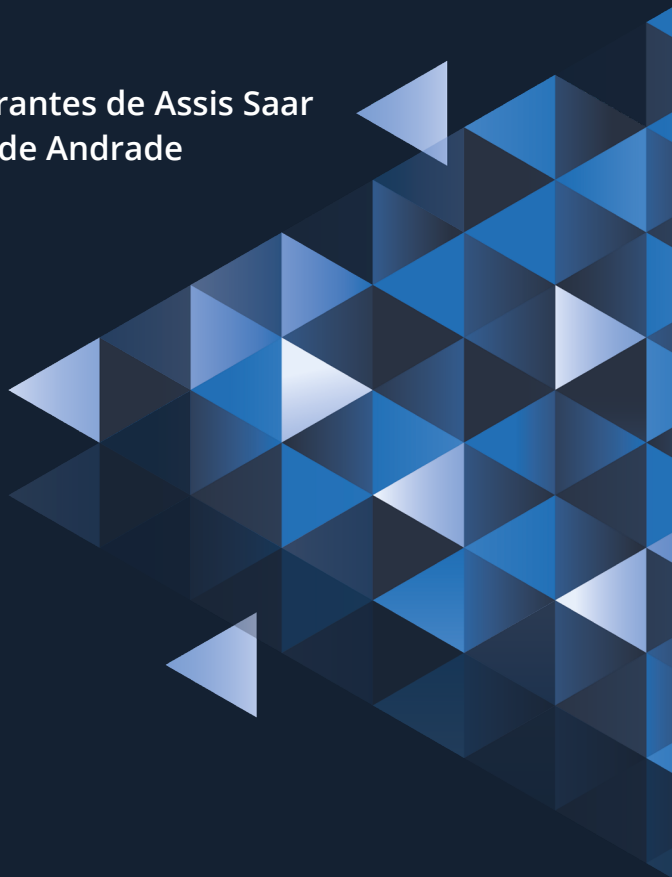


# *Perspectivas midiáticas e de educação na contemporaneidade*



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(Orgs.)



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## TV advertisement and childhood sexualization: a case of Pakistan

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## Introduction

The concept of sexualization in advertisement can have impulsive effects on the public. Apart from commercial significance advertisement often delivers significant cultural knowledge that can frame a path in which people observe the world surrounding them. In advertising there is use of models with perfect figures which forms standards of an ideal body for young girls which are changing the perception of the world.

A number of research studies have come up to reveal that models shown in advertisement with slim figures cause young girls to lose their self-confidence and lower their self-esteem and they start believing that they're bigger than they actually are (GUNTER, 2014).

In earlier days mature women assumed it being necessary, to look hot and attractive and now younger girls feel the necessity to look hot and attractive and with time deal with the exact feelings of imperfection and incapability to live up to an unattainable goal. Where the mass media advertises and encourages the flawless concept of perfection for both men and women, showing standards for an ideal body for women and toughness for men, that hardly anyone wants to attain. Such impact is evident in the form of disturbed eating habits of youth.<sup>1</sup> Nowadays young woman wants to be

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1 [www.b-eat.co.uk/PressMediaInformation#iHn0](http://www.b-eat.co.uk/PressMediaInformation#iHn0)

slim but also desire to be sexy. As levels of anorexic conditions rise, the number of women with breast implants is also observed to increase (ZUCKERMAN; ABRAHAM, 2008).

We have come across many articles and researches about the effect media has on women and men alike, but have we ever stopped to ponder upon how it might be impacting our children. Leave thinking about it behind, we don't really even pay heed to such ideas which if we may go as far as calling are considered "taboo" in the society we live in, the people shun away from such sensitive subjects. But even if we like it or not, we need to understand this dark reality and its consequences.

Pakistan is a conservative society where issues such as child harassment or abuse are shunned; the advertisers' produce ads with sexual themes without any regard for the possibility of their audience being children or the concerns such themes may birth in the society, that they may become the cause of an early introduction and exposure to sexual messages and thoughts in a child's mind which may give way for the adaptation of behavior which is not childlike and has its consequences; the fact that there is lack of literature in Pakistan on this issue is something also acknowledged.

There have been researches in Pakistan on the portrayal and treatment of women in the media, such as studies that represent women as a sexual symbol for enticing purposes and where regrettably,

media is not empowering women rather; they portray women as flawless, tempting, feminine but at the same time not being capable and potent enough to complete challenges (ALI, 2018).

Advertisements are instrumental tool for exploiting and propagating sexist ideas and imagery as an instrument for selling in a consumer culture, as represented in the study 'Exploring Sexual Objectification of Women in Print-Media Adverts: A Multimodal Analysis' by Tazanfal Tehseem and Zara Obaid. But even so there is an abundance of research found on the effect of media on adults, there are still lack of studies on how advertisement and the sexual appeals used in advertisements affect younger viewers.

This study will bring forward the issue of sexualization of children in Pakistan and may become an anchor for further studies on the subject. The three main objectives of the study were: 1) to explore how sexualized messages are framed in advertisements; 2) to find out what impact do the advertisements have on light viewer and heavy viewer children in Pakistan; 3) to analyze the sexual indicators or acts in advertisements that the Pakistani children watch that sexualize them.

## **Literature Review**

Even though most of us tend to forget the first two or three years of life, nevertheless the

early experiences may remain for years to come and last to influence us even to adulthood.<sup>2</sup> The brain goes through rapid development from the time of birth; the early experiences define if its architecture is strong or fragile. The brain is most open to influence from external experiences during the early sensitive stages of growth and development, may it be for the better or for worse (Center on the Developing Child, 2007).

In psychology, the reproduction or enactment of an action that is caused by a similar act by an animal or a person is called 'Imitation'. Studies on infants show that a child will reproduce simple movements of others in the second half of the first year, from raising their arms to trying to speak whereas the child begins to imitate the reactions of others to objects in two years of age. Growing up, children are exposed to all kinds of models most of which represent their culture. Imitation is the dominant building block of the social learning approach by Albert Bandura (BRITANNICA, 1998).

Children observe the behavior around them which was illustrated during the Bobo doll experiment in 1961. Children are surrounded by models like parents, characters on children's TV, friends and teachers at school; the child sees these models as examples and imitates their behavior.

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2 <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2014/12/19/371679655/some-early-childhood-experiences-shape-adult-life-but-which>

Developmental changes during early childhood have reflective and even lifelong consequences in a child's life, developmental and learning processes are happening at a rapid pace and these processes are not just rapid but also growing. The child's health, development, and learning construct a base for later learning and lifelong progress (Board on Children).

Children attend and perceive the actions they see from around them and may imitate that behavior without any conscience of it being gender appropriate or not (MCLEOD, 2016).

### **Impact of Beliefs on Viewers**

The impact of TV advertising on children has tainted their basic characteristics and habitual actions leading to its emerging concern, there are increasing conflicts in the family, family budget, less nutritious intake and poor health and the imitation of celebrities etc. (GALDOLAGE, 2007).

When a person's belief depends upon their sexual conduct or when they are detained to a standard that is associated with physical appeal also defined as being sexy, they are objectified, and to put it in another way they are presented as objects to be used by others instead of being independent and unique beings; in such cases sexuality is enforced upon them and such groups remain victims of sexualization (ZURBRIGGEN et al., 2007).



Women are normally considered 'sexy' only when they look young, which is confusing the line between who is actually mature and who is not (COOK & KAISER, 2004). The angst about objectification' is a more comprehensive worry of the blurring of boundaries amongst childhood and adulthood (BUCKINGHAM, 2000).

### **Portrayal of Females in Media**

In popular media, females may it be grown women or a girl, a mere child; are being sexualized and these depictions are on every other medium may it be television, music videos, or in print media (e.g., KRASSAS, BLAUWKAMP, WESSELINK, 2001, 2003; PLOUS, NEPTUNE, 1997; ZURBRIGGEN et al., 2007).

The female sexualization is specifically noticeable in the world of advertisements (ZURBRIGGEN et al., 2007). In peak time television commercials for example, Lin (1997) presents that women often were shown absence of proper clothing, they showed off their seductive side more and were portrayed as sexual objects and as the research demonstrates 9.2% of men and 20.8% of women. Similar results were presented on analyses of commercials on MTV (SIGNORIELLI, MCLEOD, HEALY, 1994).

## **Impact of Sexual Themes in Advertising on Children**

‘What is intended at children is not essentially consumed by them, and also what is aimed at adults is not necessarily only consumed by adults.’ In the article “Too Much, Too Soon? - Children, ‘Sexualizations’ and Consumer Culture”, they analyze that goods can be categorized with sexual themes being that they present a position of sexual activities through visuals, dialogue and even humor in a form of innuendo. It also includes products advertised in sexual context such as items in culturally sexualized settings, act of stripping or the wearing of sexy lingerie, in color red, black or purple.

Products advertising with the exposure of some body part and figure, culturally related to adult sexuality e.g. cleavage, curves, legs, skin etc. is also categorized as sexualization, where duplication of styles which are considered as the high fashion for adults and gender stereotyping of gender like the highlighting of physical attractiveness and intimacy of females and the presentation of dominance in men by words, symbols and activities (BRAGG, BUCKINGHAM, RUSSEL, WILLETT, 2011).

### **Consequences for the Young**

Merskin (2004, p.120) discusses that the advertisers and mass media portray girls as always

available, having a sensual mind and thus they will be gazed on as sexual objects. The Massive disclosure of media exposes women and girls to vulnerability and imparts the concept that women are sexual objects (ZURBRIGGEN et al., 2007). Cultural model theorists (BACHEN, & ILOUZ, 1996; DUVEEN, LLOYD, 1990) have debated on the notion that marketers present plans to the youth for life happenings of which they lack understanding, and which forms their cultural models.

The use of sensual themes in advertisement can have commercial and social impact. In commercial influence a specific advertising technique intensifies the effect of the messages on consumers by making it easier to recall or by stimulating positive attitudes towards it or the brand being marketed (GUNTER, 2014).

The repetitive sexualization has grave consequences on the young.<sup>3</sup> Children now-a-days are exposed to hyper-sexualized content, they're facing the gravities to be 'sexy' and 'hot' which the children of the past did not even know of, which consequences in them being body conscious while growing up along with the constant worry of their looks. And there is unquestionable evidence and cases to support such claims with regard to psychological and physical health, outlooks and beliefs (PAPADOPOULOS, 2010).

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3 [http://www.collectiveshout.org/sexualized\\_ads\\_are\\_harming\\_kids](http://www.collectiveshout.org/sexualized_ads_are_harming_kids)

As Calvert in 2008 addresses in her article the advertising of products to children, that even though vendors have targeted children for decades, the marketing strategies make the children who are younger than eight vulnerable because they lack reason and intellect to understand the intent behind TV and online advertisements.

### **The Growing Concern**

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, advertising became the domain of sexual symbolism and seduction (ASHER, 2002), In a review of the book 'Media and the Sexualization of Childhood' by Dr. Barrie Gunter in the show 'The circle of insight' by TherapyVideos (2017)<sup>4</sup>, Gunter debates about the prominence of sexual themes in children's lives, from clothing and accessories, toys and games, to music, entertainment media, advertising, and new media platforms.

The growing concern about the access of sexual images and themes in all kinds of products and different forms of entertainment targeting children and who are not yet sexually mature is addressed, who are under the age of 10 who don't understand matters of sexuality but nevertheless are introduced to them in subtle way, so they're introduced to this idea of sex before they're even ready to understand or rather deal with it in terms

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4 [https://youtu.be/v\\_pDykUi2Gs](https://youtu.be/v_pDykUi2Gs)

of their own maturity and it's also a concern in terms of turning children into sexual objects providing a source of reinforcement to adults who may have the wrong kind of ideas about children (who are sexually attracted by children) and there's such an alarming concern as well having children themselves becoming sexually aware, they start behaving in more extreme ways in terms of how they use sex to evaluate themselves which is not a healthy development, especially when the child themselves are not yet mature enough to cope with the pressures this trend brings in their lives.

Another study seconding Barrie Gunter's views (RODRÍGUEZ, VENTISCA, ALVES, 2016) where Kids on advertisements are often portrayed as much more mature than their actual age, the research also discusses how sexual appeals in advertisements can influence the psychophysical development of children negatively.

These images impact on the lives of children, taking into account that "childhood is a time of rapid physical and psychological development during which young people's physical, mental and emotional health can be permanently affected for better or worse" (UNICEF, 2012).

Nevertheless, most studies on the factors and the consequences of sexualization thus far have been conducted with adolescent girls which demonstrates that teenagers learn about sex from Television, whether correct or not

(DONNERSTEIN, SMITH, 2001). Correspondingly, college-age women who consume more sexualized content on the mass media ought to have a more sexualized attitude (BRYANT, ROCKWELL, 1994; DILL et al., 2008), sexual intents and behavioral changes including earlier introduction (BROWN et al., 2006; PARDUN et al., 2005), and compromised confidence (BEHM-MORAWITZ, MASTRO, 2009; DANIELS, 2009; GRABE, HIDE, 2009).

Furthermore, even though women sometimes revel in being sexualized (e.g., social benefits of attractiveness), it also brings major liabilities including body shame, objectification, and unwanted sexual advances (LISS et al., 2011).

As Dalton (2005) expressed, the concern that women at one time protested about being reduced to sex objects. Now, their daughters are volunteering to be sex objects. These girls appear complete, but they are not, there is every so often a lost little girl inside them. Moreover, in turning children into objects of allure for adult males, sexualization was represented as in this manner providing a foundation of child abuse and international child sex trafficking. 'Such dress prompts the child to imitate adult female behavior that she doesn't even understand. This can short-circuit normal development. It can also encourage older children and adults to relate to these young girls as sexual beings, sometimes with tragic consequences.

The whole process revolves around the TV advertisements playing a role of stimulus, the child imitates what they see by observation, imitation, and modeling, and like Cultivation theorists propose exposure to television can have long-term effect that gradually affects the audience<sup>5</sup> and the child may form a sexualized outlook and attitude in due time.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Cultivation Theory**

Cultivation theory originally given by Gerbner was later expanded by Gerbner & Gross (1976) they studied media effects, that whether and how exposure of television influences the audience perception of everyday life. Cultivation theory states that high viewers of television are more vulnerable to media messages. Cultivation theorists propose that exposure to television can have long-term effect that gradually affects the audience. The theory mostly focuses on attitudinal changes rather than behavioral, According to Palistha Maharjan (2018) the focus of the theory is on the unwary impact of TV on its viewers for they're the people considered defenseless against the messages of media. The line existing between the real world and the virtual world is blurred, and then even fictions are believed to be real.

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5 <https://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/cultivation-theory/>

## Social Learning and Cognitive Development

The social learning theory proposes that people learn from one another by observation, imitation, and modeling. Bandura's social learning theory highlights the importance of observing and imitation of behaviors and attitudes of others. Bandura (1977) stated that behavior is learned by observation through modeling and by observing others, one formulates an idea of new behaviors, and later in life this coded information serves as a guide for action.<sup>6</sup>

Behavioral learning is done observationally through modeling, behavior is observed and coded, and in later times this information serves as a guide for action (Bandura). Human behavior is explained in terms of continuous shared interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences

The question arises, how do we learn? Piaget's (1936) theory of cognitive development explains how a child forms a mental model and frame of the world. He didn't support the idea that intelligence is fixed trait and claimed cognitive development as a process which follows due to biological development and interaction with the environment.

### Methodology

To address the research questions of the observations an exploratory design of research

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6 <https://www.instructionaldesign.org/theories/social-learning/>



was conducted, the research had two parts. First was the qualitative content analysis of TV ads and then the findings of that were validated in focus group interviews for the second part.

An exploratory research with content analysis was conducted, a new area was examined using open-ended discussion from which new concepts are made and generalized (The SAGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS, 2008); 12 ads were selected in order to understand if they held sexual themes; the nature of cause and effect relationship between independent and dependent variables of the research was also studied, and validation of the effects of sexual themes found that can initiate imitation and developmental changes in children, was investigated with focus group research.

Typically to study the cultivation effect of the relationship between exposure to television and the reaction to those messages, survey methods are used. As the amount of television viewing is evaluated by the question that how much time does the viewer or respondent spends watching TV on average, the viewing time is important, but it is more important to examine the level of interpretation of the messages by the respondents. Variances in the viewpoints of heavy and light viewers provide indication of television's role to a viewer's perception of social reality (SHANAHAN, 1999). To explain the methodological approach used for the research, is to understand the main concept of cultivation theory in which Gerbner

states that to the Heavy viewer the only true reality is what they see on the TV.<sup>7</sup> Exposure of media cultivates Values, beliefs, attitudes and desires in people. Hypothetically, like a person living alone with no exposure or contact with the outside world except for what they see on the television so that all they know is from the TV – a world that is so different from the real world (FISHER, 2008).

To study the social and cultural issues that get limited by the quantitative design, the researchers concluded that the Qualitative research may help with questions of how and why a phenomenon takes place. Qualitative data includes participant discussion and observations along with the researcher's involvements, thoughts, and ideas.

The general order for qualitative research method is observation and open-ended discussion sessions. Interpretation of the responses was done, and a conclusion was drawn, providing a clear understanding of people and their behavior. It allows the researchers to examine and investigate further and to develop cultural and social contexts.

The strengths of the qualitative research design are the depth and detail of the process, its openness from the respondent's side may produce new concepts, theories and recognize aspects ignored by previous researchers who addressed researches quantitatively likewise in studies (STARR, FERGUSON, 2012; ROUSSELL, 1996).

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7 <https://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/cultivation-theory/>

The populations selected for the conducted research were the Pakistani TV advertisements for the content analysis and the children of Pakistan for the focus group discussion using the non-random purposive sampling technique. Qualitative research coding is about what category or base should the ads be analyzed (GIBBS, 2007). A Coding sheet was created using thematic analysis, five themes which were used to analyze the ads for any presence of sexual themes.

A purposive sample of 60 children was taken as focus group research; meaning that the intend with which children were selected was based on their characteristics deemed accommodating to the research objectives, just as for the ads that were selected for *content analysis* so that to validate if the themes found from amongst those 12 ads that were analyzed had the an underlying sexualizing agent or not; the type of sampling done was maximum variation/ heterogeneous sampling.

Whereas the sample for the *focus group discussion* was divided into four groups; a single group containing 15 children. 2 groups (30 children) selected for the focus group research were heavy viewers of TV and the other 2 groups each having 15 children were those who were either light viewers of TV or had no exposure at all. The age limit for the research was 2 years to 12 years, which is the defined age range for childhood according to Piaget's stages of development.<sup>8</sup>

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8 <https://www.webmd.com/children/piaget-stages-of-development#1>

A school was selected for the heavy viewer focus groups, for the children there had the characteristics that accommodated our objectives, the children had diversity in ethnicity and social class (confirmed from their teachers and parents) which provided our research with a broader view point. The children for the light viewer focus group were taken from two madrassa's (Islamic religious school) in Islamabad (capital city of Pakistan), and like the former these groups were also selected with maximum variation/ heterogeneous sampling technique; the madrassa students selected was found having diversity as well. The researchers believe that this variance and diversity in both the samples may be generalized as perceptions from around Pakistan.

### **Data analysis procedure**

Sexualizing codes were generated for the content analysis from the existing literature in table 1 and the codes set for the focus group discussion were generated by the extracted responses; the researchers have gone through all the transcripts and highlighted anything that came as sexual, sexualization defined in the introduction section was also kept in mind; as were the responses and codes of heavy viewers highlighted in table 2 and responses and codes of light viewers in table 3. At the end, based on these set codes; table 4 and table 5 were given regarding the codes that have been identified out of the focus groups discussion from heavy and light viewers of advertisements.

**Table 1 – Sexualizing Codes and Themes Identified for Content Analysis**

Sexualizing Codes Set from existing literature were:	Themes identified
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Wearing of revealing, sexy and lingerie style clothing</li> <li>▶ Women acting in a seductive manner</li> <li>▶ Acts or clothing that accentuate or draw attention to woman's chest</li> <li>▶ Exposure of skin (legs, shoulders or back etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Sexual objectification</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seductive gestures and acts</li> <li>2. Heterosexuality and readiness</li> <li>3. Cultural objectification</li> </ol>
Other Sexualizing Codes Observed in Ads	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Women's availability or attraction towards men</li> <li>▶ Wearing of tight-fitting cloths</li> <li>▶ Men shown in a dominating position over women</li> <li>▶ Women shown taking baths or bathtub or pools</li> <li>▶ Gestures and acts pulling the viewer's attention to womanly features</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Male and female intimacy</li> <li>5. Male dominance</li> </ol>

Coding sheet was designed and the codes were generated using Thematic analysis for the *focus group discussion*:

The codes were generated by the extracted responses; the researchers went through all the transcripts and highlighted anything that came as sexual, sexualization defined in the introduction section was kept in mind.

The codes were created as demonstrated in the table that follows; the tables are just a sample of how the codes were generated:

**Table 2** – Responses from Heavy Viewers and Generated Codes

Discussion extract		Codes
Participant no. 1	I find the girl really pretty in such cloths ( <i>Backless/exposing shoulders</i> ); I was to wear such cloths. But when I tell my mother she says they're not right for me	► Acceptance of revealing clothing
Participant no. 5	The girl is <i>just taking a bath</i> and <i>we don't</i> take baths <i>with cloths on</i> , the ad is actually really nice	
Participant-no. 16	Look! She's <i>naked</i> in the pool (A boy telling his friend)  Referring to a Lux soap ad (Image 13)	► Children interpreting the women naked when shown in ads such that of soap or sanitary fittings (Image 13 and 14)

Participant no. 20	Observed <i>pointing and whispering</i> to his friend about the <i>women's chest</i> (Image 17)	► Children noting the sexual message in the ad
	Observed being <i>shy and laughing</i> when a woman was shown touching her leg or when a woman	
Participant no. 23	ran her hand across a tap (Image 3/ 1) and also when in an ad for lux the female actor is shown giving a suggestive look to the man (Image 2).  <i>Look how she is looking at him</i> (Image 2) -heard stating to his friend	► Understanding of suggestive message
Participant no. 28	The girl wants to be <i>close</i> to the boy so she plays the game	► Male and female closeness was found being accepting
Participant no.29	<i>I like how he finds her</i> The boy pushes her back <i>so she won't run away</i> again (Image 19)	
Participant no. 30	I remember <i>girls always run to the boys in ads</i> when they smell good (Image 5) <i>Boys like getting close to girls</i> when they like them	► Women and men portrayed as always ready

**Table 3** – Responses from Light viewers and Generated Codes

Discussion Extract		Codes
Participant no. 1	<i>It is a sin</i> to get close to the opposite sex	▶ Discourages male female intimacy
Participant no. 5	Women and men <i>should not touch</i> each other	
Participant no. 9	Men <i>should not expose their bodies</i> it is not right	▶ Disapproval to exposure of body
Participant no. 10	No of course not, how can you say such revealing clothing are empowering	
	These women <i>are wrong to wear anything that does not cover them</i>	
Participant no. 11	Women are <i>prohibited to expose</i> their bodies they should cover up, <i>Women of today will go to hell</i>	
Participant no. 15	<i>Dance is haram</i>	▶ Dancing is forbidden
	It is <i>what the Satan tells them</i> to do that is why men and women do such thing	
Participant no. 19	Male and females <i>should maintain distance.</i>	▶ Disapproval to attraction between male and females
Participant no. 20	No observed sexualized act	▶ Sexual indicator was not found
Participant no. 23	The participant <i>played with marble balls with his friends</i>	
Participant no. 30	Such things with men and women portrayed close <i>should not be shown and should be banned</i>	▶ Does not approve of sexual appeal used in ads



Patterns were identified among the codes found and responses expressing similar positive or negative opinions were represented as one code detected and these codes were used to identify themes found in the responses from the discussion session.

**Table 4 – Codes Identified from Heavy Viewers’ Data**

Codes Identified	Themes
Acceptance of revealing clothing	Cultural objectification
Children interpreting the women naked when shown in ads such that of soap or sanitary fittings (Image 13 and 14)	
Children noting the sexual message in the ad	Seductive gestures and acts
Understanding of suggestive message	Male and female intimacy
Male and female closeness was found being accepting	
Men trapping women	Male dominance
Women and men portrayed as always ready	Heterosexuality and readiness

**Table: 5 Codes Identified from Light Viewers’ Data**

Codes Identified	Themes
Discourages male female intimacy	Intimacy between opposite genders
Disapproval to exposure of body	
Dancing is forbidden	Body exposure
Does not approve of sexual appeal used in ads	
Disapproval to attraction between male and females	Heterosexuality

## Findings and Discussion

### Seductive Gestures and Acts

Women are portrayed in a tempting manner in ads, their sexual conduct associated with physical appeal also defined as being sexy, falls in the category of sexualization. Gentle and soft movement of their hands touching a surface, giving a seductive or suggestive look was shown in ads such as of Faisal Sanitary Fittings (Image 1), Lux soap (Image 2) and ad for Vaseline moisturizer (Image 3). The researchers observed the children understanding the sexual context of the ads, they understood what was happening in the ad was not something appropriate. Imitation of such actions were also observed amongst the children while the researcher's questioned the children what the looks meant, they even though didn't know what it meant they were still catching on the sexual nature of the message being presented.



**Image 1:**  
Faisal Sanitary Fittings Ad.



**Image 2:**  
Lux Soap Ad.



**Image 3:**

Vaseline Total Moisture Nourishing Ad.

## **Heterosexuality and Readiness**

Women and men are presented as attracted towards each other, from ads of men's body spray to women's hair removal cream ads; they are portrayed as drawn towards each other and being continually sexually desiring.

Gill (2008) points that women now present a new figure that is young, attractive and heterosexual, who intentionally uses her sexual appeal and is always portrayed as ready, and up for it, and such sexual characteristics are found to present men and women as always ready and available in the analyzed ads.

Women shown attracted towards men (Image 4) (Image 5) or men finding a woman attractive (Image 5) has since a long time been seen in ads and everywhere else as well. But when children view such hypersexual acts that they

should or can be attracted towards the opposite sex they then consider it a normal act, but as concluded from the literature review such exposure may not just start an early sexual introduction to sexual messages but will so mark their whole life.



**Image 4:**

Bold - Men's Perfume Ad.



**Image 5:**

Close-up Toothpaste Ad.

## Cultural Objectification

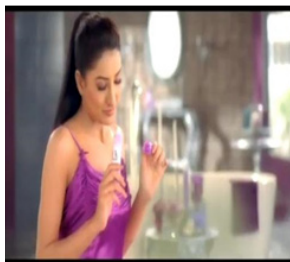
According to [thesocietypages.org](http://thesocietypages.org), cultural objectification is the portrayal or treatment of a person as a sex object and that serves for another's sexual pleasure; cultural objectification is also seen in advertisements (PEREGRINA, 2013).

When women are shown in an attractive manner with revealing clothing and sexually posed, they give a sexual message and when such content is mainstream theme for TV ads they provide the viewers with sexual contexts. Children now-a-days are exposed to hyper-sexualized content, they're facing the gravities to be 'sexy' and 'hot' (PAPADOPOULOS, 2010).

The repetitive sexualisation has grave consequences on the young.<sup>9</sup> A child when watches women in stimulating clothing they find it being the symbol of beauty and social acceptance and when these cloths highlighting the physical attractiveness and intimacy of females are adopted and approved of they become a symbol of sexualization.

The concerns raised on sexual objectification of children have taken a position that embodies a concept that is characterized by the disturbance in childhood socialization. There is an increasing volume of studies on the social sciences that has documented the essence and dominance of sexualization in different aspects of children's life and there are studies that analyze its psychological effects whether it's short term or long term. With time, its influence becomes apparent as they near adulthood (GUNTER, 2014).

### **Revealing Clothing (Exposing the Figure and Body)**



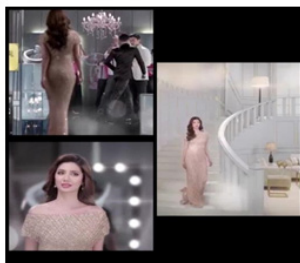
**Image 6:**  
EU Hair Removal Cream Ad.



**Image 7:**  
Lux Soap Ad.

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9 [http://www.collectiveshout.org/sexualized\\_ads\\_are\\_harming\\_kids](http://www.collectiveshout.org/sexualized_ads_are_harming_kids)



**Image 8:**  
Lux soap Ad.



**Image 9:**  
Palmolive Soap Ad.

Saba Kamar (actor) portrayed in the ad for Lux beauty soap (Image 7) is shown wearing sexy clothing where her shoulders, arms and legs are exposed while wearing of lingerie style-clothing like in ad of EU hair removal cream (Image 6) and Palmolive soap advertisement (Image 9), figure exposure observed in another commercial for lux soap (Image 8) where the attire of the actor is not just revealing but also accentuates her figure and the same theme continues in an ad for Face Fresh beauty soap as well (Image 10).

Body exposure not just grabs the attention of the viewer but also highlights the actor's physical attractiveness and as a result objectifying them. Media changes one's perception easily and when young people view such content, they think of "perfection", young girls associate perfection with wearing clothes that reveal most of their skin (PEREGRINA, 2013).



**Image 10:**  
Face Fresh Beauty Soap Ad.

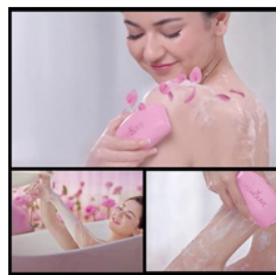
## **Exposure of Skin**

Portraying women or even men with exposed skin gives off the idea of them being naked e.g. (Image 16), advertisers do target a specific group or masses as target audience, but they can never be sure of who exactly sees their ad or if even a child is their viewer too. ‘What is intended at children is not essentially consumed by them, and also what is aimed at adults is not necessarily only consumed by adults’, expressed in the article “Too Much, Too Soon? Children, ‘Sexualisation’ and Consumer Culture”, including products advertised in sexual context such as items in culturally sexualized settings, act of stripping or the wearing of sexy lingerie, in color red, black or purple. Products advertising with the exposure of some body part and figure, culturally related to adult sexuality e.g. cleavage, curves, legs, skin etc. is also categorized as sexualization (BRAGG, BUCKINGHAM, RUSSELL, & WILLETT, 2011).

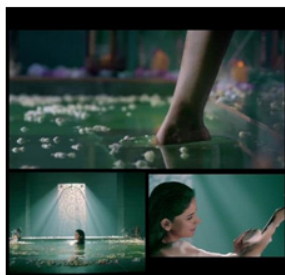
Advertisements using such themes include ads for Faisal Sanitary fittings (Image 11), Palmolive (Image 12) and Lux Soap (Image 13), and also Vaseline Moisturizer (Image 14).



**Image 11:** Faisal Sanitary Fittings Ad.



**Image 12:** Palmolive Soap Ad.



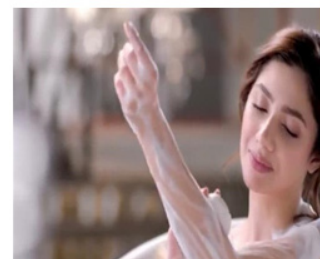
**Image 13:** Lux Soap Ad.



**Image 14:** Vaseline Moisturizer Ad.



**Image 15:** Dettol Soap Ads.



**Image 16:** Lux Soap Ad.



As there (Image15) is clear objectification taking place, sexual messages are registered in the mind of the viewer and in the case of a child they act as an early introductory to sexual messages.

### **Acts and Clothing that Accentuate Women's Chest**

It is very common theme observed that a women's physical appeal is used to catch the attention of the audience or when women are taken as sexual objects, it is an act of objectification.

Women seen running are an example of acts that accentuate a women's figure, their curves or chest (Image 17) (Image 10).



**Image 17:**

Jazz Mobile Network Ad.

## Male and Female Intimacy

Ads portraying intimacy between men and women as portrayed in ads such as for Lux soap (image 18) (image 2) and ad for close up toothpaste (image 5); portray attraction between them which gives off a sexual outlook. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography reporting a study set up by the US Congress and President, recognized that visuals and images alike arouse feelings. The research expresses that pictures or symbols portraying erotic activity don't have an automatic reflex response, the imagery engrosses the reader and initiates thought processes also known as fantasies and it is this process of cognition that brings around arousal (PRZYBYLA, 1983).



**Image 18:** Lux Soap Ad.

## Male Dominance



**Image 19:**  
Lux Soap Ad.



**Image 20:**  
Closeup Toothpaste Ad.

Men are shown in a dominating position where they are shown either pushing the girl back against a wall or trapping her like the ad of Lux soap and also in advertisement of Closeup toothpaste. Power is dominantly held by men and such acts that present dominance in men by words, symbols and activities fall in the category of sexualization.

## Focus Group Discussion (Heavy Viewers)

After the analysis and finding sexual messages in the advertisements, the researchers conducted a focus group discussion session with 4 groups of children to validate if the findings found from analyzing the 12 ads were true and if they applied to the objectives of the research; the researchers interviewed the groups separately; when the *heavy viewer groups* were interviewed

there was hesitancy at first but they quickly became at ease with the researchers and expressed their opinions about the 12 ads shown. They were asked if they have already seen them before and they all claimed of seeing them on TV, they were then questioned not directly but indirectly about if they:

- ▶ Approve of the clothing styles of the actors, that if they were accepting towards the revealing clothing
- ▶ Should women or men be presented as being naked
- ▶ What was their take on intimacy of women and men
- ▶ And how do they perceive that women and men are shown attracted towards each other
- ▶ Their take on acts highlighting a women's figure or chest

### **Cultural Objectification**

The discussion session was kept friendly and the participants were quite expressive except some shy children amongst them who's answers were rather undecided, the rest of the children mentioned no discomfort or disapproval for the clothing style of the actors like when they were shown Ad for EU (Image 6), the Lux Ad (Image 7

and Image 8) and the advertisement for Palmolive soap (Image 9), with the reference for the revealing clothing, a participant stated:

*'I like such clothing, the girl in the ad looks really pretty but I'm not allowed to wear such dresses'.*

Another stated on the former's comment that *'There is nothing wrong with them, everyone should wear dresses like that the girls look prettier in them'.*

One participant mentioned that the *friends of the girl also find her looking prettier in such clothing* (with reference to Palmolive soap ad).

Every participant's comment regarding the discussion of the clothing style of the girls in ads were positive as they all found the girls looking pretty and approving the dress styles; thus, researchers deemed their responses positive towards revealing clothing.

The participants were asked about the ads portraying girls and boys as naked (Image 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16), and the participants told the researchers that *'they are taking baths and we don't take baths with cloths on'*; other participants showed agreement with the statement of the spoken participant but also added their pointers which still expressed defense for the exposure of body, when asked that should girls be even shown taking baths their replies were ranging from *'it's an ad for soap at bath time'* to *'they should show*

*applying soap to just hands or arms'* to its actual demonstration by a boy participant who stepped in front and showed how the actor was applying soap to her leg and stated that *'she is just applying soap'*.

The researcher's showed the children the Jazz Ad in which amongst men, women are also shown running which puts accentuation to their figure and chest, all participants expressed having seen the ad and so were then asked for their take on the ad, many were found saying the girls shouldn't run and when asked the reason why there was hesitation but some participants pointed towards the ad and were heard whispering amongst themselves about the accentuation of the girls chest in the ad (Image 17).

### **Seductive Gestures and Acts**

The participants were then asked regarding the suggestive looks by showing them the ad (Image 1) and asking what they thought of it, the response here was mixed as while some simply stated and agreed upon that *'the girl is pretty'* and when were asked why she was making such faces they claimed they don't know but the researchers observed the participants especially boys kept talking amongst themselves and snickering and when they were coaxed to share they expressed that the girl shouldn't be looking at the man like that with reference to Lux soap ad (Image 2), while some girls seemed to shy away from answering

too; the researchers reached the conclusion that this could be due to the reason that even though the children don't exactly understand what a suggestive and seductive look is they still were able to identify its sexual nature and context.

For Vaseline moisturizer ad (Image 3) where the girl is shown touching her exposed leg and arm the children were neutral about it but they were again observed of understanding the sexual context, the participants responses were either undecided or as before were noted that many children started whispering amongst each other and a participant at the back was even observed whispering to her friend while she imitated touching her leg in the same manner the girl from the ad did.

### **Male and Female Intimacy**

Addressing male and female intimacy from Lux soap ads (Image 2) (Image 18) and close up toothpaste ad (Image 5) the children watched the ad with complete attention and were observed of understanding the sexual context of the ad, they didn't express it in words for they kept shying away from answering, the children again were noticed snickering and whispering amongst each other but didn't answer the question so the researchers tried another technique and gave them a 10 minute break and during that time they observed the children, the drift of their conversations were

noted, their body language and expressions etc. while showing disinterest to the children so they can freely discuss amongst each other.

The observations were found to be quite surprising; the children were commenting on how the male and female characters were dancing with each other and that it wasn't right but while they talked about it being a wrong act they were still getting its inappropriate but sexual context by the way they were found discussing it; a participant was heard saying to her friend *'did you see how the boy was close to the girl'* referring to Lux soap advertisements and another was heard saying *'the girl was going but came back to the boy and the boy came close to her too'* referring to the close up advertisement.

### **Male Dominance**

Addressing the Lux soap Ad, the participants were again observed discussing how the girl blindfolds the boy and how the boy pushes her to the wall (Image 19). When the researchers asked the participants joining in on their conversation that if boys should do that, there were responses like *'They shouldn't'* to when discussed further to figure out if they like or dislike the ad they all eventually answered in a positive manner of liking the ad and expressed of liking the game the girl and boy were seen playing in the ad (Image 18).



## Heterosexuality and Readiness

Where the participants recognized the other sexual themes they were when asked about the actions of men in the ads with reference to (Image 20) of how they are portrayed with dominating acts and symbols the children expressed again a positive response of giving away hints that they indeed understood the sexual context of the ad but didn't put it in words. Although one of the participants expressed that: *'Boy is powerful than a girl that is why the girl is trapped and cannot escape'*, When asked if such portrayal of acts are acceptable, the answers came mixed as a participant stated that *'the girl came to the boy herself so it is the girls fault she is trapped'* another stated that *'the boys liked her that is why he came back for her'*, the researchers also heard the whispers amongst the children that *'the girl liked that boy and the boy is going to kiss her that is why he is coming near her'*

The findings of the heavy viewer groups were shocking to say the least, having been confirmed that children at such a young age are exposed to such content which makes them think about the things they shouldn't have to at this tender age and to think about the damage and effect it has on their minds and development process is appalling also when the objective of the research that children imitate what they see was

proved during focus group discussions revealing that the media conspires and uses the appeals to gain profits without even thinking about the consequences for children who could also be the consumers of these sexual themes.

### **Focus Group Discussion (Light Viewers)**

After the focus group discussion with heavy viewers, *light viewers* from two madrassa's were separately questioned regarding what they thought of:

- ▶ Body exposure
- ▶ Heterosexuality
- ▶ Intimacy between opposite genders

Getting access to interview and talk to the children from the madrassa was not easy as the teachers there were quite rigid in keeping their students away from any sexual indication and thought our discussion on the topic was inappropriate and corrupting for the students there had very little exposure to the media if any and most had no exposure at all, but they agreed on the condition that there will be teachers present while the researchers conduct the discussion session.

## Body Exposure

The children were asked their ages and ethnicity and were made comfortable with the researchers and then were asked regarding what they thought of revealing clothing and exposure of body, their responses were expressed negative regarding the topic and the participant's responses were from them stating *'It is sinful'* to *'what kind of question is that, it is unethical to expose the body'* and stated that *'everyone should wear clothes that cover them, for that is why we wear cloths; to cover'* while amongst the 15 children from each group there were a child or two who were neutral about it.

## Heterosexuality

The attraction between men and women was discouraged by the children and they said, *'it is not decent'* and said such people are indecent, some children who were viewers of TV but had very little exposure said *'it was wrong and such content should not be shown'*

The discussion continued with how women are thought to be always attracted towards men and vice versa on which the children were observed being hesitant to answer but some children did confirm it is true but at the same time it is not a right thing, and even went as far as to say *'it's the work of Satan and such people who don't cover themselves and are intimate with opposite sex will enter hell'*.

## Intimacy Between Opposite Genders

When they were asked if they had seen male and female dancing together their responses lacked knowledge, as a participant when asked about having seen any male and female dance stated *'I don't have TV at home'* and when the researcher asked a participant who had two hours of TV exposure only due to his controlled schedule from his family he stated *'yes I have seen but my parents change the channel on such content'* and further elaborated that *'such content is a sin to watch'*.

*'I have seen man and women getting close in TV ads, but it is wrong, and I feel bad seeing it especially when my father is sitting beside me too'* stated another participant.

The researchers from all the children's responses and observed body language of the participants came to the point that the children who had no exposure to media or were light viewers of TV thus were not exposed to sexual themes and did not understand the sexual indicators or their context, it could be that their lack of exposure had not introduced them to sexual themes and they were found being safe from the early sexual introductory to their lives.

Addressing the research questions of our study the frequency at which people view the TV

defines their exposure to the TV ads and its sexual nature the children analyzed for the study were selected based on their characteristics and that being that they were either high viewers or low viewers.

Sexual themes are framed in ads by the objectification of women, heterosexuality and intimacy of men and women, seductive gestures etc. but the question then arises that how are children sexualized with them, as discussed in the introduction section children learn and imitate what they see supported by Bandura's social leaning theory which discusses how children observe their surroundings and learn from it; the child's development, and learning construct a base for later learning and lifelong progress (Board on Children). The cultivation theory by Gerbner also state how media cultivates ideas, concepts and frameworks in the minds of its views further supporting the reseachers claim that developmental changes during early childhood have reflective and even lifelong consequences in a child's life, developmental and learning processes are happening at a rapid pace and these processes are not just rapid but also growing.

Sexual context such as items in culturally sexualized settings, act of stripping or the wearing of sexy lingerie, in color red, black or purple. Products advertising with the exposure of some body part and figure, culturally related to adult sexuality e.g. cleavage, curves, legs, skin etc. is also

categorized as sexualization, where duplication of styles which are considered as the high fashion for adults and gender stereotyping of gender like the highlighting of physical attractiveness and intimacy of females and the presentation of dominance in men by words, symbols and activities (BRAGG, BUCKINGHAM, RUSSELL, & WILLETT, 2011).

When a person's belief depends upon their sexual conduct or when they are detained to a standard that is associated with physical appeal also defined as being sexy, they are objectified, and to put it in another way they are presented as objects to be used by others instead of being independent and unique beings; in such cases sexuality is enforced upon them and such groups remain victims of sexualization (ZURBRIGGEN et al., 2007).

## **Conclusion**

Children have models around them whom they learn from and who they imitate, we might not remember what we saw or experienced when we were mere children but what is learned sticks with us for life. Studies have proved including that of social learning theory, that children imitate what they see from infancy and in even the developmental stage of childhood and such changes during childhood have lifelong consequences, the child's development, and learning form a base for their future learning and progress.

In is the era of technology, a child opens their eyes to advertisements and is surrounded by them everywhere and anywhere they go; the concern lies in the fact that advertisers are using themes to capture the attention of their audience and consumers, and sexual appeal is a prominent appeal used. As said in the article “Too Much, Too Soon? Children, ‘Sexualisation’ and Consumer Culture what is intended at children is not essentially consumed by them, and also what is aimed at adults is not only consumed by them”. Children are introduced to the idea of sex before they’re even ready to understand or deal with it and they’re instead turning into sexual objects that can have consequences.

The result of the research conducted was found positive, objectives of the research were answered, and sexual messages were found in advertisements from portrayal of women and men being naked to intimate acts performed.

The research proved our claim that the sexual themes in advertisements act as a stimulus of which the response is sexualization of children; the findings and responses of the participants facilitated our objectives and concluded that heavy viewers found sexualized content as normal and rather enjoyable, where even if the children didn’t have the exact idea of what was happening in the ads they still understood its sexual context and the objective that whether children imitate what they

see was also proved during the discussion session, where the children demonstrated the acts they saw to their friends and the researchers. Early sexual introductory was observed in the high viewers. It is thus concluded that children don't just receive the sexual message from the sexual themes of ads, but they also understand its context and nature.

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