



**Novel Insights**, *An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Impact Factor: 4.25(IIFS), 8.2(IJIN)

Volume-II, Issue-II, November 2025, Page No. 101-110

Published by Uttarsuri, Sribhumi, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.2.issue.02W.044



## **Women's Objectification in Music Videos: A Study through the Lens of Male Gaze and Social Construction of Reality**

**Himanjali Kalita**, *Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Government Model College, Deithor, Karbi Anglong, Assam, India*

**Dr. Paramita Dey**, *Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam, India*

Received: 08.10.2025; Accepted: 23.10.2025; Available online: 30.11.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

### **Abstract**

Objectification of women refers to the process of understanding women as an object by focusing on specific body parts, violating women's dignity and respect. The portrayal of women as an object of entertainment recreates the whole idea of beauty for a woman leading to a construction of reality which is accepted and internalized in the society. A woman's beauty is judged by society according to this constructed reality based on physical appearance, which completely neglects a woman's individual worth. Failure to fulfill the set standard of beauty leads to dissatisfaction with their bodies, anxiety, low confidence, exclusion etc. In this process women's freedom over their own body is controlled by patriarchal society. In this paper, an attempt has been made to understand women's sexual objectification in popular music videos and its impact on society at large.

**Keywords:** objectification of women, male gaze, social construction of reality, gender roles, music videos

### **Introduction:**

"Objectification is the process of regarding and treating a person as an object, rather than as a person with feelings, needs and desires" (Barkty, 1990). Sexual objectification is the treatment of an individual likely as a body, an encounter of being treated as a body which is popularly introduced as an article of joy of men or prevalently consumption of male look.

"Sexual objectification occurs when a woman's body or body parts are separated from her personality and regarded as if they were capable of representing her entire self" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Hence, presenting an individual by referring only to their body for the purpose of entertainment can be considered as sexual objectification. It led to the creation of cultural attitude towards women as sex objects.

Music videos can be considered as the most powerful medium of conveying messages to the mass population. There are many categories of music videos but most of the popular music videos ones share one similar visual presentation which is presentation of women's

body. The actress has to conform to the set standard of a 'perfect attractive figure'. This is the reason behind making item songs an inevitable part of commercial Bollywood movies in contemporary times. Because of the popularity and acceptance of public towards it, not only in item songs but individual music videos also adopted the similar presentation of women to attract audience. Women's bodies are portrayed as commodities and sex objects. These songs have cheap lyrics with vulgar moves and costumes which reveal women's body in a sexually attractive way. It's not the talent and personality of the actress but her body takes the priority. This particular idea of a beautiful woman with a slim and perfect body has much deeper impact in the society. Media usually depicts a very concrete and unattainable standard of women's physical beauty and connects it with their self-worth (APA, 2007 b). Sexual objectification of women's body tries to equate women's worth and dignity with her physical appearance by ignoring their personality.

In this article, an attempt has been made to study how these music videos present women's body as an object from male gaze leading to a social construction of reality about women's beauty. For this proposed article ten popular music videos have been selected including Bollywood item songs and individual music videos based on relevance to the topic and popularity.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The following objectives are considered for the study:

1. To study the connection between male gaze and social construction of reality.
2. To analyse women's objectification in the popular music videos.
3. To explore the impact of women's objectification in the society at large.

### **Methodology:**

For the proposed paper, secondary sources have been considered. Books, articles, movies, music videos, newspaper content, film critics, published thesis, lyrics of songs, of the selected genre have been studied. Songs are selected purposively based on similar visual and lyrical themes. As it is not possible for the researcher to consider all the songs on the selected theme, it is tried to give a proper representation to different decades from 1990s to the present time. To provide a broader perspective in the analysis, both items' songs and individual music videos are considered.

Analytical and descriptive method have been used to analyse the content, costumes, dance moves, lyrics and visual presentation of women in the selected songs to understand the objectification of women's body.

### **Theoretical framework:**

To study the objectification of women's body in the popular music videos, two theories have been considered. To analyze how the concept of beauty for women is developed from the lens of man, the theory of male gaze is considered. To understand the impact of male gaze in the society at large, the theory of social construction of reality is taken into account. The two above mentioned theories have been discussed below:

### **The Theory of Male Gaze:**

The term male gaze was popularized by the British film theorist Laura Mulvey in 1975 in her essay '*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*' where she talked about how 'male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly' (Mulvey, 1975). In this

*Women's Objectification in Music Videos: A Study through the Lens of...* Himanjali Kalita & Paramita Dey article, Mulvey explains how the mainstream media objectifies women, portraying women's body through a patriarchal lens as a passive character to the active male character (Ponterotto, 2016). It refers to the visual culture which objectifies and fetishizes women's bodies emphasizing on certain body parts such as lips, legs, eyes, belly, waist etc. and reducing them to passive objects for entertainment and pleasure of male. The value of women's role is reduced to male admiration and satisfaction rather than a role of impact. The role of the female is never depicted in the position of power. The male gaze promotes self-objectification and contempt for males and the patriarchy in general, while discouraging women's empowerment, self-worth and self-advocacy (Ponterotto, 2016). It explores how women are represented in screen from the masculine perspective leading to their unrealistic representation. It converts women to a passive object, presenting them for enjoyment of men. Female doesn't enjoy the command over the screen and they are visualised in such ways where focus automatically goes to their body parts rather than their acting skills and personality. According to Mulvey, decoding beauty from male gaze reinforces traditional gender roles, making women always subordinate and giving men the dominant position. They taught women to conceptualise themselves through the lens of male gaze leading to the formation of false consciousness about how women should think, appear and behave (Mulvey, 1975).

### **Social Construction of Reality:**

In the '*Social Construction of Reality*', Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann explained how reality is constructed by human interactions. "Reality of everyday life is ongoingly reaffirmed with the individual's interaction with others. Just as the reality is originally internalized by a social process, so it is maintained in consciousness by social process" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Berger and Luckmann used the word *habitualization* to describe how people construct society through their social interactions. Habitualization refers to "any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can be then performed again in the future in the same manner..." (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Through the visual presentation of women from the masculine lens, women's beauty standards are reaffirmed and are presented as reality in the society. Their appearance, thought process, behavior and power to take decisions for themselves are controlled without making them realize the fact that this social reality is reinforcing the patriarchal gender role. Women are conditioned to accept and internalize this reality constructed by the society as normal. By applying the theory of social construction of reality in the lyrics and the ideas of the selected songs, an attempt has been made to understand how the objectification of a women's body is normalized and internalized which results in greater impact in the society about the conception of a beautiful woman. Women's body is treated as an object by setting some standards about the physical appearance of a beautiful woman which reconstructs the idea of beauty for women with specifically focusing on external appearance and physical attributes.

### **Connecting the Concept of Male Gaze and Social Construction of Reality in the Objectification of Women's Body:**

The concept of male gaze and social construction of reality are interconnected and reinforces objectification of women's body. As the theory of male gaze argued, the more we see a particular thing, the more we internalise these things as necessary and reality. The idea of

beauty for a woman is conceptualized and consumed from the lens of male gaze resulting in internalization of these beauty standards as important and reality which is considered as social construction of reality. The perspective of women is not included here. These beauty standards are created by the patriarchal society for women from the perspective of men, reinforcing the traditional gender role where the matter related to women are decided by others making women inferior and powerless to decide for themselves. Women are trying to fit into that constructed reality of the society by internalizing these standards as normal. The social construction of reality leads to creation of unrealistic beauty standards from the masculine perspective of a women's body resulting in dissatisfaction of their own body, which further leads to feeling of exclusion and losing of dignity and individual freedom to decide about their own body. It reinforces man's indirect control over women's body and lives, limiting their choices and refusing their right over their own body. They are indirectly controlled to look in some ways as set by others without considering their own perspectives. Hence, the theory of male gaze and social construction of reality can be applied together to understand how women's body is objectified in the popular music videos to attract the attention of the male audience from the perspective of male gaze leading to a socially constructed reality.

### **Analysing how the Male Gaze Theory Contributed to the Social Construction of Reality by Analyzing Objectification of Women's Body in the Selected Bollywood Music Videos:**

The songs are selected on the basis of relevance to the topic, popularity, commercial success and from different phases between 1990s to the present times. Also, songs are selected both from movies and individual music videos to have a broader understanding about the objectification of women's bodies in music as a whole rather than only from the context and content of item songs because individual music videos in contemporary times have adopted the same pattern of visualisation and presentation of female characters through lyrics, dance moves, costume and camera angles to catch the attention of the audience as the item songs do.

#### **1. Tu Cheez Badi Hain Mast:**

*"...Nahi tujhko koi hosh hosh, Uspar joban ka josh josh  
Nahi tera koi dosh dosh, Madahosh hai tu har vakt vakt  
Tu chiz badi hai mast mast tu chiz badi hai mast..."*

This song is taken from the film Mohra (1994). Here, the female character of the song is referred as *cheez* meaning an object. So, if the lyrics is analysed, it can be seen that the woman is portrayed as enjoying the high libidinal drive of her youth. She has a very light character who is conscious about her surroundings every time because of her youth energy. Her body is portrayed as *mast* meaning sexually attractive. The female is compared with an object who is physically appealing. This song was a superhit despite of the vulgar lyrics and the choreographer received Filmfare award as well.

#### **2. Gore Gore Mukhde Pe**

*"Gore Gore Mukhde Pe  
Kala Kala Chasma  
Tauba khuda khair kare  
Khub hai Karishma..."*

This song is taken from the film *Suhaag* (1994). This song is one of the best examples of how racism is promoted, and the female character are expected to be fair skinned to attract audience. In this song, the woman is presented as a fair-skinned girl on whom black specs suits, which presents her charismatic personality more attractively. This song implies how the beauty of women is objectified through her skin colour and how fair skin is considered as one of the most important qualities of beauty.

### 3. **Munni Badnaam**

*"...Munni badnaam hui, darling tere liye  
Munni ke gaal gulabi, nain sharabi, chaal nawabi re  
Le zandu balm hui, darling tere liye  
Munni badnaam hui, darling tere liye ...."*

This song has been taken from the popular movie *Dabangg* (2010). The lyrics of this song portrays the image of a girl named "munni" who blames her male counterparts for her defamation by addressing them as darling implying the normalisation of her defamation. The girl is describing herself with description of her different body parts like cheeks, eyes and her way of walking with visualisation of selective body parts of the girl to attract the male audience.

### 4. **Sheila ki Jawani**

*"...Sheila Ki Jawani I'm Just Sexy For You  
Main Tere Haath Na Aani  
...Paisa Gaadi Mehnga Ghar  
I Need A Man Who Give Me All That  
Jaibein Khaali Fattichar  
No No I Don't Like Him Like That  
Chal Yahan Se Nikal Tujhe Sab Laa Dunga  
Kadmon Mein Tere Laake Jag Rakh Dunga  
Khwaab Main Kar Dunga Poo..."*

This song has been taken from *Tees Maar Khan* (2010) and is one of the most popular songs of the decade. This one of the most objectifying item numbers of Bollywood where the female character is shown as so drawn. The female character is portrayed as someone who is waiting for her partner to provide her money and all the luxurious things which she expects in her life. If the male character can't provide these to her, she will consider him as capable to be her partner. This sexualisation of women's body is supported by vulgar lyrics and dance moves with close up shots of selected body parts.

### 5. **Blue eyes**

This song is one the worst example of objectification of women. The girl is described as below-

*"Blue Eyes Hypnotize Teri Kardi Ae Mainu  
I Swear! Chhoti Dress Mein Bomb Lagdi Mainu  
Glossy Lips, Uff Yeh Tricks  
Baby Lagdi Ae Killer  
Oh yeah qatal kare tera bomb figure..."*

In the above-mentioned song, the lyrics depicts a girl, who has blue eyes, hypnotized the male character through her sexually appealing figure. The hero is describing her as bomb indicating her figure in an inappropriate way and describes how she her body looks when

*Women's Objectification in Music Videos: A Study through the Lens of...* Himanjali Kalita & Paramita Dey  
she wears shorts. The girl is presented as dancing with all acceptance to her sexual objectification by the male character. Her different body parts are described in a way which disrespects her body and her worth. This is one of biggest commercial hit songs of 2013.

#### 6. Aao Raja

*"...Kundhi mat khadkao raja, seedha andar aao raja  
Kundhi mat khadkao raja, seedha andar aao raja  
Kol bacha perfume lagake, mood banao taja taja  
Kundhi mat khadkao raja, seedha andar aao raja..."*

This song is from the movie- *Gabbar is Back* (2018). In these songs, the lyrics are so vulgar and dance moves choreographed in a way which focus on sexual attractiveness of the female implying women as an object of sexual desire. The lyrics of the song contain extreme sexual innuendos. The close-up visuals of the song focus on specific body parts of the female reinforcing objectification of the female body.

#### 7. Garmi

*".....December Mein Karde Summer Tu,  
Tu Lambourghini Main Hoon Hummer,  
Vaise Bhi Koi Jaldi Ni Mujhko,  
Bachpan Se Hi Main Late Kamar,  
Billion Mein Tu Baby Ek,  
Hilti Kamar Jaise Snake,  
Teri Sundarta Pe Likh Doon Baby,  
Do Fut Lamba Lekh..."*

This song is taken from *Street Dancer 2020* which is another popular song of the year. This is another example of vulgar lyrics and vulgar dance moves. In this video, the female character was portrayed in dancing in such vulgar ways to reveal her bodies specifically her waist which is mentioned in the lyrics also referring as *Kamar* in Hindi. The lyrics implicate a girl after seeing whom the male character felt warm and hence, the title of the song is given as *Garmi* symbolically referring to sexual attractiveness of the woman.

#### 8. Kamariya

*"...Aaj Bijli Bhi Girwani Hai  
Fire Bhi Lagwani Hai  
Jo Tu Aake Baby Humre Saath Ma...  
Kamariya...Hilla De Hilla De, Hilla De Hilla De  
Nazariya... Milla De Milla De, Milla De Milla De..."*

This song is taken from one of the popular films *Street Dancer 2020*. In this song, the folkloric elements were included but at the same time it represents a culture of misogyny and sexism by objectifying the female body with vulgar lyrics and dance moves. Different body parts are objectified through the use of vulgar lyrics and these lyrics have been supported by vulgar dance moves to visualise the female as sexually appealing.

#### 9. Naughty Saiyaan

*"...Matkau mai kamariya dheerey dheerey dheerey dheerey,  
Saiyaan ji saamne baithe jaam peere, peere, peere, peere  
Whis whis whis ki ki ki ki,  
Maine thodi thodi pi pi pi pi,  
W Double E D, D D D D*

*Dedu love therapy*

*Mere naughty saiyaan ji ji ji ji...*

It is one of most commercially success music video of 2021. In the above-mentioned song, the lyrics depicts a hero who is called dearly by the girl glorifying the fact that he is drinking. The girl is asked not to shake her waist because it'll sexually attract the hero who is drinking. Here the glorification of drinking and body objectification of the girl which is supported by vulgar dance moves implies how female body is conceptualised as a thing of sexual attractiveness only which neglects the dignity and respect of women's body.

### **10. Aaj ki Raat**

*"Thodi fursat bhi meri jaan kabhi*

*Baahon ko deejije*

*Aaj ki raat maza husn ka*

*Aankhon se leejije..."*

This song is one of the most viewed songs of 2024 from the movie Stree 2. In this song also, female body is objectified reducing it to a mere object of male pleasure. The lyrics and visuals of the song sexualise the female body emphasising on body and eroticising it which strengthen the culture of misogyny and sexism. The costumes of the song give a very clear visualisation of the fetishism and close up shots are taken from such angles which clearly shows the curves and body parts of the female.

### **Findings and Discussions:**

Women in these songs are portrayed from the gaze of a man as an object for fun and entertainment of male viewers. Their shots are taken from closed angle to make their body clearly visible to the audience. Their clothes, appearances, dances everything is selected from this perspective only. This sexual objectification of women's body to please the eyes of male led to construction of a reality. By applying the theory of social construction of reality, through these item songs how reality about a woman body is constructed can be analysed. A woman is presented as an object by setting a reality about how a women should be. This song conveys a message about how a beautiful woman should be by neglecting personality, talents and other internal qualities of a human being and focusing only on sexual attractiveness, skin colour, type of clothes. People internalise these ideas so much that in real life also, now days, women are so much concerned about their external physical attractiveness rather than health and inner qualities. Through the everyday uses of these songs, reality about the beauty of a woman is socially constructed and everybody is trying so hard to fulfil these standards of beauty.

If the lyrics of the selected songs are analysed then some similarities can be drawn about how an actress is presented in this kind of music videos-

- 1. Presenting a Sexually Attractive Body:** it is rare to watch a heavy fat dark skinned girl doing a music video or an item song. There are some set standards about how an actress in this kind of music videos should be. For example, she should have a sexually attractive body with a fair skin, perfect waist, hip, lips which can easily attract a large section of audience.
- 2. Cheap and Vulgar Lyrics:** in the above-mentioned songs, it has been found that the lyrics are so disrespectful towards the girl which presents her as a very passive, light character driven by money and luxurious things who is dancing with the lyrics of objectification

her body. Her different body parts are described with vulgarity, comparing her with bombs in short dress. It is also presented as the girl with her 'killer bomb figure' hypnotising the male character.

3. **Sexually Appealing Costumes and Vulgar Moves:** When these videos are watched thoroughly, it can be seen that the woman is wearing different kind of costumes with a similarity that her selected body parts have to be revealed which will give her a sexually appealing look. Dance moves are also so disrespectful with those lyrics and costumes. Here, the dignity of the woman is totally ignored. More close-shots are taken so that the curves of her body become visible to the audience.
4. **Focusing on Male Audience:** Another similarity of these music videos is trying to get attention from the male character and also being proud to have the mass attention because of her body.
5. **Suggestive Language:** The use of suggestive language to implicate inappropriate things is another common characteristic of these music videos and songs.
6. **Visualisation of Selective Body Parts of Female:** The close-up shots are taken in a way so that some selected body parts of the female become clearly visible in the voids which is used as a strategy to attract male audience.
7. **Presentation of Female as Items:** These categories of music videos present female character as items to attract male audience. This is supported by vulgar dance moves, cheap lyrics, revealing costumes and close- up shots of different body parts of the female.

The visual presentation of women's body in a way as discussed above, has greater impact in the society which results in dissatisfaction of size, colour and uniqueness of women's bodies. These categories of songs have strong reached to the mass population leading to the normalisation of male gaze and female sexualisation. The internalisation of the concept of a women's body from the perspective of male is normalised and socialised in a way that everyone including women themselves accepted their body from other's perspective to be 'beautiful and perfect' as constructed by the society. Women are referred and portrayed as mere sexual items in these songs by objectification of their bodies. The costumes of the female characters are designed according to the acceptance of male gaze. The female character is expected to present their body with the support of vulgar lyrics and sexually appealing moves and costumes to the audience as the erotic object of sexual fulfilment.

In the contemporary times, women are so much concerned about looks and figure that dissatisfaction with their bodies is one of the main reasons behind frustration of young adult women according to an article title as *Emotional Regulation and Body Dissatisfaction* published by National Library of Medicine (Momene, Estevez, Herrero, Griffiths, Olave, Iraurizaga, 2023). Body shaming or fat shaming or negative comments in reference to a specific body part can be seen in popular tv shows, advertisements, social media, music videos. The reason behind this is that the society has created this concept of a women's body in such a way that it looks like the reality and people have internalised these body standards so much that even we judge people's happiness on the basis of external look. The objectification of women's body is a very systemic way of exerting indirect power to control a women's body and her appearance from a masculine perspective by a patriarchal society. Although she owns her body but not the way of living with it.

The pressure of accepting and confirming to these set standards of patriarchal society shapes how women think about their own bodies, capabilities and place in the world (Glapka, 2017). In daily lives, having a mental pressure on external appearance, physical attractiveness and being conscious about how you will be 'seen' by others are also connected to the reality of living under the male gaze which results as follows:

1. **Dissatisfaction with bodies:** By trying to fit into the beauty standards set by the society under male gaze and internalising these standards as reality, women become dissatisfied with their own bodies when they fail to do so. Everybody is unique and it's totally wrong to generalise how an ideal body should look. The focus should be on being healthy. It's impossible for everyone to fit into those beauty standards because of so many factual things related to unique structure of everyone's body. Hence, in this process of changing their body, women become unhappy and dissatisfied.
2. **Depression and anxiety:** Dissatisfaction with their own bodies leads to depression and anxiety. Failing to fit into the societal standard of beauty, many women become the victim of depression and anxiety and even goes to the extreme point of having suicidal tendencies.
3. **Low self-esteem:** Failure of fulfilling the constructed reality of beauty leads to losing of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth of women. They started to consider themselves as inferior in the society.
4. **Loneliness:** Losing of self-confidence and self-worth leads to the feeling of inferiority in the society which further results in feeling of loneliness and exclusion from others. Women who can't fulfil the set standard of how they should look, feel excluded from others.

### **Conclusion:**

Impact of objectification of women's body is neither limited to the female actress nor it ends only in the videos. It influences the self-perception and self-esteem of women. It influences women's conception about their own body which controls their power to take decisions for their own body and life. Society at large has internalised these standards of women's beauty and body so much that not only on screen but in real life also women are trying so hard to fit into these standards.

From the above discussion, it can be understood that the impact of objectification of women's bodies in the music videos has much more powerful impact in the society. It creates the concept of beauty from the male gaze without including women's opinion, resulting in indirect control of their bodies. Hence, it's the responsibility of everyone in the society to choose what we watch and what trends we choose to make an equal society for everyone to live equally without trying to fit into standard set by others other than themselves. When the goal is to make an equal society, it's the basic requirement to respect everyone and make them feel free to live according to their own wishes without being concern to anyone for anything, especially for their physical appearance.

## References:

1. Abbey, A (1982): Sex Differences in Attribution for Friendly Behavior: Do Males Misperceive Females' Friendliness? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*,42. Pp. 830-838.
2. American Psychological Association (2007 b): Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. Washington, DC.
3. Barkty, S.L(1990): *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York, Routledge.
4. Berger. Peter & Luckmann. Thomas (1966): *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Anchor Books.
5. Fredrickson, B.L & Roberts, T.A (1997): Objectification Theory: Towards Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21.
6. Glapka, E (2017): Women in the Centre of Male Gaze- Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis as a Tool of Critique. *Critical Discourse Studies*.
7. Mulvey. L (1975): Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen*. 16(3).
8. Ponterotto. D (2016): Resisting the Male Gaze: Feminist Responses to the Normalisation of the Female Body in Western Culture. *Journal of International Women's Studies*. 17(1).
9. Unger, R. K. (2001): *Handbook of the Psychology of Women and Gender*. New York, NY: Wiley.
10. Wolf, N. (1991): *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*. New York, NY: Anchor.