheless, the Pakistani TV has demonstrated a tendency towards psychologically rich depictions of women in recent years. Rather than carrying out their domestic chores, women are increasingly depicted in contemporary dramas as individuals struggling with difficult emotional, social, and psychological experiences. Although the stories depicted in Pakistani dramas are always patriarchal in nature, the most recent works have started exploring themes of trauma, emotional strength, and individual freedom. Nonetheless, scholarly research has not kept pace with this trend, and there is a lack of academic literature discussing how psychological experiences can be used as female resistance techniques in newly produced Pakistani dramas. The existing research, that explores the ways trauma informs female agency in Muamma.

## **2.2 Trauma and Female Agency**

The existing research, that explores the ways trauma informs female agency in Muamma, can be regarded as being based on this gap. As trauma allows researchers to shed some light on the long-term psychological consequences of oppression, violence, and pain, it has become a highly important area of research in contemporary literature, culture, and media studies. In contrast to the traditional view of trauma as a shocking experience, modern trauma theorists insist that trauma has a lasting effect on an individual's self-image, interpersonal relations and understanding of reality even many years after the initial incident. In addition, the importance of the trauma in feminist theory lies in the fact that some aspects of women's psychological suffering from emotional abuse, domestic violence, and patriarchal oppression remain

unconsidered by other theories.

Trauma has been increasing in importance in recent literature and media research due to its effect on identity creation, emotional development, and human behavior. Trauma theory claims that human beings are affected by disturbing experiences even years after the initial event took place. As stated by Cathy Caruth, trauma does not usually get comprehended during the occurrence but reappears in the form of memories and behaviors that affect the way a person perceives reality (Caruth 4). Likewise, Judith Herman argues that trauma may have lasting psychological effects on an individual since it violates the sense of safety and trust in oneself (Herman 33). This means that trauma should be treated as a state of mind that has an effect on current behaviors rather than a past experience.

Based on the above-mentioned assumptions, trauma is currently regarded as an issue that influences social behavior and identity. In the words of Bessel van der Kolk, trauma imprints itself deeply on both the physical and mental levels of a person, affecting their emotions and decision-making abilities, instead of merely being a memory like any other (van der Kolk 21). In helping us understand how trauma impacts an individual, this concept broadens our understanding of trauma from a purely psychological standpoint by giving an idea about the ways in which past experiences affect their behavior at the present time.

Feminist theory suggests that for women, who live in a patriarchal society where social limitations, emotional repression, and imbalance of power play a key role, trauma is often experienced. For example, according to feminist scholars, it is common for women to develop coping mechanisms to deal with these conditions. Contemporary feminist analysis explores how traumatic incidents can encourage the development of resilience, self-awareness, and resistance rather than perceiving women merely as victims of trauma. For instance, Bell Hooks posits that marginalized individuals can transform their experience of pain and suffering into power, enabling them to challenge dominance systems in subtle ways (hooks 19).

Feminist scholars also argue that trauma does not necessarily indicate perpetual victimization. In fact, it is possible for traumatic events to help women build their emotional intelligence and resilience along with other survival strategies. For example, Judith Herman explains that recovery from trauma implies restoration of the self and agency despite any oppressive or violent context (Herman 197). Similarly, Bell Hooks points out that marginalized women can convert their experiences of

suffering into political awareness and empowerment by confronting injustice (hooks 23). As a result, it can be argued that female resistance emerges from within before being manifested externally.

Therefore, the academic study of the link between trauma and female independence has become popular. Scholars suggest that physical conflict or open defiance is not the only method through which agency can be realized. Instead, it may take form through strategic planning and persistence, emotional resilience, psychological flexibility, and power bargaining in constrained situations. Such ideas and assumptions are particularly useful when considering modern female characters who are guided by complex psychological experience. Understanding of such a link between trauma and agency is required for the analysis of the ways in which women resist patriarchal structures using their internal and often ignored types of empowerment. This is discussed in the following section about the theoretical framework and psycho feminist approaches to women's resistance.

To understand the impact of psychological experience on the attitude of women towards patriarchy, recent interdisciplinary literature has been focused on the intersection of trauma studies and feminist criticism. The current generation of feminists studies the manifestation of memory, emotional strength, and psychological flexibility as agency and does not portray women characters merely as victims of oppression. This development is particularly relevant in the literary analysis, as it encourages theorists to focus on the inner workings of resistance as well as actions of defiance. A sound theoretical framework for analysing psychologically complex female protagonists in Pakistani television shows of the modern age is achieved through this approach.

### **2.3 Psycho-Feminist Perspectives on Women's Resistance**

Psycho Feminism is one such method of analysis where the connection between psychological experience, gender and individuality is explained. Womanly appearance is shown in this case as both a complicit device of patriarchy and a radical instrument of feminist intersection. Unlike conventional feminism, which emphasizes the institutional structures of social, political and economic domination. The psycho feminist critique tries to examine the process through which the patriarchal ideology gets internalized within the point of view, emotions, and unconsciously performed actions of women. Hence, the psycho feminist critique becomes an effective theoretical approach towards comprehending the female characters who exhibit

resistance through external as well as internal negotiations and actions. Psycho feminism seeks to understand the influences of the institutions and organizations on the identities of women through a blend of psychoanalysis and feminist approaches. This theory explains the way women perceive themselves and respond to the expectations that are patriarchal unlike feminist critique that informs about oppressive structures. Psycho feminism accepts that power influences through the memories of past incidents. Power influences through emotions, feelings and even desires. In this way, psycho feminist critique proves to be an effective tool towards comprehending the ways through which women can use power to develop identities. As per the theory of psycho feminism, it is clear now that there are certain interactions and associations taking place between culture and psychological experiences, which form women identities. As per Nancy Chodorow, early familial relations, especially the relations between mothers and daughters, have a lot of impact on the emotions and self-perception of women and hence influence the gender identity of women (Chodorow 93). Psycho feminism will be extremely useful while examining the female characters whose behaviour is guided and influenced by childhood trauma and memories since it becomes very clear from psycho feminism that psychological responses to injustice are hugely dependent on personal experiences and history.

One of the prominent psycho feminists, Luce Irigaray criticizes the traditional male-centric androcentric assumptions of psychoanalysis. As claimed by Luce Irigaray, women are often required to function within the framework of meaning created by the patriarchal discourses which limits their potential to create independent and autonomous subjectivities (Irigaray 133). In order to solve this issue, Irigaray provides the concept of mimicry that suggests that women could follow gender conventions at the same time reveal the domination that has been placed on them (Irigaray 76). It is not about opposition to patriarchal system but negotiation of power within patriarchal structures through mimicry.

Similarly, in *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millet observes that patriarchy operates via cultural stories, familial ties, and social relationships that legitimize the superiority and domination of men over women besides the legal and political systems (Millet 25). According to Millet, the basic thing about gender relations is that power is distributed in an unequal manner. Through various modes of resistance, direct or indirect, her theory helps readers realize how women operate in the male-dominated society and exercise power as well as deal with such patriarchy. All these factors play

role in forming identities of women, especially their will, desire, and choice. This could also have impact on their psychological development in literary modern critique. As she broadened the basis of her argument to include a structure that is social and ideology that transforms and redefines people's awareness of themselves, their knowledge and emotions, Hooks widened her argument. Belief of Hooks that women at times adopt traditional roles that are imposed upon them by the society which is dominated by males makes it hard for them to resist and retaliate. The roles that they adopt and the actions that they take are not political acts rather we can say that it is something that happens in their mind due to their emotions (hooks 17). In order to achieve real freedom, according to Hooks, we must confront and fight the external structures that are unjust and have wrong allocation of equality. Law and social norms are the two examples of such structures. By highlighting the fact of how important it is for the women to understand themselves and accept their experiences and identity, psycho-feminism reinforces its criticism. Through this we realize that understanding oneself becomes very important to fight against domination and oppression. The loudness of resistance is not always present; therefore, the response to the unjust structures should not be direct and loud enough to appear as public rebellion. It can take different forms of actions. For instance, women are able to respond mentally, in terms of their emotional awareness and perception. They can make decisions and act in such a way that can be viewed as intelligent and indirect form of opposition to the oppression. Women tend to choose silent means to resist the male-dominated structures and patriarchal order. The stories that contain the portrayal of the female characters where they show positivity and influence on the people, but the process is taking place in reality where the injustices take place in the background. Under such conditions, the main tools to show resistance and make opposition are decision making and self recognition. The methods that were discussed above become especially important in such cases. In this case, psychofeminism becomes an analytical instrument that helps to see how the agency of the character develops through psychological adaptation.

In the next chapter we are going to consider Luce Irigaray's feminist psychoanalytic theory and its application to the character of Jahanara in Muamma. The following chapter presents Luce Irigaray's feminist psychoanalytic theory. In general, this theory challenges the idea that women can resist the injustices of the world around them not just through direct forms of protest, but also adapt to them and

oppose the injustice in their own unique ways.

#### Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Luce Irigaray's Feminist Psychoanalysis

The limitations of traditional psychoanalytic theory, which was largely criticized by feminist scholars due to its predominantly masculine approach to understanding women's experiences, contributed to the development of feminist psychoanalysis. Feminist theorists utilized the concept of psychoanalysis to describe the impact of psychological as well as social and cultural factors on gender identity instead of rejecting the former. For example, according to scholars such as Juliet Mitchell, Nancy Chodorow, and Luce Irigaray, it is not possible to comprehend women's identity without considering patriarchal structures (Mitchell 31; Chodorow 87; Irigaray 133). In doing so, they created psycho-feminism, which is an interdisciplinary field focusing on relations between gender, psychology, identity, and power.

Luce Irigaray is one of the most important theorists associated with feminist psychoanalysis thought. Irigaray challenges traditional concepts of psychoanalysis that undermine the perspective of women and consider them from an androcentric point of view. According to Irigaray, patriarchal societies produce linguistic, cultural and meaning-making structures, which oppress the self and voices of women but empower men (Irigaray 133). Therefore, instead of being able to display their autonomy and subjectivity, women are supposed to conform to roles created within the framework of patriarchal ideology. Irigaray's theory is aimed at exposing those power dynamics and providing space for the expression of feminine voices and agency. The concept of mimicry plays an essential part in Irigaray's theories. As per Irigaray, women can use mimicry and pretend to act as their patriarchal communities require them while at the same time showing the limitations of their required behavior (Irigaray 76). Thus, mimicry becomes a subtle form of resistance as opposed to compliance with the rules set by patriarchy. Women can use power within dominating structures from inside by conforming to them, which would otherwise be impossible if women were trying to resist directly. This perspective draws the reader's attention to the complex interrelation between resistance and submission in the lives of women.

Although Irigaray's approach is concerned about female subjectivity and symbolic resistance, modern feminist criticism often combines her theories with broader notions of gender relations and patriarchy. As stated by Kate Millett,

patriarchy is a political system that maintains men's dominance based on the social beliefs, family organization, and culture instead of merely biology (Millett 25). Similarly, Bell Hooks claims that patriarchy affects not only societal structures but also individual consciousness, hence making women fight against the external oppression and the ideologies that sustain injustice (hooks 17). By demonstrating how women fight against patriarchy through psychological perception, emotional fortitude, and strategic behavior instead of direct resistance, these perspectives support Irigaray's conception of mimicry.

Thus, psycho-feminist perspective provides a full-scale approach to interpreting female resistance as a political and psychological phenomenon. This perspective recognizes the fact that women's responses to oppression are determined by such aspects as their identity, trauma, memory, and emotional experience, rather than seeing women as merely the victims of patriarchal institutions. As more and more modern feminists recognize, psychological flexibility, strategic silence, and emotional intelligence can become effective means of resistance in restrictive society (Tyson 122; Hooks 26). Perspectives mentioned above are particularly relevant when examining female characters in modern Pakistani TV series, where resistance is expressed through psychological negotiations rather than open struggle. In the analysis of female characters who are motivated by psychological manipulation than open defiance, Irigaray's feminist psychoanalysis proves quite useful. As per her perception, such resistance may involve actions such as strategizing, maintaining emotional restraint, silence and acting in a manner which society predicts. Such notions constitute an essential framework for understanding the ways in which female main characters cope with patriarchal situations and yet retain their sense of independence. This application of the theoretical notions of Irigaray on the character of Jahanara in the play *Muamma* is discussed in the following section.

### **3.2 Application of Irigaray's Theory to *Muamma***

Perhaps one of the most famous and significant critiques of the traditional psychoanalysis is Luce Irigaray's feminist psychoanalytic theory, which challenges the patriarchal perception of female identity and subjectivity. She believes that instead of recognizing females as independent entities, Western philosophical and psychoanalytic traditions tend to position women as the "Other" and to define women exclusively through the prism of their relations with men (Irigaray 68). Hence, women's identity and persona tend to be constructed in the symbolic space, which

excludes female voice and reinforces male experience. To help women to regain their identities and restore it outside of the patriarchal discourse, Irigaray calls for the creation of new forms of feminine expression (Irigaray 133). Since the theory explains the interactions of gender, language, and psychology in construction of female identity, it has become one of the keystones of psycho feminist critique.

The proficient theoretical model for the analysis of the character of Jahanara in the Pakistani drama *Muamma* is provided by Luce Irigaray's feminist psychoanalytic theory. It features a female protagonist whose behavior has changed significantly under the impact of the societal pressure, emotions, and childhood trauma. Jahanara tends to stay within the boundaries of the patriarchal society rather than to openly challenge its power. Her behavior exemplifies the intricate ways in which women manage to keep the agency and navigate the power while apparently conforming to the existing societal norms. Because of the explanation of how the conformity may be used as the form of resistance, Irigaray's concept of imitation and mimicry is especially relevant.

The female perspective is one of the key concepts of Irigaray's philosophy. She argues that women have to construct their own identities, languages, and means of self-expression rather than to strive for equality in the patriarchal framework (Whitford 58). Women have to recognize their own psychological experience and recreate the identity, which is free of patriarchal expectations instead of following the imposed conception of femininity. This approach moves feminist critique from the view on women as the victims of the patriarchal oppression to recognition of women as the active agents of the negotiations and transformations of the power structures. These concepts are especially helpful in the literary criticism, since they inspire the researchers to study the psychological aspects of female resistance beyond the explicit rejection of the normative values.

The acts of psychological adjustment and self-protection are shown by Jahanara during the drama. She constantly relies on the strategic thinking, emotions management, and silence to survive in the problematic situations. Such acts may look like the submission and obedience on the first sight, but under the analysis according to Irigaray's theoretical model they reveal the form of the agency that does not fit the conventional view on the female resistance. Jahanara perfectly illustrates the method of mirroring and imitation suggested by Irigaray by playing socially expected roles while pursuing her own objectives. Her behavior is the good example of how women

manage to maintain the power and the influence in the patriarchal society without challenging it.

The contemporary feminist scholars continue to use Irigaray's theoretical concepts to analyze the psychological complexity of the female protagonists presented in the literary and media texts. Her theory remains especially applicable in the analysis of those female characters whose resistance is expressed in the emotional strength, strategic silence, and psychological negotiations, rather than in the political advocacy. By highlighting the female subjectivity and symbolic resistance, Irigaray gives the researchers the opportunity to comprehend how women manage to construct the agency in the restrictive social environment. These concepts provide the theoretical background for the current study of the character of Jahanara in Muamma.

This paper analyzes Jahanara's behavior and psychological development in Muamma in the framework of Irigaray's theories of the female perspective and subjectivity, imitation, and resistance. The theory explains how her identity is shaped by the trauma and how her survival tactics turn into the acts of the agency. Applying this paradigm, the paper explores the connection between the female self-determination and psychological experience, thus getting a deeper understanding of the Jahanara's personality and her response to the patriarchal constraints. This theoretical framework is applied to the analysis of the selected scenes of the drama in the next chapter.

### **3.3 Kate Millett's Sexual Politics and bell hooks' Feminist Thought:**

*Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet is one of the most influential books in the era of the second wave of feminist criticism (1970). Patriarchy according to Millet is a political arrangement where men sustain their power and dominance over women in society using cultural establishments, family arrangements, education, religion, and literature. The assertion by Millet is that gender relations involve power inequalities that favour men and oppress women; hence gender relations are essentially political (Millet 23). Millet believes that the subordination of men is social in origin and is always sustained by ideology and behaviour patterns, thereby opposing the assumption that this subordination is natural or biological. Consequently, oppression of women has to be understood structurally and not personally. As stated by Millett, patriarchal power often tends to be insidious due to its naturalization of male domination, emotional dependence and social expectations. Rebellion and independence are disapproved and women are encouraged to accept submissiveness, sacrifice and silence as good

feminine qualities. In such way, it becomes possible to penetrate the patriarchal ideology into everyday relations and family life (Millett 35). Her theory provides an opportunity to analyze the influence of gendered power relations on the identities, choice and behavior of female characters in literature works.

By looking deeper into psychological sides of the patriarchal power relations and by focusing on the necessity of change of both structures and consciousness, Bell Hooks develops the feminist theory and supplements Millet's ideas. Hooks argues in her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* that patriarchy is a dominating system which affects the attitude, behaviors and interpersonal relations of both men and women (hooks 17). Hooks states that true liberation means overcoming the idealism which allows women to accept injustice as normal and the exterior oppressive system. Hooks argues that critical knowledge and recognition of one's value and power are the first steps to resistance. The author underlines that when viewed from the feminist perspective, the suffering, trauma and marginalization of women can serve as the source of power for them (hooks 26). Hooks encourages literary academics to pay attention not only to the experiences of oppression but to psychological strength, emotional intelligence and self-consciousness which contribute to feminist resistance. These concepts are especially relevant for literary criticism nowadays since they recognize the diversity of forms of women's agency beyond politics. In the case of *Muamma*, the feminist philosophy of bell hooks can be used to understand Jahanara's psychological change. In her childhood, Jahanara does not become passive due to her traumatic experience; on the contrary, it helps her build her emotional and strategic strength. Through the lens of resistance of hooks' theory, this study shows that Jahanara resists against the patriarchal dominance using her psychological insight rather than any other method. Through the combined theories of Kate Millett and bell hooks, this study will be able to explore the impact of trauma, gender, and power on female agency.

### **3.4 Research Methodology**

An investigation into the depiction of trauma, female agency, and psychological resistance in the Pakistani television drama *Muamma* (2025) in the drama is undertaken by means of the qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is appropriate because of its greater emphasis on meaning interpretation, experience, and social reality rather than statistical information. As Creswell says, qualitative research enables researchers to study complex human experiences "by way of deep and

thorough interpretation and thematic analysis" (Creswell and Poth 7).

A textual analysis approach is applied by the researcher in order to analyze selected scenes, dialogues, and characters in Muamma. Through textual analysis the researcher will be able to analyze how language, symbolism, characterization, and narrative construction construct gender meanings, trauma, and patriarchal power. The study analyzes the drama as the primary text without taking into account audience responses.

The study uses psycho feminist theories in order to analyze the drama; it mainly uses feminist theory developed by Bell Hooks and the concept of patriarchy as explained by Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics*. Furthermore, ideas of trauma theorists like Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, as well as feminist psychoanalysis by Luce Irigaray, are utilized by the researcher. The theoretical perspectives provide the tools required in analyzing how Jahanara's psychological experiences affect her resistance and agency in patriarchal environment.

The interpretive research approach is applied in order to analyze meanings that are embedded in the chosen situations. The research will analyze the impact of trauma on Jahanara's identity and how psychological resistance challenges representations of women in contemporary Pakistani television drama.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

A few selected scenes, dialogue and episodes of the Pakistani television series Muamma (2025) have been used as the main data in this study, mainly concentrating on the Jahanara character. Such scenes have been selected because they clearly reveal the independence of females, their psychological growth, pain and resistance in the patriarchal societies. The textual evidence needed to explore the issues of the study has been provided through such scenes.

The sources of the secondary data include scholarly books, peer reviewed journal articles, research theses and academic materials relating to media studies, psychofeminism, trauma theory and feminist critique. The majority of the sources used as the theoretical foundation of the study come from the works of Kate Millett, Bell Hooks, Luce Irigaray, Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman, and Lois Tyson. In addition to the above mentioned academic materials, to reinforce the analysis of the selected text and provide the needed context, academic materials related to Pakistani TV shows and women's portrayal were also analyzed

### **Analysis and Discussion**

A psychological feminist approach is adopted to present a literary analysis of the

chosen episodes of Muamma. The discussion revolves around the character of Jahanara and analyzes the impact of trauma on her agency, her psychological development, and capability to cope with the control imposed by patriarchy. The chapter explores the link between the psychology and feminism in the context of theories proposed by Kate Millet, Bell Hooks, Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman, and Luce Irigaray. Contrary to presenting Jahanara as an ordinary victim or hero, this research demonstrates the subversion of stereotypes about Pakistani women through her strategic and emotional action

#### **4.1 Trauma and Psychological Development**

##### **Introduction**

Jahanara's persona throughout Muamma remains predominantly influenced by trauma. Identity of Jahanara is constituted through unresolved psychological traumas as against the identities of conventional female protagonists of Pakistani television plays which are largely constituted through patience and sacrifices. Trauma in the play emerges as a persistent presence affecting her emotions, decisions and relationships as against being portrayed as something that is already resolved in the past. In Muamma, the representation of trauma as a psychological disease with long-lasting effects on one's persona and outlook as against being represented as an emotional experience that is transitory. According to Cathy Caruth, trauma cannot be fully experienced at the point when it happens; instead it recurs frequently in memories, emotions and behavior, thereby making the past and present inseparable (Caruth 4). The recurring inability of Jahanara to detach herself from the traumatizing experiences that have been influencing her so far represents this theory. One of the most significant conversations of the play illustrates this point:

*"If forgetting were so easy, I would have forgotten everything that happened to me long ago."*

**"Bhoolna agar itna aasaan hota to jo kuch mere saath hua hai, mein kab ki bhool chuki hoti."**

This example clearly shows that trauma remains in the mind of Jahanara even after time passes. She is emotionally trapped with the experience which continues to shape her personality at present instead of remembering the past voluntarily. In her opinion, as per Caruth, trauma reoccurs often as the victim does not have enough capacity to deal with the experience at that particular point of time (4). Consequently, the words of Jahanara reflect not only the pain but also the memory of trauma which becomes

the part of the entire life of the woman.

In a parallel way, according to Judith Herman, the experience of trauma can seriously change the feeling of safety, trust, and identity of a person and force the victim to reconstruct his/her outlook regarding himself/herself and others (Herman 33). All the interactions of Jahanara in the play demonstrate this process of psychological transformation. In particular, she learns to be vigilant, emotionally reserved, and cautious all the time instead of opening herself up to others emotionally and psychologically. Thus, trauma changes her approach to the present and to the past as well. Every conversation is influenced by emotional vulnerability, mistrust, and betrayal.

Jahanara's declaration makes this change more apparent:

*"I have stopped paying attention to what people say."*

**"Mene ab logon ki baaton mein aana chhor diya hai."**

Within the framework of psycho feminism, this discourse demonstrates emotional resilience despite conveying an impression of confidence. Jahanara deliberately distances herself from social standards without allowing the public opinion to dictate who she should be. According to Herman, in order to restore control over their lives, victims of trauma usually develop psychological defense mechanisms (197). In other words, unlike emotional indifference, Jahanara's emotional distance is an act of survival. She starts taking charge of her identity and refuses to internalize social perspectives.

Similarly, according to Bell Hooks, when refusing to explain themselves through restrictive social expectations, women who live in patriarchal societies tend to use distressing experiences as a resource (hooks 17). Psychological empowerment of a character is exemplified in the unwillingness of Jahanara to expose herself to public scrutiny. Emotional resilience in this case is demonstrated by the ability to continue living after experiencing a trauma rather than lack of pain. Hence, Muamma presents psychological resilience as an act of defiance and questions the conventional image of suffering heroine.

Thus, the drama illustrates how trauma is not only the cause of Jahanara's suffering but also the foundation of her psychological evolution. Rather than remaining emotionally vulnerable, she resorts to self-reflection, understanding of resilience, and emotional management in order to gradually reconstruct her identity. Within the theoretical frameworks of Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman, and Bell Hooks,

Jahanara is portrayed as a psychologically complex heroine for whom painful past becomes a catalyst for agency and not the end of her story. In contrast to conventional representations of women in Pakistani dramas where trauma is associated exclusively with oppression and not psychological evolution, this portrayal constitutes a major transformation.

#### 4.2 Female Agency and Strategic Behavior

Female agency is normally portrayed on traditional Pakistani television plays through patience, generosity, or moral fortitude. On the contrary, in *Muamma*, the agency of the main character depends on emotional competence, psychological intelligence, and deliberate decisions. In the play, Jahanara employs strategic silence, persuasion, and observations in order to maneuver within the power structure without confronting the patriarchal power directly. Her deeds are a counter example to the popular notion that only through active confrontation one can empower women.

As it was stated by Kate Millet, patriarchy restricts the freedom of women and dictates their actions through distorted power relations (Millet 23). Since it is often impossible or too risky to act against the power in such institutions, women usually find themselves an alternative way to handle it. The above mentioned reality is represented in the acts of Jahanara in *Muamma*. She is aware of the nature of patriarchal society and makes deliberate decisions, controls her emotions and uses her knowledge not only in order to protect herself but also to manipulate others. Consequently, her agency is rooted in psychological power and not physical one. This change is clearly expressed when Jahanara declares:

*"Since I have purified my heart, no one dares to raise their eyes towards me."*

**"Jab se mene apna dil saaf kiya hai, kisi ki jurat nahi meri taraf aankh utha kar dekh sakay."**

The sentence exhibits great psychological transformation despite its apparent emphasis on self-confidence. Unlike before, when she was seeking recognition from other people due to emotional hurt and betrayal, she is now creating emotional walls to protect herself from those who would take advantage of her vulnerability. This is in line with what bell hooks explains as the development of self-awareness which helps to empower women so that they can re-claim themselves and fight against patriarchy (hooks 26). It is clear, therefore, that the confidence shown by Jahanara is an indication of self-determination rather than arrogance. Jahanara's strategically minded nature comes out even more clearly when she says:

*"My only way of punishing men is to take away their loyal wives."*

**"Mardon ko saza dene ka mera aik hee tareeqa hai, un se un ki wafadar biwi ka saath cheen lena."**

This dialogue unveils her complex personality. Jahanara employs psychological techniques to undermine the male supremacy rather than seeking legal or social justice. Her behavior reflects the influence of psychological trauma on the perception of relationships and power relations. Even though her methods are ethically questionable, they reflect the extent to which psychological trauma affects her conception of justice and punishment.

In terms of psychofeminism, Luce Irigaray's concept of mimicry can help to interpret the actions of Jahanara. Irigaray claims that women might mimic patriarchal standards and simultaneously reveal and resist the system oppressing them (Irigaray 76). Throughout *Muamma*, Jahanara constantly hides her intentions behind socially acceptable behavior. She works from within patriarchal organization, using psychological techniques to influence the outcome of her actions, instead of openly resisting the patriarchal order. Thus, her seemingly obedient behavior becomes a calculated move, instead of genuine submission. However, the drama does not depict Jahanara's actions positively. On the contrary, it shows agency as a complex process that is influenced by psychological trauma and usually involves ethical dilemmas. Her calculated moves and behavior display both psychological damage and power. Thus, the resistance in patriarchal society might be defective and psychologically complicated. *Muamma* goes beyond the opposition of the idealized and the villainous woman and offers a heroine, whose agency is formed in the difficult reality of psychological trauma, memories and resilience.

Thus, the character and personality of Jahanara expand the representation of female agency in Pakistani television drama. Her ability to analyze human behavior, predict others' reaction and use psychological strength to navigate within oppressive societal organizations is what grants her power, rather than fighting physically. This drama challenges prejudiced conceptions of power, gender and control using feminist approaches of Luce Irigaray, Bell Hooks, and Kate Millett.

#### **4.3 Psychological Resistance in Patriarchal Structure**

*Muamma* presents an alternative approach of challenging patriarchy and psychological resistance. Jahanara uses psychological knowledge, emotional intelligence, and silence strategically in order to reveal the gender disparity as

compared to other stories where women are seen to oppose their oppression through physical resistance and confrontation. Her form of opposition has relevance to society and personally because it comes from her experience and not from any assumption. This story shows how women in a patriarchal environment use their subtle forms of resistance in order to exercise their power. As Kate Millett puts it, patriarchy survives through imbalance of power, which restricts women's freedom socially and personally and favors men (Millett 23). The unequal system is shown in one of Jahanara's strongest statements:

*"It is always the woman who is disgraced, even when the man is at fault."*

**"Qusoor chahy mard ka ho, badnaam aurat hoti hai."**

This point illustrates the different moral standards imposed on women. Blame is socially levied on women without any regard to who commits the deed, thereby reinforcing the patriarchal notion that family honor is tied to feminine honor and dignity. Through this point, Muamma rejects the gender norms that support male privilege and shift the entire burden of keeping social acceptability on women. This can be seen in the case of Jahanara's statement:

*"Even if a man is unfaithful, it is the woman who has to endure society's taunts."*

**"Bewafai chahy mard kry, taanay aurat ko sunnay party hain."**

Another point at which the suffering inflicted on women by the patriarchal civilisations becomes more evident is through this conversation. Bell Hooks says that patriarchy makes society habituated not only to accepting women's suffering and silence but also giving men authority (hooks 17). Through Jahanara's statement, one may see that women become objects of condemnation from society even though they do not deserve it. She sees these wrongful acts and does not want to be associated with them because of this injustice.

Thus, Muamma breaks away from conventional portrayals of women as passive sufferers through such conversations. Instead, Jahanara opposes patriarchal norms and refuses to internalise social condemnation in order to develop psychological strength. This way, the play provides a new interpretation of women's resistance in the form of their psychological strength.

#### **4.4 Reconfiguration of Female Representation**

One of the significant changes in the way the roles of women are depicted in Pakistani TV drama in modern times can be identified in the personality of Jahanara. She is shown as a psychologically rich woman who makes decisions under the influence of

trauma, memories, and emotional strength rather than patience, obedience and self-sacrifice that conventional heroines are praised for. By presenting the character with both positive and negative traits, the play breaks away from the traditional opposition of good and evil female characters.

From a psycho-feminist point of view, the personality of Jahanara proves that agency of females cannot be defined by acts of resistance and disobedience but lies in the ability of a person to use her emotional strength, strategic behavior and psychological awareness in order to survive under the pressure of the male-dominated society. This statement is well-supported by the ideas put forward by hooks who claims that feminist resistance begins with critical consciousness and refusal to accept any oppressive social norms as a norm (hooks 26). In the same way, experiences of Jahanara are shaped by unequal gender relations that determine her social behavior and choices in life based on Kate Millett's definition of patriarchy (Millett 35).

Muamma demonstrates the image of trauma as an agent of psychological transformation rather than lifelong victimization of a woman. Despite the moral ambiguity of Jahanara's behaviors, they prove that it is possible to use traumatic experience in order to develop resilience, self-awareness and agency of a person. Thus, the drama gives rise to the new paradigm of the portrayal of women where females are presented as mentally and intellectually strong personalities that are able to resist oppressive structures through strategic action.

Overall, Muamma presents the portrait of heroine whose personality and identity are defined by psychological strength rather than submission. Thus, through the portrait of Jahanara the play broadens the scope of female representation of our days and demonstrates the possibility to be resistant in your thoughts as well as in your actions. The major contribution of this research is the transformation of female representation which supports the arguments and claim of the paper that trauma can be the subversive agency rather than suffering.

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

As a part of analyzing the relationship between trauma, female agency, and patriarchal domination in Pakistani drama on television at present days, the continuous investigation examined Muamma based on the psycho-feminist theoretical background. With the help of the views by Kate Millett, Bell Hooks, Luce Irigaray, Cathy Caruth, and Judith Herman, the investigation has proved that childhood trauma greatly affects Jahanara's psychological development and creates her identity,

relationships and sense of power. In such a way, the drama reflects trauma not as a source for limitless exploitation and humiliation but as a means to foster psychological strength and ability to make decisions.

Moreover, Muamma demonstrates morally complex female hero who is impossible to characterize within the framework of traditional types of woman as victim or villain, thus, redefines the role of women according to the research results. From the psycho-feminist point of view, the drama demonstrates that psychological strength, critical awareness and emotional courage can bring female empowerment. Thus, in relation to the changing role of women in modern Pakistani dramas on TV, the results contribute to the growing body of feminist literary criticism.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

From this study, it can be inferred that Muamma is a new phase in the portrayal of women in Pakistani TV dramas as the playwright uses the motifs and conventions of abuse and conformity and challenges them. This way, the author depicts tragedy not only as a source of suffering but as the trigger of the psychological transformation and subversion through the personality of Jahanara. In other words, her case demonstrates that besides physical resistance, a woman's ability to stand up for herself may include psychological insight and strategic thinking.

Moreover, the use of psycho feminist theory together with feminist views by such authors as Bell Hooks and Kate Millett as well as theories of trauma developed by Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman prove that patriarchy operates in terms of psychology and shapes women's identity and experience beyond the social context. Thus, Jahanara's character reveals how women deal with the imposed frameworks of agency.

To sum up, this study argues that Muamma introduces a psychologically complex heroine whose strength is determined by her intelligence, emotional stability, and strategic resistance thereby enriching the image of women on Pakistani TV. Consequently, challenging its audience to reconsider the relationship between trauma, gender, and power as well as different forms of agency used by women within the framework of patriarchal systems, the play contributes to feminist discussion.

## **5.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

In particular, the psycho-feminist analysis of the trauma and empowerment of women in the TV play, Muamma, is what the research topic centers around. Further studies could also focus on comparing Muamma with some other existing Pakistani TV plays

featuring psychologically complicated female characters and, therefore, enrich this research so as to gain a deeper insight into the changing images of women in Pakistani media.

Moreover, in order to understand the impact of psychologically complicated female characters on the perceptions of gender roles and female empowerment, further research could involve investigations about viewers' reaction. In addition, through a multidisciplinary approach combining literary criticism, psychology, and sociology, trauma could be examined from the perspectives of class, religion, family or even digital media.

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