



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

## Fostering Parasocial Interaction between Users and Drama Characters through online communities: A Case Study of Ertugrul Ghazi Viewers

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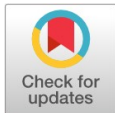
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**Abstract**— All of us, at some point in our lives, build an illusionary interaction with our favourite personalities which is all about one-sided affection and admiration for that favorite persona. That interaction is academically named Parasocial interaction. In the past, various studies confirm the impact of drama on its audience and how this impact changes their attitudes and behaviors. This study examines the impact of drama on its audiences' in the context of Parasocial Interaction (PSI). A case study of Ertugrul Ghazi has been taken in this regard as this drama, at the time of research, got the highest viewer ship in Pakistan. This paper revisited parasocial interaction theory and scrutinized PSI between a viewer and the drama character. The paper study the PSI between Facebook group members and drama characters. Qualitative content analysis has been used to explore PSI between social media users (who watch drama series and are also active on Facebook groups for drama series) and drama characters. The themes have been generated and categorized under the level of motivations for PSI e.g., physical, social, and task attraction, and new dimensions for PSI have been explored.

**Index Terms**— Parasocial interaction, Drama characters, Motivations, Facebook groups, Qualitative content analysis, Dimensions, Ertugrul, Transnational, Religious interaction, Disliked characters, Attachment

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### Introduction

The influence of media on its audience has been studied across different platforms of social sciences from the early twentieth century. Every discipline, including media research, builds its own literature on that. Different research trends take place over the older ones, and literature on media influence reshaped itself and was reshaped by scholars and professionals. The same is the case with Parasocial Interaction Theory (PSI), in which an unreciprocated relation develops between media figures and the audience despite the audience having no or limited interaction with the favorite personality. This theory progressed through time and was also confused with other terminologies (Horton & Wohl, 1956), but the worthy point is that from its emergence until today, PSI has been studied from various perspectives and got new possibilities to explore and test what theory claims.

Here the interesting thing is that PSI is common among us as we all build PSI with our favorite personalities (not precisely media figures), but people mostly are not aware of this term. The impact of media and the association that the audience builds with media leads to certain behavioral changes. These changes must be of different types; sometimes, they need to be explored by asking people about them,

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or sometimes these changes might be visible and too obvious to be noticed as a collective behavior (Enikolopov & Petrova, 2017). PSI also leads to certain points where the viewer of media not only develops an association with the character but also shows certain behavioral changes, sometimes on an individual level and sometimes on a social level, and this interaction is the same as real-life interaction with people. The viewer, audience or a fan of the media personae wants to be like the character and acknowledge everything that character does. The character can be anyone, from a newscaster to TV host, from a celebrity to drama character, and from a sports person to a politician. This study focuses primarily on PSI between audience and drama characters. Drama has a significant impact on its audience not only in terms of its content but also in the characters playing a role in it. Drama provides a uniquely engaging and distinctive experience that is not common in everyday life (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017).

Jenkin (2006), describe TV shows as a socialized experience that, with the insertion of social media, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, allows "the act of co-viewing as an experience shared by a larger international community" (Jenkin, 2006; Wilson & Ertan, 2020). Discussions about television series which is provided to a large transnational audience are taking place globally on various media platforms, and it is possible to find public or private groups about these shows, fan pages on characters, Facebook groups on the series, and behind the scenes videos allowing the audience of television serials in particular to have the ability to watch as they participate in the active discussion online (Wilson & Ertan, 2020).

This paper focuses on studying parasocial interaction between viewers and characters of the Turkish historical TV drama series *Dirlis Ertugrul* (Turkish) or *Ertugrul Ghazi* (Urdu). According to the feature published in *The Guardian* back in August 2020, the English subtitled version of *Dirlis Ertugrul* released under the title *Resurrection Ertugrul* on Netflix in 2017 has fascinated English-speaking audiences across the UK and the US. The series is now popular worldwide as it has been dubbed into six languages and broadcast in 72 countries. On YouTube alone, *Ertugrul* has surpassed 1.5bn views (Khan, 2020). According to the Anadolu Agency of Turkey, by May 2020, the viewership of the drama in Pakistan was 133.38 million, and people are still hooked so far, and numbers are still rising. (Sajid, 2020). *The Guardian* also called *Dirlis Ertugrul* "A Global Phenomena".

## Objectives

- To examine the parasocial interaction between viewers and drama characters of *Ertugrul Ghazi*.
- To scrutinize motivations and dimensions for the development of PSI between viewer and drama characters.
- To explore new dimensions and motivations of PSI between viewers and drama characters, and social media users'.

## Research questions

- Is there any relationship between PSI and social media engagement of the viewers of the drama (picture/ video posting and commenting on Facebook groups of the drama)?
- Does following Facebook groups increase PSI motivation (s)?
- What are distinct PSI motivation (s) that mediate PSI motivation (s) among users?

## Literature Review

### Parasocial interactions (PSIs): The concept

According to Perse & Rubin (1989), Parasocial interaction (PSI) is a one-sided interaction of the audience with a media figure (p.1). It is based on imaginary interaction rather than real-life interaction. It is perceived that PSI can be formed through an everyday encounter with the characters or personae through continuous television viewing. Viewers feel as if they understand the media figure similar to their own friends and close ones (Perse & Rubin, 1989). "The individuals get involved with a character in some way" (Cohen, 2009).

Kim & Rubin (1997), called PSI an influence of media that is projected and can be predicted through distinctive motivations and media selectivity. Horton and Strauss (1957) state that the PSI is an intentional, intimate interaction of the viewer with a character controlled by the media figure with no mutual development, and the viewer is aware that it is illusionary. The term Parasocial interaction was first proposed by Horton and Wohl in 1956; they distinguish parasocial interaction from any other type of imaginary interaction with media characters. Furthermore, they suggest that the PSI activates in circumstances when the popular characters or personalities recognize that the audience is watching them and talk to them directly through interviews or break the fourth wall (Dibble, Hartmann & Rosaen, 2016, p. 5-6). A façade of the character is a core part of the parasocial concept, the fictitious character that is created by media is only present within the domains of media and exists for the audiences only in parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 216). "Audiences attain a history of collective practices, which in return creates a bond. At the same time, as a part of their practices and experiences, the audience or a fan believes that they know the character more closely and deeply than others" (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

### **Dimensions and motivations for parasocial interaction**

Over the past few decades, various dimensions have emerged and were used to study parasocial interaction in a traditional media environment. Some of them were interpersonal interaction which happens during the initial stages of interaction (Rubin & Perse, 1989). Social attraction is associated with a media persona's friendliness and admiration (McCroskey & McCain, 1974) along with physical and task attraction. Attitude homophily is associated with shared similarity (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954), and it is based on comparable values and beliefs (Fredrick, Lim, Clavio, Walsh, 2012, p. 484). Rubin & McHugh (1987), suggested that social attraction is the factor that leads to PSI and discusses this dimension in detail. Later on in other studies, this dimension was studied through a quantitative approach and sometimes merged into PSI-scale. But it was always the part of PSI theory and concept.

The above-mentioned dimensions and their correlation to Parasocial interaction have been established during past decades of research in the relevant field. Auter & Lane (1999) discuss a new dimension, "religiosity" in their research on personality traits and religious media use. They discuss that the more rigorous work should be done before measuring the religious beliefs as, at that time the questions generated to access religiosity were ineffective in all cases. Similarly, Tukachinsky (2010), discusses PSI in the context of para-romantic love and para-friendship which were not clearly present in the studies before, yet it was an important factor in PSI studies.

Stever (2009), conducted a study on PSI between celebrity and their fans. The researcher stated that, "fans had three main motivations for being attracted to celebrities, most commonly referred to as social, physical, and task motivations (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Stever, 2009). In the research, "social motivation was indicated as identificatory attachment". Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) called second type "wishful identification." Bandura (1986) called it role modeling, and the third one indicated task attraction in which different categories of attachment were indicated for analysis (pp. 17-18). McCroskey & McCain (1973), discovered that physical attraction is an important factor in PSI, and it can be both positive and negative. One must admire the physical traits of their favorite personalities while some can also find the character ugly or hideous, which is also a type of attraction, and viewers have some kind of memory or sentiment attached to that character.

### **Parasocial interaction and social media engagement**

Unilaterality is one of the main features of parasocial interaction because the audience is near the character through PSI, but the media character remains unaware of this situation. (Aytulun & Sunai, 2020). The use of social media now a days is extensive; social media users can like and comment on the posts of the influencers. This liking creates one-sided nature of PSI that individual builds with character or celebrities in the traditional media, more mutual and somehow interactive, even if the reciprocity rate remains uneven (Chung and Cho 2017; Farooq et al., 2010). For instance, YouTube, which is a platform where people can watch, share and create videos anytime and anywhere, can increase the interaction with media characters which fosters parasocial relations (Madison and Porter 2016). Kim & Song (2016), states that celebrities & media characters share their pictures and information about private and professional life through social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, which creates parasocial bonding and increase interaction.

Audiences of famous people are comparatively different from the audiences' in the past. Media characters depict false intimacy in media as compared to the past when reality separates individuals from celebrities, and technology in this regard plays a crucial role (Braudy, 1986, p. 13 as cited in Laken 2009, p. 13). When it comes to fame, a photograph is one of the key points which allow people to identify images. The thought was that the photograph creates an emotional intimacy between characters and audiences.

Chung & Cho (2014), described that "social networking sites are effective in nurturing parasocial interactions in many ways. By using these sites, the audience engages with celebrities and have a conversation with them. Communication through social sites is fast and enduring, and this helps to enhance the closeness and attachment of users with characters and deepen parasocial interaction". (p.). "Social media is in contrast with traditional media because social media provides a platform where fans form links with other fans by creating virtual communities e.g., Facebook groups. Followers do this because they share the same interests, exchange comments and receive feedback from those who belong to the same social media"(Ahmad-Ur-Rehman, 2010; Haq et al., 2010; Malone, Grant, Turbak, Brobst & Cohen, 1987; Markus, 1987; Jones, 1995, as cited in Schroth, 2016).

### **PSI and transnational audience**

Ramasubramanian & Kornfield (2012), in their study on Japanese anime as a role model for U.S youth, stated that "to understand how an audience interacts with inter cultural entertainment and recognizing that audience members experience a variety of media effects as they consume and interact with media, the study explores the process involved as audience members watch inter cultural entertainment and develop long-lasting connections with characters from other cultures" (pp. 189-190). The paper explores how the U.S audience creates a meaningful bond in the form of PSI with the characters of a totally different culture. Yet the study also explores that there were certain traits of the characters which leads to wishful identification and then Parasocial interaction with the manga characters.

## Methodology

This paper used qualitative content analysis to analyze the comments of the Facebook group members on the posts of Pakistani Facebook groups of drama Ertugrul Ghazi to analyze whether Facebook groups are the mediator for PSI between the viewers and the characters of the TV drama series. Directed QCA was considered suitable for this study as it provides comprehensive data. The textual and visual data is collected from Facebook groups which were the tool for data collection.

The groups were purposively yet systematically selected. The selection of groups was according to how long it has been created, the number of members, number of posts per day and location. Also, the groups were monitored for about seven months before the collection of data and analysis. Five groups were under observation, out of which four groups were finalized for data collection and analysis. The complete posts from the beginning till June, 2021 were used to collect raw data for coding and analysis. Although all the posts related to drama characters in the group were studied, but researcher selected the comments which best fit the category to depict PSI between drama characters and the group member. A total of 94 comments were selected from group one, 75 comments from group two, 113 comments from group three, and 41 from group 4. The coding was stopped where themes started to repeat, and the researcher achieved thematic saturation. Every post in the group representing PSI was selected. This was done in order to achieve the maximum data and to analyze the phenomena completely.

Table I  
Data analysis and findings

Themes (Motivations)	A priori theme Description
Social Attraction	Users who find their FAV character a good person or admire their talent and abilities. All in all, the users who see the same qualities in FAV character as they want to see in a person in a society
Task and Problem-solving attraction	Users who are attracted to FAV character due to his/her problem-solving abilities, and the way they overcome hurdles and solve the given task
Identification or Wishful identification	Users who want to be like FAV characters or idealize their appearance and personality
Emotional Interaction	Users who feel what their FAV character feels, they feel the pain and happiness of the character and are emotions are involved in there
Attachment	Users who follow social media sites to stay updated about FAV characters and miss their FAV character, those who want to meet their FAV character in real life and want to see them every day
Group Identification	The user who finds resemblance of FAV characters with their family members, relatives or close friends and find FAV characters as friendly
Physical attraction	Users who are attracted to the physical features of their favorite character

## Frequently used words in comments by users

A program was developed to list frequently used words within a text (comments on posts), and then those words as used to discover which meaningful words were used most often in the sampled comments shown below. Later on, (Word Counter) was used to count frequently used words within sampled comments. The used words by users illustrate the PSI motivations of the users as the word itself describes a lot about the phenomena under study.

- Masha Allah (Allah has willed) is a word used by Muslims when they see something beautiful or when something good happens.
- Looks great
- Beautiful
- Love
- Love you all
- Nice
- Looks awesome
- Great actors

- My Favorite
- Insha Allah (if Allah wills it) is a word used by Muslims when they genuinely hope that something will come to pass)
- Beak
- Super
- Good
- Miss you guys
- Lovely
- Best acting
- Great
- Best
- So sweet
- Superhero
- Interesting
- Amazing
- SubhanAllah (Glory to Allah) is a word used by Muslims to praise the creation of Allah.
- I love you
- Kamal
- My sweetheart

Table II  
Emerging themes or sub-categories after coding data

Priori themes/ Categories	Cate- gories	Emerging themes/ Sub-categories (Extract from theory and existing research)	Categories (New pre-existing research)	Emerging Subcategories (New findings)
1. Social attraction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o FAV character is like my friend</li> <li>o I want to talk to FAV character</li> <li>o I am attracted to his/her personality</li> <li>o I admire his/her talent and abilities</li> <li>o FAV character possesses a good character</li> <li>o I admire FAV character because we have similar interests</li> <li>o I sometimes wish I were more like FAV character</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Best friend</li> <li>o Don't like an actor in real life</li> <li>o One-sided conversation with a character on FB groups.</li> </ul>
2. Task and Problem solving attraction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o I am happy with the way my FAV character handle problems</li> <li>o I respect how my FAV character resolves conflicts.</li> <li>o I can see strength and courage whenever FAV character faces challenges.</li> <li>o I feel sad when other people try to ruin my FAV character image</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o FAV character is brave</li> <li>o I want character to help us in real life</li> </ul>
3. Identification or wish-ful identification		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o I want to be like him my FAV character</li> <li>o We both have same narrative about life</li> <li>o We both have close ties with our family</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o I copy my FAV character in real life</li> </ul>
4. Emotional interaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o FAV character makes me happy when I am sad</li> <li>o I feel what my FAV character feels</li> <li>o I often agree with what my FAV character says</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o I cry when my FAV character cry</li> <li>o I cry when my FAV character die in the drama</li> </ul>
5. Attachment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o I follow FAV character on Facebook, Google, YouTube, and other sites just to see him/her.</li> <li>o I want to meet FAV character in person.</li> <li>o I want to see FAV character every day.</li> <li>o I see other shows and films of FAV character</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o I miss him/her every day</li> <li>o I want to hug my FAV character</li> <li>o I don't want any other actor to replace my FAV character</li> <li>o I binge-watch the drama series</li> <li>o Don't want to see FAV character outside the image that they portray in drama</li> <li>o No more appear in the drama</li> <li>o FAV character is like my brother/ sister</li> <li>o I wish FAV character would be my brother</li> </ul>
6. Group identification		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o I see FAV character just like a friend</li> <li>o FAV character characteristics is similar to that of my close friends</li> <li>o FAV character reflects a character similar to that of a family member or a relative</li> </ul>		

Table 2 Continue.....

Priori themes/ Categories	Emerging themes/ Sub-categories (Extract from theory and Categories (New pre-existing research)	Emerging Subcategories (New findings)
7. Physical attraction	<p>1. Sexual/ Intimate attraction Romantic Attachment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o FAV character is quite handsome and pretty</li> <li>o FAV character is very sexy looking</li> <li>o FAV character is very attractive physically</li> <li>I don't like the way FAV character looks</li> <li>o FAV character is somewhat ugly</li> <li>I find character as hideous</li> </ul> <p>2. Religious attraction and attachment</p> <p>3. Transnational interaction</p> <p>4. PSI termination</p> <p>5. PSI with disliked character</p> <p>6. Fan of FAV character</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o My life</li> <li>o I want my FC so bad</li> <li>o I want FC to be my boyfriend/ girlfriend</li> <li>o I Want to marry him/her</li> <li>o I consider myself to be hiswife</li> <li>o No one is beautiful in this world other than FAV character</li> <li>o I feel jealous when he/ she gets close to someone</li> <li>o He/she make me fell in love with him/her</li> <li>o I don't like anyone gets close to FAV character</li> <li>o I often see him/ her in my dreams</li> <li>o Character is representing Islam in true manner</li> <li>o Character depict true history of Islam</li> <li>o I specially pray for the wellbeing of my FAV character</li> <li>o FAV character is an idealized religious figure (Islamic hero)</li> <li>o Characters give good Islamic messages</li> <li>o This makes me happy when character accept Islam</li> <li>o I admire his/ her faith in ALLAH</li> <li>o FAV character make my faith strong</li> <li>o Want to go to the country where FAV character live</li> <li>o My country and FAV character country have brotherly relations</li> <li>o I want FAV character to visit my country</li> <li>o I welcome my FAV character if he/she visit my country</li> <li>o I like Turkish people</li> <li>o I am interested in the history of Turkey after watching drama</li> <li>o Stop watching Bollywood and Hollywood films</li> <li>o Start loving drama character and stop loving another FAV character</li> <li>o Appreciate DC skills and tactics</li> <li>o DC is good actors</li> <li>o Like his/her style</li> <li>o He/she pissed me off</li> <li>o I satisfy if something bad happen to him/her</li> <li>o Fan art</li> <li>o Fan videos</li> </ul>

**Findings and Discussion**

**Type of motivations and dimensions in the themes conveyed in the Facebook comments**

Based on the sample of the study, the paper investigates 13 motivations (categories) users talk over in the comment section of Facebook. Initially, seven categories were found to be applicable on the comments during sample coding, along with one emerging category, "Religious attraction and attachment". Furthermore, another six categories emerged during the coding that was relevant to the subject under study. The major categories consist of further sub-categories, which were around 90. These 90 sub-categories were not completely illustrated through comments.

**Social attraction**

This category was assigned to comments, which include statements containing the admiration of favorite characters' abilities and one considering character as their own friend, same as happened in social relationships. This motivation leads to the factors which make the audience attracted to the characters social traits. Within this dimension, eight out of 10 categories were illustrated, while the rest of the two categories were not illustrated. One of the emerging sub-categories was "I don't like a character in real life," which shows that they were so into that illusionary interaction that they started disliking the actor out of their character. It consists of total 10 sub-categories, out of which three were extracted out of final coding and the remaining seven were extracted from literature and theory.

### **Task and problem-solving attraction**

This category was assigned to the comments in which the users were attracted by the way their favorite character handled problems and got motivation from their strengths. They admire the way their favorite characters resolve conflicts and face challenges. This dimension basically depicts the attraction of users towards the daily life problem-solving abilities of the characters'. They also wish that their character helped them in real life as well. This dimension was discussed by (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin & Step, 2000; Shahbaz et al., 2016) in their research and advocated that this dimension is equally important to developing PSI between audience and media personality. This dimension got four existing categories, and two sub-categories emerged out of the final coding. Only one category was not illustrated out of five. Sample comments are exemplified in Table 4.

### **Identification and wishful identification**

This was the least depicting category in the comments. Only two sub-categories were depicted through the comments. This category was allotted to the comments in which users want to be like the character or copy them in real life. They feel like the character was their reflection. This includes the posts in which the users' commented on their picture showing the same hairstyle as their favorite character. Hoffner (2009), studied this dimension in detail and showed how the gender chooses favorite character on the basis of their identification with themselves.

### **Emotional interaction**

This category was assigned to the comments in which users' were emotionally involved with their favorite character. Users feel sad about the miseries and deaths of characters in drama and also feel happy when something good happens to their favorite character. It consists of five sub-categories, out of which two were explored by the present study. The sub-categories of this dimension was completely illustrated in the comments.

### **Attachment**

This dimension was also highly illustrated in the comments, and it was assigned to the comments, which shows the attachment of users with their favorite drama characters'. This would show the long-term interaction of users' with the characters and the continuation of the attraction even if the drama series ended. The audience try to keep in touch with the favorite characters through other sources and platforms. This is similar to everyday attachment with our loved ones, where we want to meet our loved ones and miss them when we are unable to meet them for a longer period of time. Horton & Wohl (1956), predicted this sub-dimension of PSI in their study. The four sub-categories already existed, while the researcher discovered six new sub-categories and is illustrated in Table 4.

### **Group identification**

This dimension of PSI was chosen for the comments in which the users think of their favorite character as their family member. They see them like they see their closest friends and family members. They also try to relate the characters with their family and friends. Group identification was also discussed in many research studies before and was also reported by (Horton & Wohl, 1956) in their discovery of PSI and its dimensions. This dimension consists of seven sub-categories, in which five were already part of the dimension while the other two were explored by the present study.

### **Physical attraction**

This dimension was interestingly associated with gender in the past studies, and the current study also sees this consistency in the comments. This dimension was assigned to the comments in which users seem to be attracted to the physical traits and physical appearance of the favorite character. This dimension consists of six sub-categories which consist of positive and negative physical attraction, and all of them were hauled out from pre-existing literature. Only three positive sub-categories were presented in the comments, as shown in Table 4.

### **Sexual or intimate attraction**

This dimension emerged out of the data during the final coding and was the dominant category within the comments. The reason for naming this dimension as the sexual and intimate attraction was the type of comments and the wording used in it. This dimension is somehow closely associated with physical attraction, but it was separately developed due to the nature and meaning of the comments.

This dimension is also closely related to Para-romantic relations as investigated by (Tukachinsky, 2010) but it was not named as romantic attraction, again due to the specific and distinct wording used by the users' for example, one user commented that "The older he grows, the tastier he became (Tongue emoji and heart emoji)" similarly another user commented that "He turns me on every time I see him... OHH mayn!!!"

### **Religious attraction and attachment**

This was another emerging prevailing and emerging dimension that was depicted in the comments. Users' were mostly attracted to the characters due to religious similarities as the drama was based on Islamic leaders and the history of Muslims in Turkey.

The dimension consists of eight sub-dimensions, and all of them were highly illustrated. This dimension emerged during initial coding and was used in the questionnaire as an additional dimension for quantitative data collection. Group members' admire their faith and admire the character believe in ALLAH. Also users' commented that the characters make their faith even stronger.

### **Transnational interaction**

The transnational interaction was an exclusive dimension that emerged out of data during the analysis. The drama understudy was Turkish, and the users' under study were from Pakistan, which means that Pakistanis were developing PSI with Turkish characters.

This dimension was allotted to the comments which represent the Pakistan/ Turkey relationships, users' urge to visit Turkey after watching drama series, and considered Turkish drama characters as an idealized figure in Pakistan for example, one member commented that "I love them and can't wait to visit Turkey and the beautiful people and culture (Flower emoji)." Also another user commented that "This series showed that Turkey knows how to make cinema, with superb actors who showed the world the patriotism, the religion that shows that everything with GOD is right, where justice always wins, they follow the tradition of a people who started the Ottoman Empire."

### **PSI termination**

This dimension was studied under the label of Parasocial breakups in the past, where the person in the audience with a parasocial relationship stops loving and idealizing their favorite personality, and it is as hurtful as real-life relationships (Eyal & Cohen, 2006). People feel distressed once the show ends. The drama series understudy was also ended, but by the time of study, it was also on- aired on national television in Pakistan with Urdu dubbing. The users' on Facebook were the people who had already watched the whole series, and some were watching. Their presence on social media represents that they want to extend their interaction with their favorite characters' therefore, they follow social media platforms so that they can see their favorite character every day and share their thoughts with the people whom they find similar to themselves (Fans of the drama or a specific character).

People always make comparisons, and in the end, they choose someone to be their favorite whom they find more related to themselves and who fascinates them more for example, one group member commented that "Ertugrul k baad Indian actors aur bhi zyada bakwas lagtay hain (Naughty tongue emoji)" Horton & Wohl (1956), described that the audience experience PSI with characters are free to withdraw from this interaction anytime and also choose among the relationships that are offered. PSI with disliked characters' Tian & Hoffner (2010), studied the PSI of people with liked, neutral, and disliked characters and found out that people highly responded to the liked character. This dimension was added in the current study with seven sub-categories after studying the literature and developing exclusive categories for this dimension as the comments represent the most frequent involvement of group members with the disliked characters of the drama, and they were discussing their role in the drama. This shows their interest toward disliked characters as one member commented that "The most iconic villain, he annoyed the hell out of them all" one member also commented that "Noyan was brave and tactician was Sadedtin Kopek!"

### **Fan of FAV character**

The researcher was inspired by the Henry Jenkins work on fandom and fan studies, and this dimension emerged out of that inspiration. The researcher studied the behavior of members in the comments and observed that there were some people who stand out differently from other members. They commented differently; they were way too serious about the character. They declared themselves as fan of their favorite character on multiple occasions and showed their loyalty to the character. Here an important thing is, that interacting Para-socially with the favorite character does not mean that the person also acknowledged themselves as their fan. Fan is a person who is somehow different from a normal viewer. He behave differently and feel inversely. Fan itself is an identity (Jenkin, 2013) and the researcher observed this identity within comments. People use social media to express their identity as a fan (Stever, 2009). This dimension consists of five sub-categories. One of the members commented that "Ertugrul I'm your fan and I'm you.



The users and members tends to comment openly and were more vocal about their thoughts on the posts in Facebook groups when the data was analyzed, and such questions cannot be asked to the respondents through a questionnaire, and even if asked, there was a higher chance of getting no to wrong response as people cannot express themselves openly in surveys. Table 4 shows the increasing motivations of the Facebook users and group members. The current drama series, which was taken as the case study, clearly develop different types of motivation for PSI between the audience and drama characters'. Such dimensions were not common in PSI literature and theory before, such as religious attachment, sexual attraction, and transnational interaction. The table 5.4 shows the findings of the analysis and exemplifies how the members have distinct motivations. One of the main reasons for different motivations of viewers and members' was self-expression. On social media, people seem to be more communicative, and the ethnographic approach didn't interfere with the responses of the individuals. PSI termination was also very typical and showed how the drama series impacted collectively to emerge a mutual behavior.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study aims to explore the parasocial interaction between the audiences and the drama characters of Ertugrul Ghazi. This paper studied Facebook group members of the drama series. It also evaluated the difference in the motivation of PSI between viewers, users' and the drama characters. The qualitative content analysis on Facebook groups of the drama series and comments of the people shows that more males were involved in such groups and group members have different motivations for PSI with drama characters. This paper explored new dimensions for PSI, such as (religious attraction and attachment, PSI termination, sexual and intimate attraction, and transnational interaction). The dominant motivation among group members and TV viewers' was religious attraction and attachment, and this dimension of PSI was an exclusive finding of this study. The Facebook group members discuss the drama story and characters even if the series or the episodes of the drama end and as a result, develop stronger bonding with them. They behave like a fan which is different than an ordinary person. They post, comment, and share in a group to take the opinion of other like-minded people of the online community and build an illusionary relationship with the character. Interestingly, sexual attraction was a distinct emerging dimension in the present study as the drama was more religiously important. The explicit use of wording for drama characters can only be possible explored through an ethnographic approach.

### **Future Research Directions**

The features of the development of parasocial interaction need more investigation. The future studies will need to revise the explored dimensions in the study to validate them and to prove their theoretical importance. Different research approaches like in-depth interviews also help to study the individual experience more genuinely. Furthermore, the study on this topic will need to be conducted again sometimes in the light of the Parasocial relationship which comes after parasocial interaction, to see whether people still in a one-sided relationship with the drama character or not or whether that Parasocial interaction converts to parasocial relationship or not. Also it helps understand the phenomena from a different angle and also tested the theory once again in the presence of new media. Furthermore, the theory of Parasocial interaction and drama characters needs to be studied and addressed more in relation to different theories like fan studies and social identity theory as suggested by (Laken, 2009).

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