



Gender Representation in Punjabi Wedding Traditions and Songs: A Qualitative Research

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ABSTRACT

Pakistani culture is comprised of multiple traditions and practices that are highly valued and frequently conveyed through music. This study examined the depiction of gender in Punjabi wedding songs, providing a thorough examination of how men and women are portrayed. The study used a qualitative methodology of content analysis to look at song lyrics in order to comprehend how gender roles are portrayed. Twenty participants completed the survey, and 25 well-known Punjabi wedding songs were chosen for analysis from a variety of sources, including books, CDs, DVDs, and internet sites. The result showed four major themes, including concept of marriage, attachment patterns, cultural stereotypes, and significant relationships, followed by fourteen sub-themes, and sixty codes pertaining to gender portrayal were found in the content analysis. With a focus on physical characteristics for both sexes, men are usually portrayed as strong and women as lovely. Many aspects of Punjabi society are reflected in the songs, with a special emphasis on relationships. The songs highlighted that important people in a bride's life, including her parents, siblings, and friends, and they emphasize the momentous occasion of moving from her parents' house to her in-laws'. Men are shown as the defenders of women, who are sensitive and treasured. Crucially, there were no examples of women being denigrated or perceived as inferior in the analysis. This study offers insightful information about Punjabi cultural and musical traditions.



Introduction

Culture includes the common values, ideas, and meanings that characterize a country and act as a platform for the expression of viewpoints and experiences. It is an essential component of all societies, influenced by social, political, historical, and traditional factors (Accord & Dennora, 2008). Language, customs, values, symbols, folklore, and narratives are just a few of the components that make up culture. Every society has a unique culture that influences its identity on a personal and a national level. Pakistan, a Muslim nation, has a distinctive and abundant cultural legacy that is defined by its values, customs, and beliefs. Pakistan's culture is unique due to its cultural diversity, which is reflected in many areas, including festivals, literature, religious rituals, ceremonies, customs, and the arts (Khan, et. al, 2012). The people of Pakistan hold a great deal of respect for the many rituals and traditions that make up their culture. Although the nation's four provinces—Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—have different

cultural identities, the country as a whole has a shared cultural framework. For example, the majority of people in Punjab speak Punjabi as their first language, making it the province's official language (Mulholland, 1991).

Punjabi literature, traditions, and rituals are rich, and wedding songs are a major part of this culture. Mehndi, Dholki, and Mayon are among the unique customs that distinguish weddings in Pakistan and are hence an integral part of the festivities. In Pakistan, a wedding is a tremendous event that is loaded with joy, colorful attire, and excitement. Deeply ingrained in tradition, Punjabi weddings highlight the culture through pre-wedding traditions like mehndi, mayon, and dholki. The rich cultural legacy that has developed throughout time is reflected in these vibrant, exciting gatherings that are packed with cuisine, dancing, music, and ornate clothing (Ali et. al, 2014).

Punjab presents a wide range of traditional songs that are appropriate for many situations and express joy, grief, and all emotions in between. These songs capture the spirit of Punjabi culture and are incredibly emotive, expressing true feelings. Wedding songs are the most well-liked and captivating of all song genres, with a particular song chosen for every wedding ceremony. During ceremonies like Magni, Mehndi, Barat, and Rukhsati, different family members—such as the bride's sisters, friends, or parents—sing songs. Songs like "DESAN DA RAJA" are performed for the groom, for instance, while others like "DHIYA RANIYA KINA JAMIYA KINA LA JANIYA" and "SADA CHIRIAN DA CHAMBA VE" show affectionate taunts or displays of affection between the relatives of the bride and groom. These songs depict traditional gender roles and conduct in addition to highlighting the love and joy of the event. Despite contemporary influences, Punjabi weddings still heavily incorporate these ancient traditions, with wedding music playing as a uniting theme throughout the festivities (Ali et. al, 2014).

Songs that are frequently broadcast on media like the radio have the power to repeatedly sway listeners, which is why music is so important in forming our opinions. But these songs' teachings are frequently disregarded. According to Dibben's (1999) paper "Representations of Femininity in Popular Music," music conveys social information and influences listeners' attitudes toward it. The media portrays gender in both conventional and unconventional ways (Wood, 2005). The world we live in is reflected in songs, particularly in their lyrics, which can serve as a social mirror and aid in the development of social identities (Seitz, 1991).

Sex is based on biological traits that label people as male or female, whereas gender refers to the social norms and roles connected to being male or female. In a variety of settings, scholars have investigated gender and gender roles. Gender, as defined by Bassow (1991), is the set of expected behaviors and characteristics that are associated with being male or female. According to Sadiq (1996), gender is a sociocultural practice that is represented in a person's physical attributes. According to Aluede (2005), gender roles influence decisions and guide conduct in accordance with social or cultural standards. Gender is basically the social construction of being either male or female. Our cultural understanding of gender is greatly influenced by popular music. Everybody who hears these songs is influenced by them because they are frequently played again at occasions. According to Brown (2003), music serves as the cornerstone of social events and gatherings, providing young people with a window into the adult world through the language, lives, and role models of the musicians.

Lyrics are crucial for addressing gender issues because, as noted by Freudiger and Almquist (1978), they have the power to serve as a socializing agent, disseminating gender norms and preconceptions. Like other kinds of art, songs and folktales are passed down through the years, frequently being recited verbatim from memory and reflecting the ideals of the society. One of the main factors that defines Punjab as a cultural region is music. Society gives significance and social recognition to events and occasions, which act as venues for entertainment and social interaction i.e. festivals, weddings, and other ceremonies are among them. According to Nahar and Gill (2012), every occasion is linked to particular get-togethers and music that enhances the customs, with roles that are well-defined so that everyone is aware of their responsibilities.

In Northern India, Chatterjee (2012) carried out an empirical study that examined Indian and Dutch folk songs sung by women. Songs that represent women's unsaid feelings, hopes, disappointments, and shared desires as well as their responses to their social surroundings were critically analyzed in this study. According to societal expectations, these songs portrayed women as traditional, obedient, and subservient. They frequently focused on female deities, birth and marriage rituals, festivals, and everyday tasks. The study also highlighted the songs' "safety-valve" function, which enables women to vent their emotions while maintaining socially acceptable positions. Although there isn't a comparable study on Punjabi wedding songs in Pakistan, Nahar and Gill (2012) have studied Punjabi folk songs and tappas in both India and Pakistan. Their research, which included a sample of life-cycle songs, concentrated on the topics, genres, and types of Punjabi songs.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research stems from its capacity to offer a more profound comprehension of the representation of gender roles in Punjabi wedding songs. It provides a detailed examination of the cultural and societal meanings included in the lyrics, which are sometimes disregarded in conventional quantitative analyses, by employing qualitative methodologies. In addition to offering insightful information for combating gender stereotypes and guiding future cultural and gender-related research, this study advances our understanding of how media, particularly music, impacts social ideas of gender. It also emphasizes how Punjabi communities use music as a means of cultural expression and socialization.

Objective of the Study

- To examine the portrayal of gender in Punjabi wedding songs.

Research Questions

- How are both genders represented in Punjabi wedding songs?
- Are women depicted as fragile in Punjabi wedding songs?
- Do wedding songs primarily focus on the bride or the groom?

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a qualitative methodology to investigate how gender is portrayed in Punjabi wedding songs, applying the content analysis method to meet the goals and specifications of the research.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of Punjabi wedding songs. These songs were selected by the researcher in order to examine the Punjabi cultural and gender representations in the lyrics.

Sample

The study's sample was comprised of 50 Punjabi wedding songs, selected by the researcher from sources including CDs, DVDs, the internet, and Punjabi songbooks.

Translation Technique of Punjabi Wedding Songs

- **Purpose of Translation:** The purpose of translation was to provide an English version of Punjabi wedding songs for the convenience of readers unfamiliar with Punjabi or Urdu.
- **Procedure of Translation:** The translation process involved several structured steps to ensure accuracy and cultural integrity:
 - a) *Forward Translation into Urdu:* The researcher engaged bilingual experts proficient in Punjabi, Urdu, and English. These experts translated the songs into Urdu, prioritizing poetic translation over a word-for-word approach. The translation was simplified to make the content easily understandable for readers.
 - b) *Back Translation into Punjabi:* To ensure the accuracy of the forward translation, the songs were back-translated into their original Punjabi version. This step helped identify and address any discrepancies in the forward translation. The expert panel ensured that cultural and customary nuances were preserved during this process.
 - c) *Forward Translation into English:* Following back translation, the researcher involved the bilingual expert panel once more to translate the songs into English. The experts were provided with the original Punjabi songs, the Urdu translation, and the back-translated Punjabi version. While translating into English, the panel carefully considered the original context, meaning, and cultural background of the songs.

Procedure

The researcher initially identified 50 Punjabi wedding songs whose lyrics reflected gender portrayal and were commonly sung during marriage ceremonies in Punjab. A survey was conducted among married women to shortlist these songs. Participants provided their age, duration of marriage, educational qualification, and identified five songs they believed were most popularly sung at Punjabi weddings. This process yielded a total of 100 songs. The researcher enlisted the help of highly qualified experts to refine the list for content analysis. The experts' shortlisted 35 songs that were widely popular in both rural and urban Punjabi weddings. The researcher, in consultation with the supervisor, reviewed the expert-selected songs and focused on those centered on the bride and groom, specifically Mehndi and Rukhsati songs. Ultimately, 25 songs most relevant to bride- and groom-focused themes were selected for content analysis.

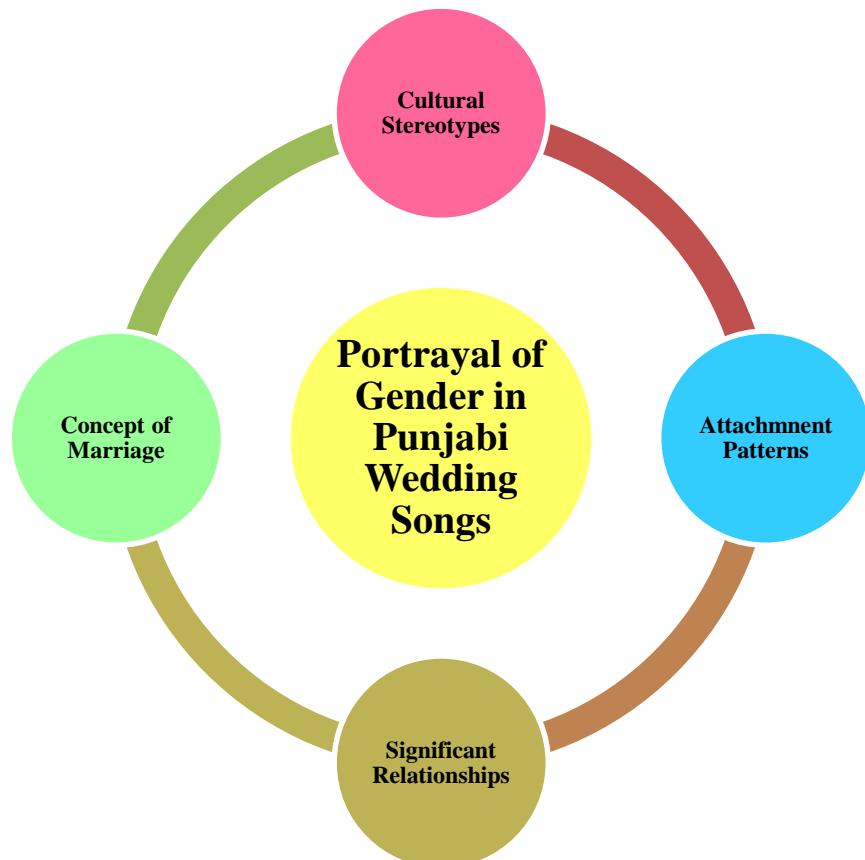
Analysis

In order to analyze and classify cultural and literary data in Punjabi wedding songs, the study used the content analysis method. This approach entails methodically going over the songs' material to find recurrent themes, patterns, and representations. It focused on how the lyrics depict gender, cultural norms, and society values. The songs' cultural value and gender role representation were better comprehended by the researcher by coding and grouping them into subject categories.

Results

Almost 25 wedding songs, which are representative of those usually sung at Punjabi weddings and other associated events, were used for content analysis. The chosen songs are significant in terms of their content and the message they convey through their lyrics. The researcher identified four major themes from the investigation, which concentrated on the representation of gender in Punjabi wedding music, 14 sub-themes, and 60 codes that are associated with the portrayal of gender. The main findings are summarized in figures and narratives.

Figure 1 “Major Themes in Portrayal of Gender in Punjabi Wedding Songs”



The data indicated that representation of gender is multifaceted and multilayered, a characteristic that is present in all compositions. The major themes extracted from songs, such as the concept of marriage, significant relationships with in-laws, friends, and family, attachment patterns with husbands and families, and cultural stereotypes, are interwoven and interlinked.

Table 1 “Frequency of occurrence of major themes in songs”

Major Themes	f	%
Cultural stereotypes	80	49.38%
Attachment patterns	15	9.25%
Significant relationships	39	24.07%
Concept of marriage	28	17.28%
Total opportunities	162	100%

Table 1 listed the main topics that emerged from the examination of how gender is portrayed in Punjabi wedding music. In terms of gender representation, the researcher identified four main themes that were most apparent in these songs. The initial category was *Cultural Stereotypes*, which were the basis for

49.38% of wedding songs. Women are being described as beautiful, while males are being depicted as strong. Furthermore, these songs also addressed the physical characteristics of both genders. The second category was *Attachment Patterns*, which encompasses 9.25% of the tracks. This theme demonstrates the extent to which women are emotionally dependent and bonded to their families. The lyrics of these songs also address the perspective of the spouse. The third major theme, which accounted for 24.07%, was *Significant Relationship*. It denotes the relationships between the bride and groom's in-laws, family, and peers. The content of those Punjabi wedding songs also illustrated the relationship between the bride and groom's in-laws and family. The fourth theme, "*Concept of Marriage*," was the subject of 17.28% discussion, indicating importance of weddings to Punjabi individuals. Marriage is a gathering of families and the commencement of a new existence, with the exception of celebration.

Table 2

“Frequency of Sub Themes in Songs”

Major Themes	Sub themes	f	%
Cultural stereotypes	Weak & Delicate	22	13.58%
	Physical attributes of women		
	Physical attributes of men	15	9.25%
	Women assertive role & style		
	Men as protector and provider		
	Men as strong	3	1.85%
	Women are beautiful		
	Distance/ separation from family after marriage	10	6.17%
Attachment patterns			
		3	1.85%
		7	4.32%
		13	8.02%
Significant relationships			
		7	4.32%
	Emotional dependence & attachment with family	5	3.08%
Concept of marriage	Emotional dependence & attachment with husband		
		10	6.17%
	Relationship with in-laws	15	9.25%
	Relationships with family and friends		
		24	14.81%
	Marriage as a union with other family & a new life	21	12.96%
	Marriage as an event of celebration		
		7	4.32%
Total		162	100%

From 60 codes, 14 sub-themes were found through an examination at how gender is portrayed in Punjabi wedding music. As an illustration, consider the Physical Attributes sub-theme, which lists the traits and attributes that are associated with men and women. These sub themes clarified various categories. The *cultural stereotypes* are divided into eight sub-themes, which include Weak and Delicate, which accounts for 13.58% of the total. The physical attributes of women are 9.25%, while the physical attributes of men are 1.85%. The assertive role and style of women are 6.17%, and roles of men as provider and protector are 1.85% and 4.32%, respectively. The perception that women are beautiful is 8.02%, and the distance from family after marriage is 4.32%. Punjabi wedding songs -identified all of these sub-themes, which addressed the roles of men and women and attractiveness of women. However, results suggest that the physical attributes of women were described more frequently than those of males. In addition, these songs underscored the notion that women are the property of others and that it is a marriage custom for women to establish a separation and distance from their family. In general, these songs depicted women as fragile and fragile, while men are depicted as robust, protective, and provider. Conversely, the assertive role of women has also been demonstrated.

There are two sub-themes within the *Attachment Patterns* theme: Emotional Dependency and Attachment with Family (3.18%) and Emotional Dependency and Attachment with Husband (6.17%). The

findings indicate that women were more emotionally dependent and intensely attached to their husbands than to their families. The Punjabi females were deeply devoted to their husbands following their marriage. Additionally, they are entirely dependent on their spouse and are expected to obey him. The findings also showed that girls are viewed as someone else's property and are encouraged to obey their parents from an early age. Their spouse is supposed to be their main provider after they move out of their parents' house. It is customary for parents to offer petitions and counsel regarding their children's future spouses.

Relationships with in-laws comprise 9.25% of significant relationships, while those with family and friends comprise 14.81%. The results indicated that the bride and groom's bond with their family is more solid than their bond with their in-laws. Two sub-themes are included in the fourth major theme, *Concept of Marriage*: marriage as a celebration (4.32%) and marriage as a partnership with another family (12.96%).

Discussion

The purpose of the research was to investigate how men and women are portrayed in Punjabi wedding songs, with a particular emphasis on gender representation. Using content analysis, the researcher was able to extract 60 codes, 14 sub-themes, and four main themes from 25 well-known Punjabi wedding songs that are frequently played at weddings. Many factors, such as society and the media, influence how people perceive gender, and songs have a big impact on how people understand gender roles in culture. According to Freudiger and Almgquist (1978), song lyrics can be used as a socialization tool. Punjabi wedding songs are a reflection of the region's beliefs, social institutions, and culture. Here is a discussion of the findings:

The Punjabi wedding songs were followed by four major themes; *concept of marriage, attachment patterns, cultural stereotypes, and significant relationships*. In these songs, the physical attributes of women and men are used to culturally stereotype them. Women are depicted as weak and vulnerable in some songs, while in others, they are depicted as assertive, beautiful, and stylish. Conversely, the males in these songs are depicted as strong, protective, and providers. The Punjabi wedding songs discuss necessity for women to establish a barrier from their families after marriage. This is a traditional practice in Punjab, as girls were married from afar, even in other cities. The second major theme that was extracted from the songs attachment patterns. This theme pertains to the extent to which a girl is attached to her parents and family prior to marriage, and how their spouse becomes their sole source of support after marriage. The songs address significant relationships with friends, family, and in-laws, and some songs are about the concept of marriage. In Punjab, weddings are nothing short of a feast, and they are an occasion for celebration and pleasure. The wedding preparations commence a few months prior to the ceremony. The songs illustrated that a wedding is a union with another family and the commencement of a new relationship.

The findings revealed the social roles and physical characteristics that are ascribed to both men and women, as well as the sub-themes of the first major theme, *Cultural Stereotypes*. While women are shown as beautiful, men are portrayed as powerful. It also underscores the fact that marriage for women is a separation and distancing from family. Furthermore, women are perceived as fragile and fragile. They are reliant on the masculine members. They are fragile and submissive. Additionally, certain tracks illustrated the notion that women are burdensome and that their sole recourse is to complain.

The results showed that women are depicted in songs as attractive and the object of beauty. Everyone admires the Punjabi females' attractiveness and good looks. In general, women are depicted as beautiful in songs and videos to capture the focus of the audience. The lyrics of the song have demonstrated that women are attractive and objects of beauty;

Balle balle bai je tu meri tor vekhni Kali kaghri lawa de gotta

**Very well very well if you want to see my character, apply the lace of gold and silver on black
petticoat /skirt**

Kudi Ta Sadi Tille Di Taar Ae

Our girl is as iron- pan

oye akhe amman de us phad lai soti ae

response the mom as she hold the stick

ke mudja sohneya main teri chan jehi voti ve

turn away I am as moon bridal of your

The results of the current study are corroborated by Sommers, Sommers, and Davis's (1993) study, which emphasises how women are frequently portrayed as beautiful objects and men as aggressive and domineering. throughout general, themes of violence, objectification, power, and sexuality are prevalent throughout MTV video content.

The results highlighted that women are an asset to someone else. Punjabis have a tradition that a girl must abandon her parents' home after marriage, as they are considered an asset. Girls are raised in their

parents' homes, where they spend their entire lives, receive an education, and serve their families. However, they are aware that they will eventually depart their homes. Girls are referred to as guests in their parents' homes from a young age and are expected to join their husbands' homes upon their marriage. The results demonstrated that God has equitably distributed the birthplaces of females and the individuals who remove them.

Lyrics of song have shown that women are someone else's asset:

Sada Chiryan Da Chamba Way Babal Asan Ud Jaana

We have the troop of sparrows father we are about to fly

Madhaniyan Haye o mereya dadheya rabba kinhaaN jammianN kinhaaN ne le janiaaN

Ah! My GOD who make the (mixing) sticks and who take it away?

Women are depicted as emotionally reliant and devoted to their partners and children, according to the sub-themes of the second major topic, *attachment patterns*. It emphasizes that "if males are the family's pride, women are the family's honor." The songs also underline the bride's strong familial attachment and the protecting function of her family. Daughters are depicted as being guided by their parents and showing love and respect for their spouses, whom they frequently see as superior. Women are portrayed as having an emotional bond with their families and relying on them to protect them from harm and to support them through difficult times. The results also showed strong family ties, with daughters living comfortably at their parents' house and their wants being satisfied by relatives who understand that she will eventually depart once she marries.

The links between the bride and groom and their families, friends, and in-laws are highlighted by the sub-themes of the third major theme, *significant relationships*. Although the bride's connection with her in-laws is frequently portrayed negatively, the results show that the bride and groom have excellent relationships with their immediate families. The majority of sithaniyan (teasing songs) are written from the bride's point of view, while some also depict the mother-in-law acting rudely towards the daughter-in-law. But rather than being the ones making fun of their in-laws, they are more often the target of it. The mothers of the pair play important roles in the close relationships that the bride and groom have with their parents, siblings, and friends.

The *concept of marriage*, which is the fourth major theme, has two sub-themes. The first perceives marriage as a family unity and the beginning of a new partnership, whereas the second emphasizes marriage as a happy occasion. Elders offer prayers and blessings for the couple's new journey as the bride and groom's families come together for weddings. In accordance with traditions, the ceremony enables the couple to start their lives together. Both parties' families and friends enjoy the festivities and treasure the special moments. Weddings bring joy by encouraging get-togethers and festivities, and planning frequently starts months in advance to produce a memorable occasion.

Conclusion

The study identified that Punjabi wedding songs mostly depict men and women in culturally conventional positions, highlighting attachment styles, connections with the bride and groom's (in-laws') families, and the idea of marriage. Various cultural aspects are also evident in this investigation. These songs detailed the physical characteristics and roles of both males and women. Men are often depicted as strong in certain songs. Conversely, women were depicted as assertive. The most startling finding of the study was that Punjabi wedding songs did not portray women as inferior or marginalized. These songs also emphasize the value of relationships in Punjabi culture, highlighting the close ties, mutual respect, and concern between parents and children as well as between siblings. The contentment of one member is of great importance to the other members of the family. Women are considered precious and honored by the family, if males are the pride of family. This research demonstrates the intriguing perspective of Punjabi culture.

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