



## Perceptual Transformation of acid victims after media projection (An interview based study from the victimized women of acid attack)

**Sajida Awais**, PhD Scholar, School of Media and Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.  
[sajida.awais@hotmail.com](mailto:sajida.awais@hotmail.com)

**Aqsa Iram Shahzadi**, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan

**Saima Iqbal**, Lecturer communication studies, Queen Mary College Lahore,

**Dr. Shehla Honey**, Department of Physics and Centre for Nanoscience (CNS), University of Okara, Pakistan

**Jamil Asim**, Scholar, Universiti of Malaysia, Sarawak (UNIMAS) and Department of Criminology, Scholl of Law, University of Okara, Pakistan

**Abstract-** The focus of the study is to analyze the perceptual transformation in the lives of those acid victim women who went on air on the media. The study holds huge importance because it tends to demonstrate the role of TV channels in transforming the lives of acid burnt women and motivating them back towards life again. Moreover, literature review suggests that there was immense need of such research that could infer the role of media in terms of perceptual transformation that media brought in their daily life, personality and in society. The method of research was based on quantitative and qualitative approach for analysis. In quantitative approach, close-ended questions were asked from acid victimized women and qualitative approach was based upon open-ended questions leading towards short interviews. The study revealed that media brought positive, remarkable and significant transformation in the lives of these victimized women when they appeared on air in terms of confidence building and empowering them. But it could not bring any distinguished change in the behavior of society in terms of educating them to help these victims through diverse means.

**Keywords:** Perceptual transformation, media, projection, acid victim

### I. INTRODUCTION

The expeditious development of communication and different avenues of information has accelerated the ways one gets media messages. Each form of media is shaping one's opinion, attitudes and determining the public discourses. In this scenario, media also reinforce to arbitrate the portrait of women in society. Therefore, media representation of women has changed widely within the passage of time. As (Theresa & Jane, 2012) says that media is a powerful way to promote the social and cultural values that can be used for the promotion of women from grass root level.

Under the mainstream media vehicles, TV is regarded as the main source to be the real form of media where social issues of women can be highlighted to provoke the viewers to comprehend the situation. As (Sharma, 2012) cognizance the influence of media as unparallel and its role on the psychology of viewers as spellbinding for the portrayal of different images. For her, if women's images exhibit traits of strength such as courage, determination, intelligence, self-respect and honesty, the viewer's perception can be regarded for positive results.

On the account of representation of women and demonstration of domestic violence cases, media not only inform viewers, but also at the same time it directs their attention towards certain topics. The issue of domestic violence is one of the pivotal point that media has been featuring considering the focal point over it. As (Asif, 2013) contends on the contribution of TV channels to highlight women related issues and argues that Pakistani media is playing prominent role to highlight the key social issues of women for the awareness of the society.

Being most of the prevailing nature of the violence, domestic violence is one of the worst types used for women. According to UN report there are diversified forms of violence against women. These are of physical, sexual, psychological and economic nature. These forms of violence are interdependent on each other (Report, 2009). Moreover, the root causes turning to be the reasons behind such domestic violence is ignorance, social

set up of a community, gender discrimination, poverty and unawareness about the laws in most of the under developed countries.

Among all of this violence acid throwing on the women is considered to be the worst kind of attack that makes them helpless and dependent on others for their whole life. According to a report of Acid Survivor Foundation (ASF), acid crimes have increased from 1 percent to 71 percent in the year of 2012 to 2013 in Pakistan (Report, 2014). Another report of Acid Survivor Foundation reports that till 2014, 49 (66.2%) of total acid victims were women in Bangladesh (ASF, 2014). Moreover, Indian report search founded that 153 cases of violence has been observed during 2002 to 2010 (Report, 2011).

There has been made tremendous legal reforms to overcome the issue of acid attack. The Qisas law (Wasti, 2009) is in practice in which the perpetrator may have to suffer the same situations as victim is facing. Further, in 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011, Pakistani civil society along with Parliamentarians with special appearance of Marvi Memon, UN agencies, legal and medical experts, media, National Commission on the status of women and acid survivors themselves made efforts to pass the law for amendments in Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), comprehensive legal mechanism and complementary law for acid throwing. These amendments have been made under the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2011 (Act XXV). (Act, 2011). However, implementation of such laws does not seem into practice because of uncertain situations of law enforcement authorities.

Under all such premises, (Cash, 1990) proclaim that there are two overlapping perspectives through which acid burnt victims can be examined. It is the 'view from the outside' and 'view from the inside'. The view from the outside covers the area of social and cultural perspectives in which appearance influence social perception and interactions. The view from inside is related to victim's individual perception about himself or herself including self-concept and emotional well being. At the same there is several NGO's working to rehab the deprived conditions of these women who have to face the acid attack. These are trying to empower them economically, psychologically and socially to make their life normal.

In this uncertain situation, media's endeavor to depict the miseries, hardships and sufferings of these acid burnt women is appreciating. It is observed that morning shows, documentaries, films and news reports are trying to cooperate with them to make their life easy and normal. If this is the case, then there is need to know for us as how real the representation of women are on TV and whether it is effecting the attitude of those who are viewing it and those victimized women whose lives are being represented on it in positive and potential ways.

Thus, this study tends to view the actual circumstances of acid burnt women who have been participant of TV programs on media. The purpose is to view the advancement in positive ways that have occurred in different perspectives of their lives. In this way, the researcher will be in a position to establish the argument that media is performing its role in constructive ways to motivate these victims towards life.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To explore the role of TV channels to motivate the acid victims towards life.
- To find out the changes in society's behavior that acid burnt women noted/faced after watching them on TV channels
- To learn the changes brought in acid burnt women's personality after going on air, on television channels.
- To analyze the changes in acid burnt women's daily life after being interviewed on air.
- To find out the opinion of acid burnt women about television channels in highlighting their problems.
- To explore which of the source is more active to support the victims (Government or N.G.Os)

### **Research Questions**

- 1) What is the role of TV channels in motivating the acid victims towards life?
- 2) What types of changes take place in acid burnt women's personality after being interviewed on air?
- 3) What types of society's reactions do the acid burnt women face after coming on air, on television channels?

- 4) Do the acid victims think that television channels effectively highlight their problems?
- 5) What is the role of N.G.Os and Government in rehabilitation of acid burnt victims?

## II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

For the study, data were collected from semi-structured interviews of acid burnt women who appeared on Pakistani channels for the purpose of interview. Researcher met the victims on personal basis for the interview. The interview consisted upon open ended and close-ended questions. 6 interviews from the victims were conducted on face to face while 4 were telephonic. The reason for telephonic interview was the issue of availability of the victim because those were residents from the cities other than Lahore. The open-ended questions were recorded for further consultation while the interviewer on the spot filled close-ended questions during face-to-face discussion. The survey questionnaire elicited the factual information about the victims and open-ended questions during the interview provide the explanation of the issue.

Due to short sample, the researcher has not applied any test and has just checked the frequency.

### 2.1. Population

For this study, the population is acid burnt women of Lahore and Karachi.

### 2.2. Sample Size

For this study, 10 victimized women of acid attack were interviewed belonging from different cities of Pakistan. Researcher approached them on the basis of personal contacts.

### 2.3. Instrument

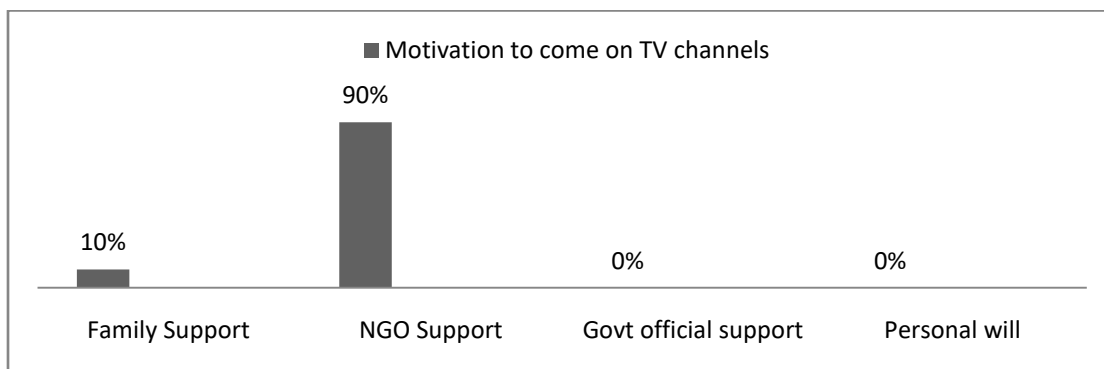
Open-ended and close-ended questionnaires are used.

## III. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

For interviews, a permission letter and research plan was sent personally to MusaratMisbah, NGO smile again foundation (executive director) housing authority Depilex beauty clinic Lahore. She signed it after two days and allowed for interviews were recorded and saved on a mobile phone for analysis.

### Close Ended Questions (Quantitative Analysis)

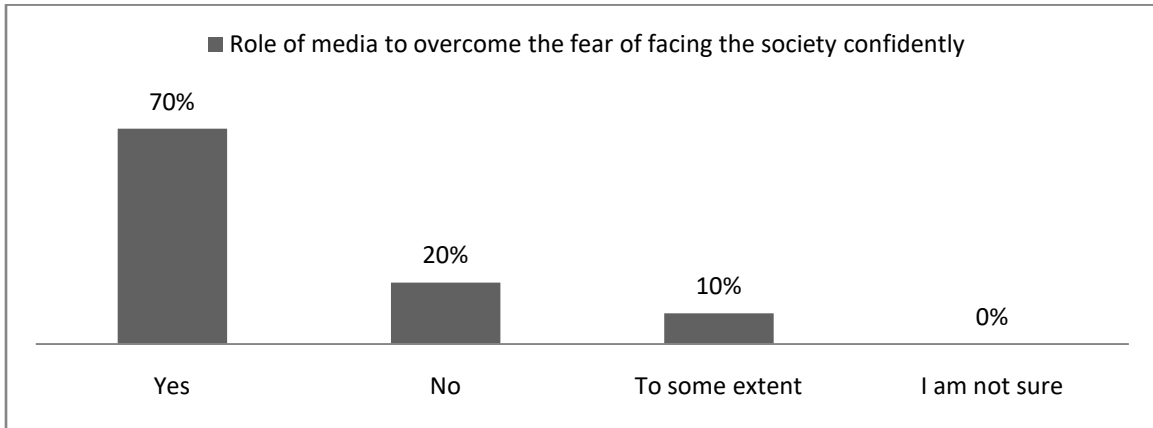
Figure: 1 Motivation to come on TV channels



### Interpretation

The above mentioned figure illustrate that the motivation that acid burnt women get is most of the time from the side of NGOs. Sometimes it is from the side of family as well. But there is not government support or even any personal will that entrenched them to come on TV channels. It shows that often NGOs are performing their role to transit the motivations to such victims.

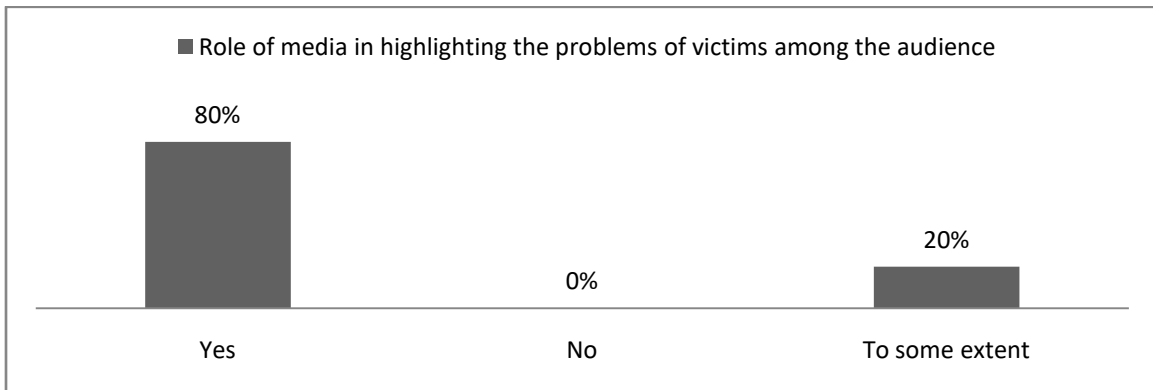
Figure: 2 Role of media to overcome the fear of facing the society confidently



### Interpretation

The figure clearly emphasize that on the account of overcoming the fear of facing the society, 70% of the women are agree that they have beaten their fear after coming on air. Though there are 20% of the victims who argue that they had no impact on their confidence building after coming on media. Despite all this, there are 10% women who feel the difference to some extent.

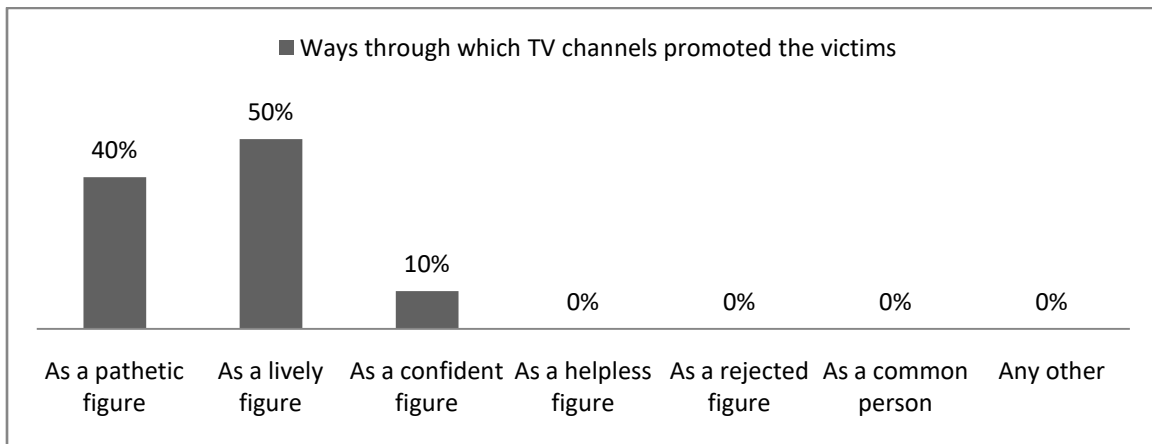
Figure: 3 Role of media in highlighting the problems of victims among the audience



### Interpretation

80% of the victims believe that their problems have been highlighted prominently when they got on air on a particular TV channel. But 20% of the women consider that their problems have been highlighted to some extent. Overall, it shows that media projected their essential problems in appropriate manners.

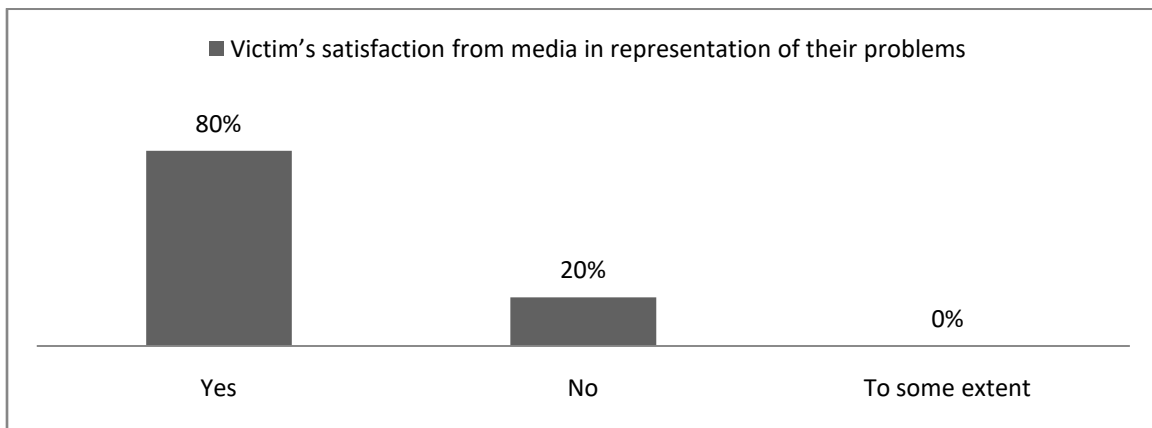
Figure: 4 Ways through which TV channels promoted the victims



Interpretation

The presentation of the descriptive analysis portray that 50% of the women are of the opinion that they were symbolized as a lively figure when they were given chance to appear on media. However, the percentage of those women is almost the same who assume that their representation on the media has been as exposition of a pathetic figure. Comparably, there are few of the women who think they were presented as a confident figure. Overall, the portraying of such victims is as a lively figure who provide the motivation to all those who are facing sufferings in their lives to move forward without considering any frustration.

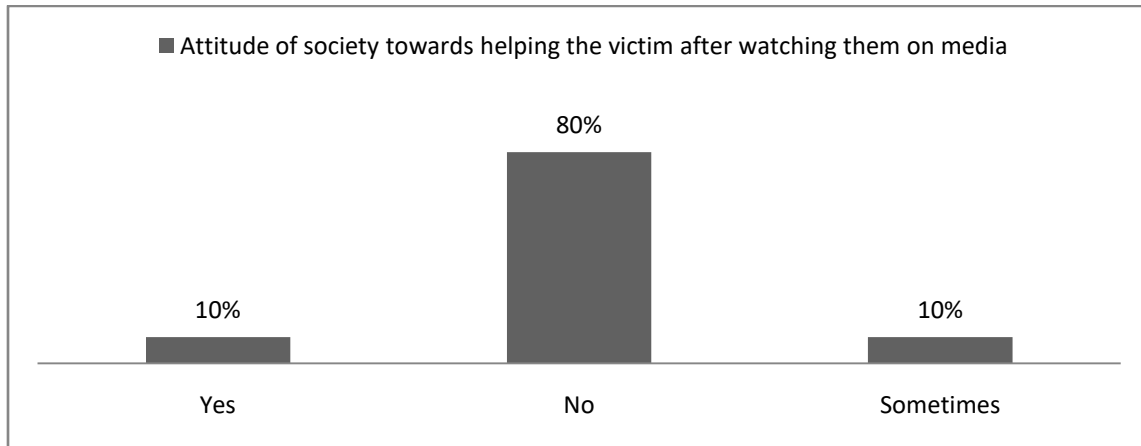
Figure: 5 Victim’s satisfaction from media in representation of their problems



Interpretation

The above-mentioned figure specifies the satisfaction of the victimized women from media in terms of highlighting their problems in appropriate manners. Most of the women are adequately satisfy with the illustration of their problems that media portrayed. But on the other hand, 20% were not happy with it. They wanted media to highlight their problems in more appropriate manners.

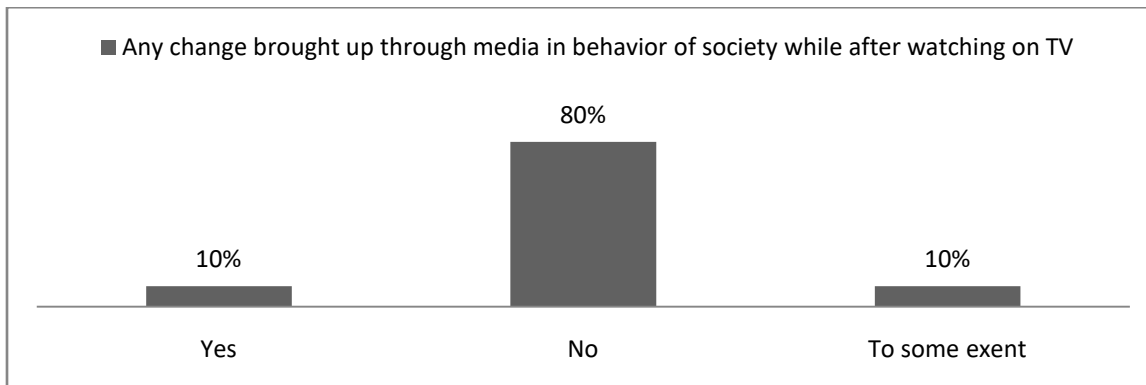
Figure: 6 Attitude of society towards helping the victim after watching them on media



#### Interpretation

On the account of attitude of society towards helping the women was not positive enough. 80% of the women hold the opinion of societal reaction towards their miseries as just viewing them on media for learning the lessons from victims. But few of the women admitted that people move forward to help them sometimes as well. But their frequency is not remarkable.

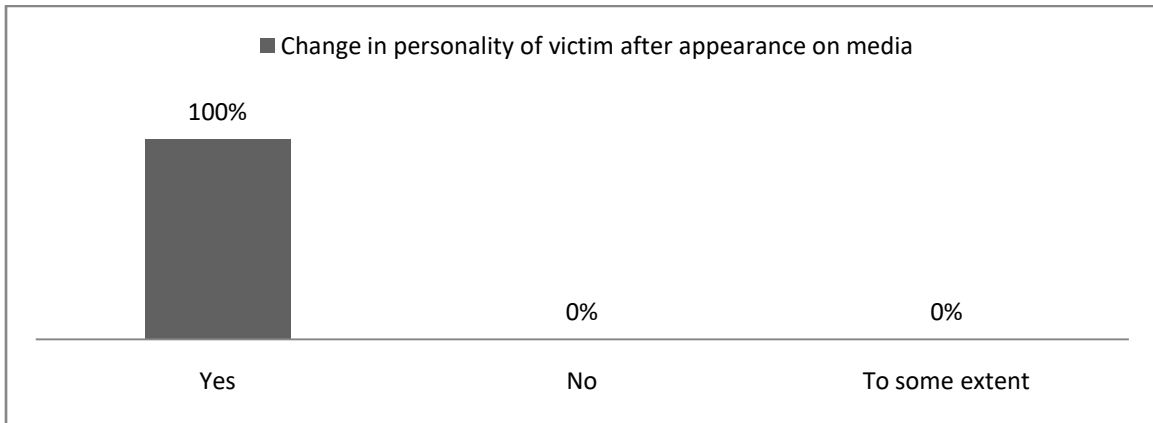
Figure: 7 Any change brought up through media in behavior of society while after watching on TV



#### Interpretation

Most of the women believe that media could not bring any change in behavior of society even after manifestation of their problems. Only 10% of the people from the society expose themselves having the sympathies with the victims after watching them on media. Most of the people tend to behave as they have not seen the victims on the media any more.

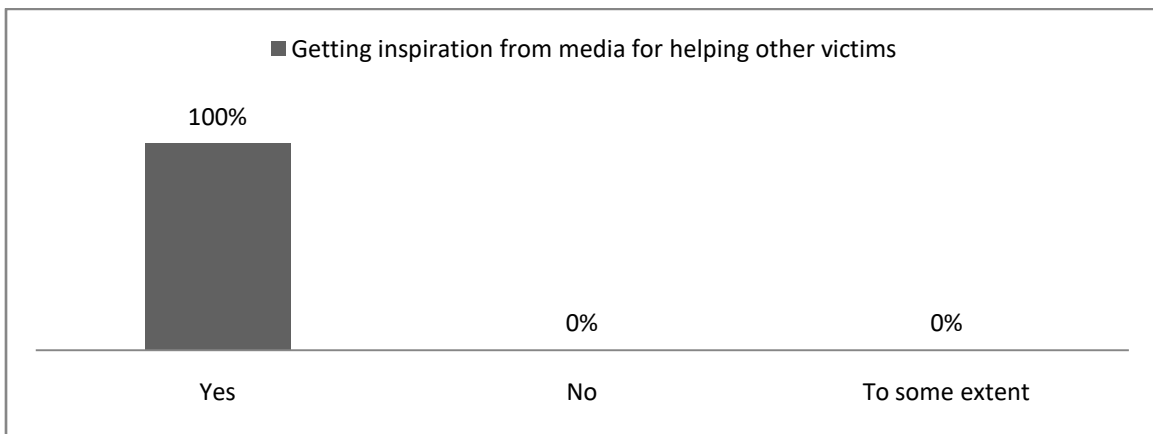
Figure: 8 Change in personality of victim after appearance on media



**Interpretation**

As far as the change in their own personality is concerned, 100% of the women agree that media has transformed their lives in applicable manners. It shows media played positive role while reconstructing their daily activities.

Figure: 9 Getting inspiration from media for helping other victims



**Interpretation**

After being on air on the media, 100% of the women are inspired to help the victims of acid burnt women through various measures. Their inspiration supports them to nourish all those who have been contrived to suffer like they are experiencing.

**Open Ended Questions (Qualitative Analysis)**

**Type of behavioral changes in society after watching the victims on air**

On the behavioral approach of society towards these victims, most of the women have a great deal of objections in this regard. They are not happy with the people of their society because they are not treated as distinct human beings. Being an essential part of the society, their efforts even in workplace, social gatherings and even in personal life are not gratified and endorsed by most of the people. People tend to take advantage of their disabilities in different ways and prove to be acrid with them. As one of the victim asserts about the behavior of the people

*“Even after being on air on so many morning shows on TV, people still do not understand our sufferings. They associate the consequences of our sufferings with our own sins and reflect their biasness at the time of discussion with us considering the burden on society. Media could not change their perception at all in terms of increasing the awareness regarding our feelings and disabilities.” Sabra Sultan, Jehlum*

These women deliberately demonstrate their sorrows and grief associated with the society and believes that even after being on air on media, they did not observe any remarkable change in behavior on the society.

*“Physical challenges that I am facing from so many years is not as much painful for me at times, as much painful the attitude of society is towards me at my job. I have to earn livelihood for my children and I want that society must understand my efforts and sufferings that I am bearing with my disfigurement and media need to highlight it.”*

It shows that media, even after so many endeavors, could not bring any advancement in behavior of the society. Need of the hour is to bring both the society and media in accordance with each other.

### **Type of personality changes that victim’s feel in them after being on air**

After being live on the media, there were most of the women who believe that they feel enormous changes in their personality. They think that media helped them to frame their own identity. They feel themselves more confident when they have to face the society and believe themselves as an integral part of it. Moreover, the changes that occurred within the passage of time are the certainty in their discussion when they talk to other person. They do not take themselves living in a deplorable condition. Instead, they are determined and media have provided them directions in this regard.

*“At time, when I had to face the isolation due to insecurities, media provided me the strength to share my feelings while communicating with others. Instead of avoiding due to my appearance, media persons gave me courage to introduce myself with confidence. Well, I feel more confidence.” Shaista Niaz Banu, Karachi*

Researcher observed that those women who tend to go on air usually are more aware then those who happened to appear only for once or twice. They argue that after coming on media they reformed themselves in terms of getting aware with the laws that provided them protection and insurance for their further rights.

*“In order to overcome my personal distress, media came forward to encourage me. They presented my problems in a way that make me to feel more normal and I do not feel hesitation while interacting with others.” Nasreen, Multan*

*“My personal and social life was ruined when my husband threw acid on me. I could not cope with my disfigurement till the time I did not gain courage to face the people. But facing people was never easy before facing the huge audience on TV. After that I felt positive energy in me that helped me to utilize my potential abilities.” Naureen, Lahore*

However, there are few of the women who have no impact on themselves while even after being on air. They feel that there are so many complications in their lives after being victimized that no one can overthrow them even not the media.

### **Types of changes that TV channels brought up in victims in daily life**

Media has brought the changes in their daily lives as well. These women admit that the persistency in their daily routine life that media imparted in them was never the same as it is now.

*“What happened with me was never my fault. My deserving was never based on all this. Therefore, I did not consider it my fate and worked hard to compose my family after this incident. In order to put these efforts, media and rehabilitation institutes played important part to change my thinking.” Jospheen, Lahore*



They used to be submissive in front of the people who used to tease them due to their miseries. But they believe media turned over their level of submissiveness into spirit of certainty that they are not incompetent or worthless from anyone.

*"There was a time when life got meaningless for me, but within the passage of time and with the help media, a lot of reforms took place in my daily life. I learned about the laws and regulations that apply on the cases of acid victims. Now I am able to handle the court cases on my own."* TasleemBaighum, Vehari

The role of the NGOs is remarkable in providing them the space for working in jobs in such male dominated society. But still, these women have objection over the behavior of the society, which ridiculously treats them being the anonymous individual of some other planet.

### **Role of victims while helping other Acid victims**

These women are very eager to participate in all types of support that can provide comfort and assistance to the victims just like them. Although, they admit that they cannot help them financially, but most of the women conceded that they keep themselves alert in this regard and take them to rehabilitation centers for their treatment.

*"I can understand the painful journey of such women who by all means have to face such situations for whole life. Their beauty is taken with the replacement of long lasting horrible facts. My sympathies remain with these women and I try my best to help them with all means"* ShaistaNiazBanu, Karachi

*"I wish to arrange different social programs for such women because feelings of isolation can never be overcome without such social gatherings."* Sabra Sultan, Jehlum

On the whole, researcher observed that their wish to help the victims just like them presents the idea that they feel more pain for them than any other individual of the society.

Means of help for the victim by audience after watching them on TV channel

Although, the frequency of the people who helped the victims is not remarkable to mention. But those people who helped these women through having networked relationship with rehabilitation centers.

*"In order to help me in terms of financial means, nobody came forward to assist me except those rehab institutions that provide assistance to such victims. Even government officials and members from society did not pay any attention in this regard."*Naureen, Lahore

These institutions are playing cardinal role in their financial, moral, psychological, medical, legal and social problems. But besides that, no Govt. officials or any other person approached them for resolving their problems in terms of legal matters, financial support and medical treatment.

*"After watching me on TV, nobody took any serious instance to help me or the women likeme. But I want different organizations to support us in order to secure our employment that can help us to overcome our insecurities"* AneashaZoya, Lahore

## **IV. RESULTS / MAJOR FINDINGS**

The study is an attempt to elucidate all those perceptual changes that media brought in the lives of acid attacked women after being on air. The core and essence of the study exemplify that media has a positive and determining role in transforming the perception of acid burnt women. Their personal and social life depicts these changes as victims accepted the fact. But media could not bring any noteworthy change in the perception and behavior of society when these women interact with people in their daily life. Media seems having inadequate planning to incorporate the awareness among the masses with regard to conferring the problems of these victims. The role of the government has been viewed as doing nothing in executing the

awareness among such women regarding their psychological health, physical treatment and enduring decision making procedure for legislation. Moreover, due to lack of education, these women have to face a lot of problems with regard of discussing their issues with other.

## V. DISCUSSION ON MAJOR FINDINGS

This study entails the objective to feature the perceptual transformation that media imparted in acid burnt women after the projection of their problems in different programs on various TV channels. The overall findings demonstrated several invisible facts that are related with the lives of such victims.

On overall basis, researcher observed that women from Karachi were more active and alert in terms of awareness regarding the laws that are applied on acid throwing cases. Women from Punjab were not enough informed and seemed confused while answering few questions. For them, it was difficult to articulate their real life experiences in terms of defining in front of researcher openly. In such instances, respondents were given extra time to compose themselves and re-frame their answers after thinking on them. The reasons behind these phenomena were observed as the lack of education for those women who could not express their experiences fully. Therefore, researcher had to formulate the questions in a way that could make more clarifications where inconsistencies were observed. Another reason observed in this regard was that most of the headquarters of TV news channels are in Karachi and women from Karachi have more access to the information regarding their situation and laws. Therefore women from Lahore were less aware in this regard.

On the account of close ended questions, it is observed that media played determining role for transforming their perception regarding victim's personal choices and experiences. 70% of women believed that their fear of facing have been overcome due to their appearance on media. Those who have appeared on media for several times, tend to be more confident and courageous. For the part of highlighting their problems on media, 80% hold the opinion that media is performing very well in terms of sharing their problems with society so that people can associate their empathies with them. But 40% of these women feel that their representation has been displayed as a pathetic figure and 50% of them think that their representation was depicted as a lively figure. 80% of victims are happy with the media projection of their problems. But most of the women are disappointed from the society because media could not bring any reform in them. On contrary, they feel perceptual transformation in themselves due to the confidence provided by the media.

On the account of qualitative part of the questionnaire, the role of media with regard to the changes in the lives of these women is concerned, and then it is clearly evident that media played determining role in it. Before coming on air, these victims were not able to fulfill their needs on their own. Media empowered them in a way that helped them to get courage to earn a sufficient livelihood. When it was analyzed as what were the changes that victims felt in their inner self after being exposed on the media, then these were enormous. Most of the women learned to speak in front of audience and tried to overcome their fear. The biggest fear before coming on the media was the fear of rejection they had in their mind. But as the time passes, media and implementing techniques of rehabilitation centers to extended their positive energies on such platforms. With the help, these women feel themselves more determined than ever before.

Likely, through qualitative analysis, researcher conferred that these women are happy with the projection of their problems in appropriate manners. They believe that media highlighted their issues in prominent manners. These issues are related to their personal life and daily life problems in workplace, social gatherings and surroundings. At the same time, unfortunately, coverage of media for these victims could not bring any change in society. The critical measures that society holds for such victims still remain the same. Media made it possible to bring perceptual transformation in their daily life and personality of these victims. But the change that is essentially required in society is very difficult to bring. These women believe that media needs to ponder upon the situation to compose such programs that can reconstruct the thinking of the society in terms of helping them in form of financial aid, moral support and sympathies.

With regard to the support in terms of moral, financial, medical and psychological is concerned; NGOs and rehabilitation centers are on the top of the list to work on it. These women allege that they are helping these

victims to bring them towards life on their own. Unhappily, government and other lawmaker authorities do not come forward to help them. These institutions also help them to have the psychological treatment from various fountain houses on their own expenses.

The dilemma with such women has been observed that most of them are not aware with their rights and all those laws that are applicable for their future protection, seizing and punishing the culprits. Rehabilitation institutions are working actively for their psychological treatment but level of awareness of these women exhibits their knowledge about their psychological treatment is not sufficient enough because most of them even do not know about strategies that are being applied on them for their mental treatment.

On the whole, this interview based study revealed that media played vital role in perceptual transformation these victims after being attacked but people from society did not pay enough attention to them as much they deserve.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Through this research, it is concluded that the study revealed that media brought positive, remarkable and significant transformation in the lives of these victimized women when they appeared on air in terms of confidence building and empowering them. But it could not bring any distinguished change in the behavior of society in terms of educating them to help these victims through diverse means.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendations for TV channels**

TV channels need to incorporate more adequate techniques in their programs that not only highlight the issues of such victims but should have impact on the behavior of the society as well. The frequency of such programs can be increased to raise the level of awareness among the masses. The documentaries and stage plays should be arranged to make the audience feel same as the feelings of an acid burnt women. For this purpose, media can take consultation from various psychologists who can recommend their suggestions to the program producer for ways to handle such sensitive issues. There has been made documentaries by notable documentary maker SharmeenObaidChinoy(Chinoy, 2012) on such sensitive issues. But there is need for efforts in this regard.

### **Recommendations for Government**

It is an imperative that Government place more emphasis on mental health of these victims in order to overcome the distress that lead them to have negative impacts on their personal and social life. Initiatives should be taken into consideration for pondering more focus on the women whose educational qualification is low in order to tackle their experiences that cause for their emotional disturbance. On the behalf of government officials, self-help group centers can be established where victims can share their thoughts and feelings. Awareness raising campaigns can be organized to inform people regarding the consequences that victims have to bear.

### **Recommendations for Lawmakers**

Law enforcement institutions need to apply these laws within a particular frame of time so that the victims will not have to suffer for justice. The cases, after complete investigations should be finalized with decisions as soon as possible. There is immense need to organize such institutions that can help such victims without causing distress and painful for them.

## Recommendations for rehabilitation centers

In spite of so many efforts that these institutions are putting in their work, there is need of more struggle. The urgency of the time is to educate these women with different terminologies and their meanings. If they are getting psychological treatment, then must be aware as what does that mean and why it is their need.

## Recommendations for Researchers

There is immense need for those researchers who can explore the other dimensions of this sensitive issue. Considering all the findings, it is analyzed that these victims are not welcomed in society. One of the reasons observed through discussion is the concept of beauty that society holds. Therefore, there is need to know the underlying attitudes towards these phenomena as how it is developed and maintained and how it can have impact as a barrier on flourishing the personality of such victims. So far, only those areas have been highlighted in the literature that consists on the domestic violence and acid burnt victims are only part of such studies. It can be viewed as what are the reasons behind not having any impact on society for those programs in which media is projecting these women. Further, acid burnt women and role of media in empowering them should be the integral part of a separate study.

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