



Men Without Shirts: Bollywood, Bodybuilding and Masculinities in Pakistan

Amna Nasir*

University of Sydney, Australia

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Abstract: Gujranwala is a city known for its wrestlers. Over the past few years, the traditional wrestling is transforming into an urban phenomenon of bodybuilding; though, the focus on male body has remained the same. Wrestling and bodybuilding are not mere sports in this city but rather an expression of one's masculinity and dominance. A certain type of Bollywood movie culture, in which the hero is shown as a hyper-masculine, muscular and assertive man, have become very popular among the male audience in Gujranwala. This study aims at investigating the connection between the fast-growing gym culture in Gujranwala and such Bollywood movies, and how the hegemonic masculinity shown in these movies is being interpreted by the male Bollywood audiences in Gujranwala. Through Quota Sampling, and with the sample of a hundred bodybuilders, a questionnaire-based survey was conducted. The corresponding results showed that Bollywood movies were extremely popular in Gujranwala; gym-goers idealised heroes with particular hegemonic body types and behavioural patterns and believed that they inspired them to join gyms.

Keywords: Bollywood movies, bodybuilding, masculinity, men, Pakistan.

* Journalist and researcher, e-mail: amnanasir100@hotmail.com

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role Bollywood movies play in formulating and transforming the existing bodybuilding culture in Pakistan. Furthermore, it analyses the effect of such movies on the idea of masculinity among Pakistani male gym-going population.

By taking the male, gym-going population of Gujranwala as a sample, this study explores the effect Bollywood movies had on their idea of masculinity, which can be defined as one where men are supposed to have beefed up bodies and are dominant and assertive. The current study explores the link between three phenomena; bodybuilding, Bollywood and masculinity.

This study looks at the impacts of body imagery shown in Bollywood movies on the younger generation of men in Pakistan and the relationship between the body types and masculinity traits portrayed in these movies and the bodybuilding culture in Pakistan. There have been no significant studies that link masculine body image portrayals in Bollywood with gym-going trends and attitudes in South Asia, and I believe that my paper will make significant advances in this area for further researches.

The methodology used for this research is quantitative, as it explores the relationship between Bollywood movies and gym-going behaviour in Gujranwala. A hundred male gym-goers from Gujranwala selected through Quota Sampling were asked to fill the questionnaire and the results collected were then manually accumulated in the SPSS software. The questionnaire consisted of the questions related to their gym-going behaviour, their taste of Bollywood movies, and their idea of what constitutes to be a real man.

The upcoming chapters will present the readers with an overview of Bollywood and its relationship with masculinity, body imagery and bodybuilding, the impact of Bollywood movies in Pakistan, a brief overview of the past scholarship on toxic masculinity, unhealthy body image portrayals and cinema, followed by a section on the findings of my

study and how it corresponds with the existing literature and lastly, the conclusion.

The Idea of Masculinity

In order to understand how it may impact one's life and the society at large, it is firstly important to understand the different ways in which masculinity can be defined. Masculinity is understood as a personality type which consists of traits include courage, independence and assertiveness. Machismo is often termed as a deep structure of masculinity and is often equated with bravery, sexual domination, and protective about honour, being able and willing to face the dangers. By teaching all these traits to men, they are taught to be assertive, while women are forced to be passive. Machismo might lead to a man being the total opposite of hypersensitive, often resorting to violence as a form of expressing his feelings (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Masculinity has different interpretations depending on cultures and history. However, the basic frame of the term is quite similar, generally and contributes to strengthening gender roles by attributing a particular gender with a set of traits and responsibilities (Dornan, 2004; Kaufman, 2015). This definition of masculinity certainly fits well within the South Asian concept of what a man should be and is echoed in the Bollywood movie portrayals of the "perfect man" – which will be discussed later in the paper. In South Asian cultures, the concept of masculinity is taken very seriously and if a man fails to display the right masculine characteristics, he is instantly considered an outcast and is made a subject of public ridicule. (Dornan, 2004; Kaufman, 2015). As we will later discuss in the discussions section, a man who cannot identify with these set masculine traits is mocked and deemed less of a man – something also echoed time and again in the Bollywood movies discussed in this paper.

The cinematic portrayal of these strict categorisation of masculine traits into a mould of hegemonic masculinity can lead to men feeling the need to perform a certain kind of masculinity. Much like the case of discontent over female bodies, males also face the same malaise over their physiques and bodies. While in the case of females, such discontent leads to issues like anorexia nervosa, in order to achieve a thin frame; in the case of males to achieve masculine bodily features, phenomena like muscle dysmorphia are witnessed. According to various researches, the reason why most males are unsatisfied with their bodies is the socially constructed concept of masculinity and its connection with body image (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kapoor, 2017).

Bollywood and Masculinity

For decades, Bollywood movies are infamously portraying a hegemonic and toxic form of masculinity. The male protagonist is a tall, muscular fellow with a carefully crafted body, sporting a set of abs and bulging muscles. Someone who can conveniently beat up a hundred bad guys with one hand and refuse to die even after bullets pierce his body. This toughness is not limited just to the sculpted bodies of the heroes; it expands to all other parts of their personality too. A quintessential Bollywood hero will be rowdy, full of revenge for the wrongs done to him and his loved one, assertive and angry (Shandilya, 2014). Not only this, the cute looks of this hero will also allow him to get away with harassing and stalking the women as a gesture of love. In his show *Satyamev Jayate*, Aamir Khan, one of the leading Bollywood stars admitted that Bollywood movies, teach the audiences that if they harass and stalk women, they would fall in love with them. He later apologised for having worked in such movies himself (Lakshmi, 2014).

A United Nations [UN] report in 2014 revealed, “Deep-seated discrimination, pervasive stereotyping, sexualisation of women and their underrepresentation in powerful roles by the international film industry” (Singh, 2014). The study by UN especially notes the overall high depiction of women as a sexual object, rather than on empowering

roles. The male-centric movies produced by Bollywood can itself be traced back to the Hindi culture, where patriarchy reigns supreme and the alpha male is thought to be a brave person who fights for whatever is his and is often a hero (Vetticad, 2016). Keeping this in mind, men often take the leading position in the Hindi cinema, where the hero, as described by Vetticad (2016), is “north Indian, Hindu, upper-caste, heterosexual men marked out by their ability and desire to be the sole breadwinner, protector and head of a household, to fight wars if they are aristocrats, to single-handedly bash up dozens of goons and/or to woo women to the point of hounding them.” This can be evident from Akshay Kumar’s *Holiday*, where he stalks the heroine and kisses her forcefully in the public, or Salman Khan lifting Jacqueline Fernandez’s skirt in *Kick* - all they are in for is to be won over by the hero (Vetticad, 2016).

Among other traits depicted in Bollywood movies that are taught to be “masculine”, one is their body image. The idea of a “masculine physique” is dominated by hefty sizes, through movies and action figures, is shown to be a bulky body with beefed up muscles. While men are expected to look in a certain way, they are forced to repress their emotions, act cold and should not get swayed by their feelings. This objectification of a male’s body then result in men striving to achieve the ideal and upon failing to do so, they end up under severe societal pressure, resulting in depression, self-imposed isolation, low on self-esteem and often going for unhealthy means to achieve that body image (Deus, 2012; Miller, 1998).

Bodybuilding Culture in Pakistan

Bodybuilding can be defined as the use of “progressive resistance exercise” to develop the muscles (Emery, 2003). This exercise is done using dumbbells, barbells, machine stations, gradually increasing the weight. If it is done effectively using proper diet and control, the body can transform, enhancing a man’s overall look. Although bodybuilding is mostly exercised for health and fitness purposes, there are certain sports related to it – competitions and powerlifting (Emery, 2003).

History of bodybuilding in the Subcontinent can be traced back to the 11th century when men used dumbbells made up of wood to enhance their physiques. However, bodybuilding as a sport was developed in the 19th century. After the partition, a Health Culture Movement was started in 1948 at Bagh-e- Jinnah, Lahore. Soon afterwards, when the youth in Lahore responded with great fervour, more clubs were opened all over the city. First competition can be traced to have occurred in 1952, titled Mr Lahore. Following its success, the competition was expanded to the provincial level, as Mr Punjab was organized soon after. The same year, in December, the first ever Mr. Pakistan contest was organized in Lahore by Pakistan Amateur Bodybuilders Association. In 1995, when the fourth annual Mr. Pakistan was organized, it became the well-attended contest, with 55 bodybuilders taking part from all over the country. Bodybuilding has been especially popular in the Punjab region of Pakistan and it can be said that the country has a long history attached with bodybuilding (Verkaaik, 2013).

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of Bollywood movies on the existent bodybuilding culture in Pakistan?
2. What role does Bollywood culture play in strengthening the gender-related stereotypes in Pakistani male population?

Literature Review

Since the focus of this research is on the stereotypical ideas of masculinity, it is important to explore the role played by media in promoting certain gender-related stereotypes. Some of the most popular gender-related stereotypes include “boys will be boys” or “girls should not get dirty”, lying bare the socially constructed ideas about gender. This section reviews the existing literature on this topic in order to

understand the phenomenon of masculinity and body imagery, and their relationship with Bollywood cinema.

Prevalent depiction of genders in media portray a woman as caring, polite, cooperative, conscious about the way she looks and is overly sensitive. On the contrary, a man is often portrayed as someone very rational, competent, assertive, and good in everything (Foss, 2008; Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1986) Women are often portrayed as sex objects in media, where most of the times, their bodies are shown unnecessarily. However, over the past few years, male bodies have also been presented as “erotic spectacle and commodity”, changing the overall idea and experience of masculinity (Kapoor, 2017; Verkaaik, 2013).

Bollywood in Pakistan

The Bollywood industry and its course of action have deeply integrated themselves into the Pakistani society. There is a large audience of Bollywood cinema in Pakistan and a huge amount of fan following for the Bollywood actors and actresses. The cinemas in Pakistan are also reliant on Bollywood films in order to survive (Juni, 2014). This is because the film industry in Pakistan is not producing enough content to keep the cinema business running. According to Juni (2014), Bollywood films and music have heavily influenced the Pakistani society over the past few years. From Indian music being played in local festivities to Pakistani channels airing Indian entertainment shows to Bollywood films heavily appreciated by masses in Pakistan, different segments of the society in Pakistan are definitely contingent on Indian industry mediums for their daily dose of entertainment (Hussain, 2017).

The popularity of Bollywood films can be judged from their box office collections in Pakistan. PK collected around 19 crore INR in Pakistan, followed closely by Dhoom 3, which collected 12 crore INR. Shah Rukh Khan's Don 2 managed to collect more than 4 crore INR (Nagpal, 2015).

The Bollywood Connection

To understand the phenomenon of movie-going, it is important to understand the idea of identification. Over the past decade, the definition of an ideal hero in Bollywood has transformed from the lover-boy like Aman in *Kal Ho Na Ho* to Chulbul Pandey in *Dabangg*. While the trend of Bollywood heroes going shirtless is very old, Shah Rukh Khan was the first one to develop the modern-day 8 pack-abs for his *Om Shanti Om* song, *Dard-e-Disco*. *Om Shanti Om* grossed 1.5 Billion INR worldwide, becoming the highest grossing movie at the time of its release (PlanetBollywood, 2007).

Ghajini was released only few months after *Om Shanti Om*, again with Aamir Khan with a hefty body and often shirtless. It broke all existing box office records by crossing the 100-crore mark in India. Ghajini was also released in Pakistan, amid heightened political tensions between India and Pakistan. *India Express*, an India daily reported that it opened to good response from the audience and continued running in the cinemas for more than three weeks. The report said: Ghajini' opened to a good response three weeks ago and most Pakistanis are raving about the film (*The Indian Express*, 2009).

Salman Khan's *bodyguard*, which was released in 2011 opened to rave reviews in Pakistan, with movie grossing 50 million rupees on its first day. (Dawn, 2011). In *Bodyguard*, Salman Khan is again a muscular bodyguard who is supposed to protect a woman. In its title song, he wiggles his heavily built biceps to the tunes of music. Salman Khan *Starrers Dabangg* and *Dabangg 2* broke all the existing box office records at the time in Pakistan, with the second part grossing PKR 1 crore on the opening day. Both the films end with a fight where Salman Khan, showing his heavily built, muscular body fights the villain and ends up winning (Indicine, 2013). Salman Khan's *Sultan*, which is about a wrestler's life, has become the biggest grossing movie in Pakistan, earning more than 300 million (Aijaz, 2016).

Such movies finding success in Pakistan points towards the acceptance they found among the audiences, resulting in the increase in gym-going population. Herald's Umer Ali visited Gujranwala – a city famous of its pehalwani and bodybuilding – and discovered serious Bollywood influence on the gym culture there (Miller, 1998; Ali, 2016).

Ali (2016) argues that a significant increase in the gym-going population after *Dabangg* and *Dabangg 2*. Several gym owners confirmed to (Ali, 2016) that “many of the trainees come here with the sole purpose of looking like Salman Khan. Their haircuts and facial hair are all in the fashion of Chulbul Pandey.”

Bollywood movies are popular all over the South Asian Diaspora and their popularity, especially in India has prompted many researches on their impact on the society. The continuous negative portrayal of women has led to the validation of women as inferior beings and it has reinforced the idea that this is natural (Kapoor, 2017). Apart from being depicted as inferior beings, women are also sexually objectified. They are strategically placed in the movie to cater to the “male gaze” (Khan & Taylor, 2018).

In her essay titled “Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema”, Mulvey (1975), proposed that women are mostly portrayed as an object of the male sexual desire and her own desires or feelings are not as important as the pleasure of the heterosexual, male audience. In Bollywood movies, the heroine is, with few exceptions, always secondary and lower than the hero. Her role in most Bollywood movies is given in the context of a male protagonist, whose role is central to the script. Females are rarely given roles where they hold their own, independent existence (Khan & Taylor, 2018). However, in the recent years, male body has also been eroticised. Like Shah Rukh Khan showing his six pack abs in “Dard- e-disco” from *Om Shanti Om* is placed for the pleasure of female audiences (Roy, 2010).

Movies like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* “reinforce conventional gender constructions”. Hero, named Rahul is an urban, straight male, who is friends with a tomboyish girl Anjali (who is in love with Rahul), falls in

love with Tina after she proves to him that she's a good Indian woman. Meanwhile, Anjali tries to conform to Rahul's beauty standards but fails. Heartbroken, Anjali goes away from his life. Years later, she has now become "womanly" and is about to get married to another man but in a "giving-a-bride-over" scene, her fiancé takes her to Rahul, with whom she gets married (Ciecko, 2001). Similarly, when someone watches a Hindu film, they respond to it and interpret it, first as a man or a woman and other aspects of your identity might be irrelevant in your interpretation of a film. Contrary to these urban college-going type heroes, is the brand of heroes like Chulbul Pandey in *Dabangg*, who are hyper-masculine, have beefed-up bodies, are the agency for goodness and fight the evil. Girls often swoon over them and they decide which girl they want to be with, not the other way around. Movies like these in India all over the world have led to a crisis of body image among the male movie-going population (Ciecko, 2001).

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It is generally thought that body dissatisfaction is a problem associated only with the females. However, several researches have shown that men are also a victim of body dissatisfaction and this rate is fast increasing (Primus, 2014). According to a Psychology Today survey conducted in 1997, around 47% of men were dissatisfied with their bodies. However, Primus (2014) argues that the numbers could be much higher because many men would be too embarrassed to talk about these issues, in an attempt to avoid being mocked as "gay" or "girlie".

Male becoming overly body conscious has been explained by Threatened Masculinity Theory (Mills & D'alfonso, 2007), which explains that with the growing popularity of the feminist movement, women are now standing shoulder-to-shoulder with men and are no more dependent on them. The roles like being the breadwinner and a "man", which were a way for men to assert their muscularity, have now diminished, forcing them to look for other avenues to do so. According to Mills & D'alfonso (2007), failure to distinguish themselves from women leads men to focus on their bodies, as a way of regaining their masculinity and express it more assertively.

Psychoanalysis by Badinter reveals that the male body consciousness is also an attempt of men to differentiate themselves from women. Since men come from female bodies, they struggle to disenchant themselves from female body, to assert their masculinity (Rodgers, 1995). Validating this argument, Primus (2014) believes that as men look at muscularity as an avenue to express their masculinity, the ideal male body image in media has also changed to a muscular one, as few studies indicate that male models are now becoming increasingly muscular and losing body fat. This heavily muscular body depicted in media is unnatural, as it is unattainable by most of the men. A barrage of these body images makes men to believe that should also achieve such bodies, and upon failing to do so, lead to male body dissatisfaction (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1986).

Similarly, Bollywood movies, having a large audience in Pakistan, have influenced the cultural transformation of the country (Matusitz & Payano, 2012). From Bollywood male heroes like Shahrukh Khan and Salman Khan becoming household names in Pakistan to Bollywood dialogues being a part of the daily life, Bollywood movies have a sweeping influence in the cinemagoers. According to Juni (2014), 72% of Pakistanis use CDs to watch Bollywood movies. 67% of them watch Bollywood movies with the sole purpose of entertainment, while 13% watch for the sake of education and 20% for information.

Pakistani cinemas mostly show Bollywood movies, as the quantity of Pakistani movies produced per year is very low and Hollywood movies don't attract mass audiences. Pakistani cinemas depend on Bollywood movies for survival (Juni, 2014). Apart from the cinemas, Pakistani TV channels also have agreements with Bollywood production houses and regularly showcase Bollywood movies.

A study about the impact of Bollywood movies on the cultural transformation in Pakistan by Juni (2014) revealed that an average male spends 6-7 hours a week watching Bollywood movies. It also indicated that the day-to-day interaction of Pakistani youth is influenced by the

Indian movies. The study further revealed that the dressing choices of the Pakistani youth were heavily affected by the India movies.

With this sort of cultural impact of Bollywood movies on the Pakistani audiences, one of the research questions for this thesis are highlighted once again; do Bollywood movies affect the bodybuilding culture in Pakistan? Several studies suggest that the image of a hero has changed over time in Bollywood movies. According to Kavi (2000), the difference between male Bollywood heroes can be judged by two movies which are a few decades apart. In *Achyut Kanya* released in 1940, Ashok Kumar's body is always covered, while in *Salman Khan's Judwa* produced in 1990, he's shown shirtless at every chance. This phenomenon is often referred to as the "eroticisation of male body" (Kavi, 2000).

Salman Khan's movies from 2014 to 2017 are prime examples of this phenomenon. According to Shandilya (2014), Khan is an action hero who cracks jokes with the villain while showing off his impeccable abs and saving the damsel in distress. This larger than life persona that he creates on screen with his movies *Ready*, *Bodyguard*, *Ek Tha Tiger*, *Dabangg 2*, have launched Khan into super-stardom. In these movies, the plot revolves around the muscular heroes who express their masculinity through fighting off with the villains; the fight sequence itself is focused on two male bodies, both "inviolable and impenetrable". However, the hero succeeds in violating the body of the villain and succeeds (Shandilya, 2014).

Like the hyperbolising of women body creates a distance between a woman and her body, allowing the audience to her femininity as being constructed, same is the case with the male body in action films. These films limit the masculinity to the depiction of bodily strength and physical power. These visuals, when seen on screen, move the male audiences to aspire for such body, leading them to practice hardcore bodybuilding, which often comes at a cost. Depending how an individual approaches bodybuilding, it can either just be a pastime or a sport. However, the "talent" in bodybuilding is based mostly on the appearance of a bodybuilder. In bodybuilding competitions, the focus is on

individuals, rather than teams, so bodybuilders tend to go to extreme positions to show their muscles in the best possible way (Denham, 2008).

Historically, bodybuilding has prevailed due to the fear of male bodily degeneration, in the context that male body has always been an avenue for men to express their sexuality. In the West, First World War gave a chance for men to reclaim their masculinity through bodybuilding. This, however, was different from the traditional definition of masculinity, as this time, equipped with muscular body, it was modernised and sexualised (Carden-Coyen, 2009).

According to Verkaaik (2013), bodybuilding is cultural product, in which the practitioners, either males or females, feel insecure about themselves, so they compensate this insecurity through showcasing their bodies in the public. It can also be the result of feeling powerless, hence muscular bodies become symbolic to power. While the male bodybuilders may want to look like Salman Khan in Dabangg, bodybuilding physique can be transformed through training, diet and at times taking drugs, the final shape, however, depends on the genetics. Hence, the result of a male bodybuilder can never be exact version of his idealized image, in this case Salman Khan (Verkaaik, 2013).

When this audience fails to achieve the desired results, they shift towards the use of unhealthy drugs and practices, for example steroids, to achieve the type of bodies they see in the movies. Several studies have shown the relation of eating disorders and plastic surgery with the body image disorders and how it might result in the use of steroids and practices by bodybuilders (Keane, 2005).

According to Keane (2005), steroid use is linked to a prevalent syndrome known as muscle dysmorphia. The dangers linked to the use of steroids are more than one. Male bodybuilders abusing anabolic may develop the female breast tissue, as their use starts interfering with the regular production of testosterone. Steroids are a shortcut for the younger bodybuilders who might aspire to look like the heroes they see on TV. Instead of training for years, doing different sorts of exercises to

develop a natural body, many would seek one pill that is going to speed up their way to the glory (Denham, 2008). The overuse of steroids also causes aggression, narcissism, hostility and irritability. Like drugs, the absence of steroids also causes anxiety, as the users crave for it. Muscle dysmorphia is based on the false ideas of body image as perceived in media texts. When suffering from this syndrome, one cannot see their body as it is in reality and rather see it as defected, due to their perception of a good body (Keane, 2005).

Another side effect of steroids is roid-rage, which is a psychological effect, where the users of steroids react in extremely angry manners. The term was first used in 1980s, when several bodybuilders were found to be committing violent crimes. The users cannot control their impulse and overreact in most situations. However, many researchers believe that such side-effects exist only in those who excessively use the steroids (Dhar, 2013)

The literature reviewed suggest a significant link between the male body image and the idea of masculinity, how it is promoted in Bollywood movies and how the audiences keenly perceive these media texts as reality, attempting to achieve the same body and may end up using anabolic steroids, indulging into unhealthy practices, which results in affecting their health.

Findings and Discussion

This chapter consists of the critical discussion and analysis of the findings of the research. According to the findings, 40% of the men have joined the gyms in less than a year, and 21% have been going to gyms for 1-2 years. Comparatively, only 3% of the respondents have been going to gyms for more than 5 years, which indicates that the gym culture is only growing popular now and might not have been popular enough 5 years ago. Both Sultan and Dangal were released in less than a year, indicating an apparent effect on the gym-going trends. 18% of the men spend more than 2 hours in the gym on a daily basis, which indicates the importance

of gym in their lives. While a majority, 41% of the respondents spend less than one hour in the gyms, indicating that they come for fitness, 4% of them spend more than 3 hours in the gym. Majority of the respondents were not too highly educated, which could be one reason why films had an impact on their lives, as they failed to watch them critically. Findings of the survey reveal that the Social Learning and Imitation Theory is at work here, as the body builders follow what they see on the screen.

One of the research questions for this study was to analyse the impact of Bollywood movies on the bodybuilding culture in Pakistan. 68% of the respondents of the survey, who were bodybuilders from Gujranwala, agreed and strongly agreed that Bollywood movies are a great source of entertainment. These findings match the findings of Juni (2014), who also stated that Bollywood movies had a large audience in Pakistan. Only 18% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that Bollywood movies are a great source of entertainment, and 10% remained neutral. One of the main focuses of this study has been the impact of Salman Khan's movies on the bodybuilding culture, as it has been identified in the literature review that his movies have depicted a very hyper- masculine hero, and very stereotypical gender roles. As per the responses of the bodybuilders, 49% of them believe Salman Khan has the best body among the other Bollywood actors. John Abraham is the second most popular actor among the bodybuilders in Gujranwala, 29% of them believe he has the best body among his rivals. 17% of the respondents believed Hrithik Roshan had the best body, while only 4% voted for Vidyut Jammwal, who has very pumped body, but is not too popular as yet. Salman Khan is mostly known as "Salman Bhai" among his fans, which exist in large numbers in Pakistan as well, as indicated by the findings of this study. The line between the screen and reality gets blurred, enabling the audiences to see Salman Khan as one of their own, thus they try to imitate him. This corresponds to the imitation theory, which states that humans tend to learn and imitate what they see around them. This can turn toxic, as the real-life persona of Salman Khan would be completely different, and it will be like chasing the wrong ideals.

Salman Khan has become a very popular phenomenon among Pakistani male, gym-going population, as 70% of the respondents believe that Salman Khan is the most masculine hero of all times. 73% of the respondents also believe that when the audiences see Salman Khan on the screen, performing different stunts, depicting a hyper-masculine persona, they are inspired to follow him. Salman Khan's last film *Sultan*, which broke all box office records in Pakistan and was about the life of a wrestler, is a huge hit in Gujranwala, and was 87% of the respondents have watched it. Only 12% of the respondents disagree that *Sultan* can inspire men to join gyms, while 83% of them agree that *Sultan* inspires men to join gyms. It is important to note here that while Bollywood movies did inspire many men to join the gyms, the obsession with body was always there in the society.

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77% of the respondents agree that the physique built by Salman Khan must be followed by everyone. These results clearly show that Salman Khan has a massive following in the city of Gujranwala and most bodybuilders either join gyms after looking him in screen or get inspiration from him and workout harder to become like him. Salman Khan also appeared shirtless during as early as 1990, but his success started with *Wanted*. According to Shandilya (2014), his success could be due to the introduction of a *masti* genre, in which violence has been shown as a fun part of the film. According to Roy (2010), these movies are a continuation of the trend where the male bodies have been eroticised.

This study attempted to explore if the male gym-going population in Gujranwala liked Bollywood heroes due to their well-built bodies. 38% of the respondents strongly agree and 42% of them agree that Bollywood heroes look attractive and masculine due to their well-built bodies. This indicates the prevalent mind-set among the youth in Gujranwala in which they see masculinity through the lens of body imagery. The impact of this type of Bollywood heroes is demonstrated when 38% of the respondents strongly agree and 49% of them agree that these muscular heroes inspire the movie-goers to join gyms. Only 5% of the respondents disagreed that such body imagery depicted in the

films doesn't inspire anyone to join the gyms. Most gyms in Gujranwala are mostly abuzz with Bollywood songs, ranging from rap to item songs and these songs were instilling passion and fervour among the audiences.

52% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that muscular Bollywood heroes are a role model for people, and 32% of the agree with it. This is a clear indicator of the extent to which certain Bollywood movies have influenced the male gym-going population in Gujranwala.

One of the research questions asked in this study is, if Bollywood movies are complicit in promoting certain gender-related stereotypes in Pakistan. 35% of the respondents strongly agree and 35% of them agree that shirtless heroes shown in the Bollywood movies are true depictions of a real man. 10% of the respondents remained neutral, while only 20% of them disagreed with the statement. It shows a clear trend that along with the depiction of beefed-up bodies and inspiring men to join the gyms, Bollywood movies have also promoted a stereotypical idea of masculinity, where the real is supposed to have a well-built, muscular body. The heroes going shirtless are particularly shown as an important moment in the film.

As a continuation of the same trend, 44% of the respondents strongly agree and 40% agree that having a good body is synonymous to being manly. These ideas can become very dangerous for men, in what is known as toxic masculinity (Miller, 1998).

The gender-related stereotypes are strengthened further by Bollywood movies showing women finding heroes with well-built bodies to be attractive. These stereotypes resonate among the gym-goers of Gujranwala, where 80% of the respondents agree that women do find men with good bodies to be attractive. Female characters are mostly shown inferior to their male protagonists and are present in movies just to support and further the agendas of the men (Khan & Taylor, 2018). For example, in *Wanted*, Salman Khan is the protagonist, and the heroine falls for him because of his looks. In a song in *Ramleela*, when the

protagonist, Ranveer Singh takes his shirt off, women faint after looking at him. Apart from that, this also reveals that Bollywood movies set certain unachievable standards for men. Mulvey (1975) introduced to the concept of male gaze, stating that women are shown in media as an object of male sexual desire (Khan & Taylor, 2018).

In movies like *Dabangg*, where the hero is asserting his wishes upon the heroine, threatening her to take the money or get slapped, has left a mark on the male Bollywood movie audiences in Gujranwala, as 78% of the respondents agree that a real man is assertive. This is quite revealing of the sort of stereotypes that the Bollywood movies are strengthening and enforcing in Pakistan. 84% of the respondents assert that a real man should have a strong body. When this is seen keeping the popularity of Bollywood movies in view, it can be said that Bollywood movies depict a masculinity that revolves around strong bodies, hence there is a popular belief among the bodybuilders that they should have a strong body to be a real man, strengthening the stereotypes related to gender roles.

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As Bollywood movies mostly depict men to be dominant in their lives, the influence is evident on the viewers in Gujranwala, 47% of whom strongly agree and 41% agree that a real man is dominant in all walks of life – a concept known as Alpha male. Alpha male is known to be all powerful, all conquering, who single-handedly take on 10 men – aggressive and dominant.

As identified in the literature review, bodybuilders may resort to extreme dieting regimes, using supplements and steroids in order to achieve a certain look. 93% of the respondents agree that it is important to follow a strict dieting regime to achieve a certain look. On the question of supplements, 50% of the respondents agree that it is important to take them, while 38% disagree with the statement that it is important to take supplements.

The side-effects and harmfulness of steroids have been discussed in detail in the literature review. As many bodybuilders take them, they are not really aware of their side-effects. 33% of the respondents were

fully aware, and 33% of partially aware, a quarter of the respondents were not aware at all about the side-effects of the steroids. Despite a majority of the respondents being aware of their side-effects, 68% of them agreed that it was important for the bodybuilders to take steroids to take part in bodybuilding competitions. Only 20% of the respondents conflicted the statement that bodybuilders have to take steroids while taking part in the competitions.

Some bodybuilders quite often take sex tablets like testosterone, while working out. As shown in the (32% of the respondents agree that it is important to take sex tablets, while 52% were neutral. Only 16% of the bodybuilders disagreed with this statement, which shows the ideas that have taken roots in the younger generations.

25% of the bodybuilders were not aware of the effects at all, while 42% were only partially aware. Helen Keane (2005), who studied the steroids users and found them to be extremely violent and antisocial. She also notes that the steroid users went to extremes of personality disorders, as some of them were hyper-masculine, while the others were hyper-feminine.

The social learning theory introduced by Albert Bandura in 1971 was applied in this research. Every human being, like learning from other external factors, also learns and imitates what they see in their surroundings. According to Bandura (1971), man's behavioural patterns can change through experiencing something directly, or by learning something new by observing others around him.

A person, unless he is attentive, cannot learn from his surroundings. He can only learn if he attends to or is able to recognize the features of his model's behaviour. After he has given enough attention to the model, then comes the retention stage, where he remembers the behaviour of his model. A motivation is needed to imitate the act of his act, which if present, can lead to reproduction (Bandura, 1971).

This theory was applied in this research and it was theorised that the male gym-going population in Gujranwala was inspired by Bollywood movies to join the gyms. Watching a Salman Khan movie in the cinema, seeing his hyper-masculine, muscular persona on screen, it is theorised that men in Gujranwala learnt from him and decided to imitate him, thus joined the gyms in an attempt to look like him.

Several experiments have shown that if children are exposed to violent behaviour in films, they tend to be aggressive immediately after watching it (Huesmann, 2005). This can also be viewed through the theory of social construction of gender. Many researchers believe that gender roles are socially constructed, and the society decides how a man, or a woman should behave. Social constructionism is the idea that people take things as “real”, which they see as being practiced in the society.

The ways through which gender roles are constructed can be divided into two parts. First is the materialist theory, which discusses the structures upon which the social environments function to perpetuate gender roles, and second is the discursive theories, discuss the meanings taken from language and culture to associate them to a certain gender (Alsop, Fitzsimons, & Lennon, 2002). The gender is defined only in the two binaries of male and female, which are defined by the way one behaves, talks, eats and dresses. The stereotypical definition of gender sees women as submissive and quiet, while men are expected to be strong and bold. These traits are constructed socially, and the individuals are not given the chance to decide their own identity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

If a person believes that he's capable of doing what he observed by the model, there is a more chance that he is going to imitate. Bandura (1971) named this phenomenon as “self-efficacy” and defined it as “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives.” This can be applied on the population of this research, as the motive of men joining the gyms was to look like Salman Khan and other muscular

Bollywood heroes, and in order to do so, they opt for unnatural ways like taking supplements and steroids.

Due to the influence of mass media, social learning theory is also applied on their effects on human behaviour. Media has become a very important tool to influence the choices made by everyone. In this age, people are bombarded by messages from print, electronic and social media, which subconsciously affects their choices (O'Rorke, 2006). Several big industries, like fashion or food are heavily reliant on the same phenomenon. This way, through advertising a certain brand for example, some ideas like masculinity can be associated with that brand (Bandura, 2002).

Several research studies conducted in the past have shown that movies affect audiences in general and young audiences in particular. After watching movies, young audience members are more likely to imitate what they see on screen and even indulge into unhealthy practices. These studies used various models of "media effects" to establish the influence of visuals on the behaviour of younger audiences, especially in terms of sex, action, aggression and violence (Juni, 2014). However, talking specifically about young Hindi film viewers, Kapoor (2017) argues that younger audiences make out different meanings from the movie narratives and their interpretation of romantic and violent scenes can be poles apart from each other, depending on the intersecting factors of their identities; their ages, socio-economic background and other life experiences. With this sort of effect on the behaviour of the audiences, mass media also promotes various stereotypes, which may include a typical depiction of an object, idea, belief or a community.

Conclusion

As the reviewed literature found out, Bollywood movies are extremely popular in Pakistan and have created a niche of their own. While the society is already patriarchal and has internalised the stereotypical ideas of masculinity, it is further strengthened by the depiction of manhood in

most of the Bollywood movies, where the hero is muscular, aggressive, assertive, and dominant over the heroine and over people around him. In particular, Salman Khan is the most popular actor among the male gym-going population of Gujranwala.

The stereotypical idea of masculinity has found fertile ground in Gujranwala, and it is further strengthened by the Bollywood movies. It is evident from the responses that Bollywood heroes are found attractive due to their well-built bodies, and having a good body is synonymous to being manly and dominant. The survey also revealed that 78% believe a real man is assertive. As the theory applied in this research was social learning theory, it has thus been proven that it works on this context of the study and the men in Gujranwala learnt these ideas from the society; movies being a big part of it. The survey also revealed the tendency of men in Gujranwala to use steroids and how they impact the health.

To conclude, the survey results have answered the research questions regarding the impact of Bollywood movies on the bodybuilding culture in Pakistan, the role they play in strengthening the gender-related stereotypes and in addressing the possible connection between bodybuilding and masculinity. It has been proven through data that Bollywood movies play a major role in inspiring men to join the gyms and look like the heroes they see on the screen. Apart from inspiring men to join the gyms, movies also formulate their worldviews regarding what the real man is, how he behaves and looks. Bollywood movies also set the standard for an ideal body image, which the men in Gujranwala attempt to imitate, and during the process, face adverse effects, especially on their health.

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Üstsüz Erkekler: Pakistan'da Bollywood, Vücut Geliştirme ve Erkeklikler

Öz: Gujranwala, Pakistan'da güreşçileriyle bilinen bir şehirdir. Son birkaç senedir, geleneksel güreş, vücut geliştirmenin kentleştirilmiş bir versiyonuna dönüşmeye başlasa da, erkek bedeni üzerindeki odakta bir değişme söz konusu değildir. Güreş ve vücut geliştirme faaliyetleri Gujranwala'da sadece birer spor faaliyeti olmaktan ziyade erkekliğin ve baskınlığın ifade edilmesi için birer araç olarak kullanılmaktadır. Kahramanın hiper maskülen, kaslı ve kendine güvenen erkekler olduğu Bollywood sinema kültüründeki erkeklik tipi Gujranwala'daki erkek izleyici kitlesinde oldukça popülerleşmiş durumdadır. Bu çalışma, Gujranwala'da hızlı gelişen spor salonu kültürü ve bahsi geçen Bollywood filmleri arasındaki bağlantıyı ve bu tarz filmlerde sunulan hegemonik erkekliğin Gujranwala'daki erkek izleyiciler tarafından nasıl yorumlandığını araştırmaktır. Yüz vücut geliştiren erkeği kota örnekleme yoluyla dahil ederek bir anket araştırması uygulanmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları Bollywood sinemasının Gujranwala'da oldukça popüler olduğunu, vücut geliştiren erkeklerin bu filmlerde sunulan hegemonik bedenler ve davranışlar örüntülerini idealleştirdiğini ve bu erkeklik temsillerinin spor salonlarına kaydolma konusunda erkeklere ilham verdiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bollywood filmleri, vücut geliştirme, erkeklik, erkek, Pakistan.