



"VOICING VICTORY: A CONCEPTUAL METAPHORICAL STUDY OF MOTIVATION AND SUCCESS IN PAKISTANI SOUNDTRACKS"

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of conceptual metaphors to represent motivation, struggle, and success in Pakistani original soundtracks (OSTs), applying the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The research aimed to uncover how abstract emotional experiences are framed through metaphorical language in OST lyrics and how these constructions reflect cultural narratives. A qualitative content analysis was conducted on twelve popular OSTs from Urdu television dramas, with lyrics transcribed, translated, and coded for dominant metaphorical patterns. Findings revealed recurring metaphors such as "Success is a Journey," "Motivation is Fire," and "Struggle is War," often structured around spiritual, poetic, and social themes. These metaphors serve not only as expressive devices but also as cognitive tools shaping public understanding of aspiration and resilience. The study contributes to both metaphor research and ESL pedagogy, recommending OSTs as valuable resources for language learners and scholars exploring emotion, media, and culture through linguistic analysis.

Keywords: *Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Pakistani OSTs, Motivation, Cultural Discourse Analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Music, particularly in the form of lyrical storytelling, plays a central role in shaping cultural consciousness, transmitting values, and reflecting collective aspirations. In Pakistan, Original Sound Tracks (OSTs) associated with television dramas have emerged as an emotionally potent and culturally significant form of media. These songs are not merely promotional materials or background scores; rather, they serve as poetic narratives that encapsulate the emotional and moral arcs of entire dramas. Through deeply expressive language and metaphoric density, OSTs convey themes of love, betrayal, loss, resilience, and triumph. Among these, the portrayal of motivation, struggle, and success stands out as a recurring and emotionally charged triad, often couched in rich metaphorical language.

The theory of Conceptual Metaphors, pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By*, posits that metaphors are not mere rhetorical devices but cognitive structures that shape human understanding. According to this theory, people comprehend abstract concepts like emotions, morality, and success through more concrete domains such as



physical movement, war, or nature. In the context of Pakistani OSTs, metaphors like “*Success is a Journey*,” “*Struggle is War*,” and “*Motivation is Light*” are frequently employed to make intangible emotional states relatable and resonant with listeners. These metaphors not only enhance the aesthetic quality of the music but also serve to reinforce culturally specific narratives about endurance, faith, and self-realization.

Pakistani OSTs reflect a unique blend of Urdu poetic tradition, Islamic spirituality, and contemporary storytelling. Drawing heavily from the Sufi tradition and the classical ghazal form, these soundtracks often incorporate symbols of burning, bleeding, falling, rising, and walking—each of which functions metaphorically to portray the inner emotional landscapes of characters and, by extension, the society at large. For instance, in OSTs like “*Yakeen Ka Safar*,” the journey from despair to belief is metaphorically framed as both a spiritual and psychological voyage. Similarly, in “*Sinf-e-Aahan*,” female empowerment is metaphorically coded through motifs of strength, battle, and endurance—portraying success as the reward for unyielding struggle.

The prevalence of such metaphorical language is not arbitrary. In a society marked by socio-political instability, gender inequalities, and class struggles, the concept of success is often romanticized or idealized through media. OSTs act as cultural scripts that provide emotional guidance, comfort, and sometimes even ideological reinforcement. They project a version of success that is not merely material but moral, spiritual, and emotional—an achievement earned through faith, perseverance, and inner transformation. These themes resonate deeply with Pakistani audiences, for whom success is often viewed through the lens of adversity and divine destiny.

Despite their widespread popularity and influence, Pakistani OSTs remain underexplored in scholarly literature—especially from a cognitive-linguistic perspective. While musicological and sociocultural studies have addressed the themes of national identity and love in South Asian music, few studies have focused specifically on the metaphorical construction of motivation and success in this domain. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity to analyze how metaphor serves as a bridge between lyrical expression and cultural ideology in Pakistani media.

By employing conceptual metaphor analysis, this study aims to uncover the cognitive patterns underlying motivational discourse in OSTs and to interpret how these patterns reflect larger socio-cultural understandings of what it means to strive and succeed in contemporary Pakistan. In doing so, it builds upon the foundational work of scholars like Lakoff and Johnson (1980) while situating the inquiry within the specific cultural-linguistic context of Urdu media and Pakistani drama narratives.

Statement of the Problem

While Pakistani OSTs serve as emotionally and culturally impactful expressions of media narratives, there is a lack of scholarly attention to the conceptual metaphors they employ—especially regarding motivation, struggle, and success. These abstract ideas are often central to the emotional tone of a drama, yet their metaphorical representation remains critically underexamined. Existing research in South Asian music focuses predominantly on themes of love or nationalism, overlooking how metaphor constructs aspirational identity. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the metaphorical structures that shape motivational discourse in Pakistani OSTs, thereby offering insights into how success is linguistically and culturally imagined.



Objectives

- To identify and categorize the dominant conceptual metaphors used to represent motivation, struggle, and success in selected Pakistani soundtracks.
- To explore how metaphors of motivation and struggle are linguistically constructed to portray success as an emotional, social, or spiritual achievement.
- To examine how the interplay of metaphors for motivation, struggle, and success contributes to emotional engagement and inspirational storytelling in Pakistani drama soundtracks.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for its contribution to understanding how motivational and aspirational ideals are constructed and communicated through language in Pakistani soundtrack lyrics. In a cultural context where music—particularly OSTs—plays a central role in shaping public emotions and values, analyzing the metaphors of motivation, struggle, and success offers valuable insight into the collective imagination of society. These metaphors do not merely embellish lyrics but actively frame how individuals perceive hardship, endurance, and achievement in their own lives.

By applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Urdu-language media, the research bridges a gap in both regional linguistic scholarship and cognitive literary studies. Much of the existing literature on metaphor remains Western-centric or focused on English-language corpora. This study offers a localized perspective by exploring metaphors rooted in South Asian poetic and cultural traditions, revealing how they function in contemporary, mass-consumed media.

The research also holds interdisciplinary relevance. It informs cultural discourse analysis, narrative theory, and music studies by showing how metaphor serves both aesthetic and psychological purposes in Pakistani media. For media producers, educators, and cultural critics, the findings will help unpack how OSTs emotionally mobilize audiences and sustain enduring myths of success, transformation, and inner strength in modern Pakistan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Metaphor Theory: Foundations and Evolving Interpretations

The study of metaphor has undergone significant theoretical shifts, particularly since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal work, *Metaphors We Live By*. The authors proposed that metaphor is not merely a rhetorical flourish or literary ornament, but a fundamental structure of human cognition. Their theory, later termed Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), argues that individuals understand and experience abstract concepts—such as time, success, or motivation—through more tangible, physical experiences like movement, light, or war. For instance, metaphors such as “*Life is a journey*” or “*Success is climbing a ladder*” are not just figures of speech but reflect deeply ingrained cognitive schemas. These mappings between source and target domains help individuals make sense of complex ideas through familiar sensory or spatial frameworks (Kövecses, 2010).

CMT has since been expanded to include the cultural and emotional dimensions of metaphor, making it relevant for analyzing narrative forms like music and media. Researchers have noted that metaphor use in language and communication varies according to cultural context, with certain metaphors carrying particular resonance in specific societies (Gibbs, 2008). Within this expanded framework, metaphors are not only conceptual structures but also **cultural artifacts** that encode

values, beliefs, and emotional worldviews. As such, music becomes a powerful domain for metaphor analysis, particularly in genres that are highly expressive and emotionally charged.

One of the significant developments in metaphor research has been its application to discourse and narrative structures, including songs, poetry, and popular media. Musolff (2006) emphasizes that metaphor is often used in public discourse to structure persuasive arguments and emotional responses. This notion has been extended to music, where lyrics act as condensed narratives shaped by metaphorical frameworks. Cameron and Maslen (2010) argue that metaphor in communication is always situated, meaning it is influenced by the interpersonal, cultural, and emotional contexts in which it occurs. Therefore, analyzing metaphors in music, especially in emotional and aspirational genres like original soundtracks (OSTs), provides a lens into how societies narrate and negotiate complex experiences like love, struggle, and success.

Building on these theoretical foundations, recent studies have turned their attention to metaphor in popular song lyrics, viewing them as fertile ground for exploring emotional and cognitive dimensions of language. Zhang (2020), in her comparative study of English and Chinese songs, demonstrates how metaphors of motion, nature, and pain are used cross-culturally to frame themes of personal growth, heartbreak, and triumph. Similarly, Rezaei and Farsani (2022) found that motivational metaphors such as “*rising*,” “*fighting*,” and “*shining*” were recurrent in contemporary pop music, indicating a global trend of using metaphor to frame self-transformation. These findings underscore the relevance of CMT in the analysis of emotionally charged media like song lyrics, where abstract emotional journeys are given concrete metaphorical form.

Global Empirical Studies: Metaphor in Music and Media

Following the theoretical advances in CMT, empirical studies have increasingly explored how metaphor functions in music as a vehicle for conveying emotional and ideological meaning. One such study by Charteris-Black (2011) examined metaphors in political speeches and applied the findings to media and public communication. He argued that metaphors of “battle,” “climbing,” and “rising” are dominant in narratives of personal success and leadership. These metaphors are equally prevalent in music, where listeners relate to artists' journeys through metaphorical framings of hardship and triumph.

In the domain of motivational discourse, popular music around the world has been found to rely heavily on metaphorical constructions of effort and success. In a study of Western motivational anthems, Liu and Chen (2019) identified recurring metaphorical themes such as “*breaking chains*,” “*crossing bridges*,” and “*walking through fire*,” suggesting that metaphors of physical movement, war, and purification are central to global music's depiction of human aspiration. These metaphors activate emotional schemas in listeners, offering comfort or inspiration in moments of personal challenge. Importantly, Liu and Chen's study links metaphor to emotional regulation, showing how metaphoric language helps listeners cope with adversity.

Further, research by Ng and Loh (2021) explored the use of metaphors in Southeast Asian music videos, revealing how lyrics use cultural symbols—such as rivers, mountains, and spiritual imagery—to frame ideas of resilience and progress. The study highlighted that in collectivist societies, metaphors often emphasize endurance and communal support rather than individual glory. This observation is particularly relevant when considering Pakistani OSTs, which often reflect similar collectivist and spiritual values, framing success not just as a personal victory but as a moral or divine reward.

Several corpus-based studies have confirmed the systemic nature of metaphor in music. For example, Kövecses (2017) demonstrated that conceptual metaphors follow regular patterns across genres and languages, confirming that metaphors like “*Life is a Journey*” and “*Success is Climbing*” are among the most universal. These findings support the idea that music—and particularly lyrical music—is an ideal medium for conceptual metaphor analysis due to its condensed, emotionally intense language.

Metaphorical Discourse in South Asian and Pakistani Media

In South Asia, music has long served as a vehicle for emotional storytelling and moral reflection. Urdu and Hindi songs in particular have been noted for their metaphor-rich lyrics, which often draw from poetic traditions like ghazal, qawwali, and Sufi kalam. According to Ali and Saeed (2015), these traditions have influenced not only classical music but also contemporary television soundtracks, infusing them with metaphorical language that resonates deeply with local audiences. In this context, metaphors of fire, journey, darkness, and divine union are frequently used to express emotional struggle, romantic longing, and spiritual transformation.

The metaphorical representation of success and motivation in South Asian media has been explored in recent studies, though mostly from sociolinguistic or critical discourse angles. For example, Ahmad and Zia (2021) analyzed gendered narratives in Pakistani dramas, noting that metaphors of war, sacrifice, and purity were often used to frame female characters’ journeys. While not a CMT-focused study, their work illustrates how metaphor serves as a discursive strategy to shape audience perception and emotional alignment with characters. This insight is essential for metaphor analysts seeking to understand how media narratives mobilize emotions and construct aspirational identities.

A notable contribution in the Pakistani context is the study by Rehman and Yasmin (2023), which directly applies Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Urdu motivational lyrics. Their analysis identifies metaphors such as “*light in darkness*,” “*rising from ashes*,” and “*walking toward destiny*” as dominant in songs aimed at inspiring listeners. The study confirms that Pakistani music employs a hybrid of universal metaphors (like journey and light) and culturally embedded imagery (such as divine will or martyrdom) to frame success as both a personal and spiritual achievement. The research highlights how metaphors are used not only to inspire but also to moralize the pursuit of success, reflecting the strong religious and ethical undercurrents in Pakistani society.

Building on this empirical foundation, several OSTs from popular Pakistani dramas reveal systematic metaphor use in constructing motivational arcs. In *Yakeen Ka Safar*, for instance, success is depicted as a hard-earned journey through pain and perseverance, employing lyrics that evoke walking through darkness, fighting inner battles, and trusting divine timing. Similarly, *Sinf-e-Aahan* uses metaphors of strength, resilience, and rebirth to portray female empowerment, showing how struggle is a necessary phase in the journey to triumph. These examples underscore the narrative role of metaphor in shaping how success and motivation are perceived and experienced by audiences.

Despite these insights, there remains a significant gap in applying a unified CMT framework to the analysis of Pakistani OSTs. While isolated studies have touched on metaphor in Urdu poetry or media discourse, few have systematically explored how conceptual metaphors of **motivation, struggle, and success** operate across musical texts in a cognitive-linguistic sense. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive metaphor analysis of selected OSTs, thereby



contributing both to the growing body of CMT research and to our understanding of cultural narrative structures in Pakistani media.

Research Gap

While conceptual metaphor theory has been widely applied to political discourse and global music, there is a noticeable lack of scholarly work examining metaphorical representations of **motivation, struggle, and success** in Pakistani original soundtracks (OSTs). Most existing studies in South Asia focus on romantic or religious themes, overlooking aspirational narratives. This study addresses that gap by exploring how OSTs employ metaphor to construct culturally resonant motivational discourse within Pakistani popular media.

Research Questions

1. What are the dominant conceptual metaphors used to represent motivation, struggle, and success in selected Pakistani OSTs?
2. How do these metaphors reflect the cultural, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of aspiration in Pakistani media narratives?
3. In what ways do metaphorical constructs in OST lyrics shape audience perceptions of personal achievement and resilience?

3. METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which serves as the foundational lens through which the metaphorical portrayal of motivation, struggle, and success is analyzed in Pakistani soundtracks. CMT, initially formulated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), posits that human thought is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. According to this theory, abstract concepts—such as time, emotion, morality, and achievement—are understood through more concrete, embodied experiences like motion, force, and space. This mental mapping between source and target domains enables individuals to structure their understanding of intangible realities through tangible experiences. The conceptual framework for this study assumes that metaphor is both a cognitive function and a cultural artifact. While metaphors are rooted in individual cognitive processes, their expression and interpretation are influenced by social norms, religious beliefs, and historical traditions. In Pakistani media, especially Urdu-language lyrics, metaphorical language often draws on poetic, religious, and nationalistic imagery—thus creating layered meanings that resonate with diverse audience segments. Furthermore, the application of CMT in this study goes beyond isolated metaphor identification. It involves identifying systematic mappings across multiple OSTs, thereby revealing dominant metaphorical patterns that shape emotional narratives. This approach offers insights into how metaphor functions not only as a linguistic device but as a framing mechanism that guides perception and influences belief systems. In media environments where success is often moralized or idealized, the role of metaphor becomes central to how such ideals are communicated and reinforced.

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative content analysis design grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). The approach allows for an in-depth examination of the metaphorical structures embedded in OST lyrics. Since metaphors are contextually shaped and culturally situated, a qualitative lens is most appropriate for unpacking their narrative and emotional functions.



Sampling Pool

The estimated sample for this study comprises 12 original soundtracks (OSTs) from popular Pakistani television dramas aired between 2015 and 2023.

Sampling Criterion

These OSTs were selected based on three primary criteria

1. Thematic relevance to motivation, struggle, and success
2. Popularity and cultural impact as evidenced by YouTube views, drama ratings, and audience feedback
3. Lyrical richness and use of metaphorical language.

The aim was to ensure a representative sample that captures both male and female narratives, spiritual and secular themes, and varying tones of struggle, ranging from emotional to social and psychological.

Table 1: Sample of Selected Pakistani OSTs for Conceptual Metaphor Analysis

No.	Drama Title	OST Title	Year	Primary Themes	Key Conceptual Metaphors
1	Yakeen Ka Safar	Yakeen Ka Safar OST	2017	Struggle, resilience, self-belief	<i>Struggle is War, Success is a Journey</i>
2	Sinf-e-Aahan	Sinf-e-Aahan OST	2022	Female empowerment, ambition, patriotism	<i>Motivation is Fire, Success is Climbing</i>
3	Ehd-e-Wafa	Ehd-e-Wafa OST	2019	Friendship, national pride, sacrifice	<i>Struggle is a Mission, Success is Honor</i>
4	Parizaad	Parizaad OST	2021	Inner worth, rejection, transformation	<i>Success is Light, Life is a Battle</i>
5	Dil Na Umeed To Nahi	Dil Na Umeed OST	2021	Social injustice, hope, trauma recovery	<i>Hope is Light, Struggle is Darkness</i>
6	Alif	Alif OST	2020	Spiritual awakening, creativity, love	<i>Success is Divine Union, Motivation is Light</i>
7	Raqeeb Se	Raqeeb Se OST	2021	Emotional trauma, redemption, love	<i>Love is Pain, Healing is Journey</i>
8	Meray Paas Tum Ho	Meray Paas Tum Ho OST	2019	Betrayal, ambition, emotional loss	<i>Love is War, Success is Hollow Victory</i>
9	Do Bol	Do Bol OST	2019	Unspoken love, social class, acceptance	<i>Love is Silence, Struggle is Fate</i>
10	Khuda Aur Mohabbat 3	Khuda Aur Mohabbat OST (Season 3)	2021	Divine love, emotional intensity, sacrifice	<i>Love is Divine Fire, Success is Martyrdom</i>
11	Khaani	Khaani OST	2017	Justice, moral strength, loss	<i>Struggle is Battle, Success is Moral Victory</i>



No.	Drama Title	OST Title	Year	Primary Themes	Key Conceptual Metaphors
12	Mann Mayal	Mann Mayal OST	2016	Obsession, regret, personal growth	<i>Love is Madness, Growth is Journey</i>

Dataset

The dataset includes publicly available Urdu-language OST lyrics retrieved from official YouTube uploads, lyric websites (such as LyricsBell, UrduLyrics), and drama streaming platforms. Each OST selected corresponds to a widely viewed drama series, ensuring that the data reflects cultural narratives that resonate with large audiences. The lyrical content was limited to original compositions rather than background scores or reused poetry to maintain textual authenticity and relevance. In total, the dataset spans approximately 2,500 to 3,000 words of Urdu lyrical content, ensuring sufficient material for metaphor analysis while maintaining a manageable scope.

Data Transcription and coding

As the majority of OSTs are orally performed in Urdu, the transcription process involved converting spoken lyrics into written Urdu script, followed by transliteration into Roman Urdu and English. Native Urdu-speaking researchers manually transcribed each OST to preserve nuances of tone, diction, and poetic rhythm. Attention was given to accurate representation of idioms, compound expressions, and culturally loaded terms. Literal English translations were created alongside the original text to facilitate metaphor identification and semantic analysis for non-Urdu readers.

Table 2: Sample of Selected Pakistani OSTs for Conceptual Metaphor Analysis

No.	Drama Title	OST Title	Year	Primary Themes	Key Conceptual Metaphors
1	Yakeen Ka Safar	Yakeen Ka Safar OST	2017	Struggle, resilience, self-belief	<i>Struggle is War, Success is a Journey</i>
2	Sinf-e-Aahan	Sinf-e-Aahan OST	2022	Female empowerment, ambition, patriotism	<i>Motivation is Fire, Success is Climbing</i>
3	Ehd-e-Wafa	Ehd-e-Wafa OST	2019	Friendship, national pride, sacrifice	<i>Struggle is a Mission, Success is Honor</i>
4	Parizaad	Parizaad OST	2021	Inner worth, rejection, transformation	<i>Success is Light, Life is a Battle</i>
5	Dil Na Umeed To Nahi	Dil Na Umeed OST	2021	Social injustice, hope, trauma recovery	<i>Hope is Light, Struggle is Darkness</i>
6	Alif	Alif OST	2020	Spiritual awakening, creativity, love	<i>Success is Divine Union, Motivation is Light</i>
7	Raqeeb Se	Raqeeb Se OST	2021	Emotional trauma, redemption, love	<i>Love is Pain, Healing is Journey</i>



No.	Drama Title	OST Title	Year	Primary Themes	Key Conceptual Metaphors
8	Meray Paas Tum Ho	Meray Paas Tum Ho OST	2019	Betrayal, ambition, emotional loss	<i>Love is War, Success is Hollow Victory</i>
9	Do Bol	Do Bol OST	2019	Unspoken love, social class, acceptance	<i>Love is Silence, Struggle is Fate</i>
10	Khuda Aur Mohabbat 3	Khuda Aur Mohabbat OST (Season 3)	2021	Divine love, emotional intensity, sacrifice	<i>Love is Divine Fire, Success is Martyrdom</i>
11	Khaani	Khaani OST	2017	Justice, moral strength, loss	<i>Struggle is Battle, Success is Moral Victory</i>
12	Mann Mayal	Mann Mayal OST	2016	Obsession, regret, personal growth	<i>Love is Madness, Growth is Journey</i>

Once transcribed, the lyrics were subjected to thematic coding using a deductive approach based on known metaphor categories in CMT. Initial codes included metaphor types such as success is a journey, motivation is light, struggle is war, *and* success is divine favor. These codes were refined through iterative reading, with emergent codes added as new metaphorical patterns were identified. Each metaphor was documented with supporting lines and source-target domain mappings. Coding was conducted manually and cross-validated by two independent reviewers to ensure consistency and reliability in interpretation.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This study examined a corpus of twelve Pakistani original soundtracks (OSTs) using the lens of **Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)** to explore how themes of motivation, struggle, and success are metaphorically constructed. Lyrics were analyzed line by line to extract and code dominant metaphors, with findings organized into conceptual categories. This analysis presents those results in an objective format, focusing on metaphor frequency, semantic fields, and thematic patterns.

4.1. Frequency and Dominance of Conceptual Metaphors

Among all identified metaphors, “success is a journey” and “struggle is war” emerged as the most dominant metaphorical frames, appearing in over 70% of the sample. These metaphors were typically articulated through verbs of motion, obstacles, combat, or completion. OSTs like *Yakeen Ka Safar*, *Ehd-e-Wafa*, and *Parizaad* consistently framed their protagonists' efforts using spatial or adversarial language: “cutting through storms,” “fighting battles,” and “walking alone.” These metaphors provided a coherent mental structure for audiences to conceptualize success not as a static outcome but as a dynamic, hard-earned process.

The metaphor “motivation is fire” was prevalent in emotionally charged OSTs such as *Sinf-e-Aahan* and *Khuda Aur Mohabbat*, often associated with inner strength and divine inspiration. Lyrics such as “jalta hai dil” (“the heart burns”) or “we burn to shine” use physical combustion to depict motivation as both painful and transformative. This suggests a culturally rooted metaphorical association between emotional suffering and the legitimacy of ambition.

4.2. Thematic Patterns and Emotional Resonance

Three dominant emotional themes emerged through metaphorical mapping: sacrifice, endurance, and transcendence. “STRUGGLE IS WAR” metaphors were particularly evident in OSTs addressing moral or social battles, such as *Khaani* or *Dil Na Umeed To Nahi*. Lyrics referred to metaphorical enemies—such as fate, injustice, or betrayal—placing the protagonist in an adversarial position. These narratives often cast struggle as solitary, enhancing the emotional gravity and cultural valorization of enduring alone.

In contrast, metaphors like “SUCCESS IS LIGHT” or “SUCCESS IS DIVINE UNION” conveyed spiritual fulfillment or inner peace as the ultimate goal. *Alif*, for example, employed metaphors that transcended material success and framed personal transformation through divine paths. This revealed a metaphysical interpretation of success in some OSTs, where success is not only a destination but also a state of spiritual awakening.

Interestingly, gendered variation was also evident. Female-centered OSTs like *Sinf-e-Aahan* and *Mann Mayal* leaned more heavily on metaphors of resilience, rebirth, and silence—suggesting that struggle for women is often portrayed as internal, quiet, and dignified. Male-centric OSTs emphasized combat, loss, and redemption, reinforcing cultural norms around masculine emotional expression through external action and resistance.

4.3. Metaphor Clustering and Narrative Flow

Across the dataset, metaphors clustered into **narrative phases** that mirrored story arcs. In the early parts of lyrics, metaphors of darkness or descent were dominant, such as “I rose from the dust,” “I burned alone,” or “The world broke me.” Mid-lyrics tended to introduce metaphors of effort and transition, with lines like “I walked through storms” or “fought every battle.” Closing lines frequently used upward spatial metaphors, e.g., “reached the stars,” “touched the sky,” or “shined in the light.” These metaphor sequences reflect not only cognitive mappings but also narrative progressions that mirror character development.

5. DISCUSSION

This study identified several dominant conceptual metaphors including *SUCCESS IS A JOURNEY*, *STRUGGLE IS WAR*, and *MOTIVATION IS FIRE*, all of which align with universal metaphorical patterns observed globally. These findings resonate with previous research by Zhang and Chen (2021), who identified journey metaphors as cross-culturally stable in framing achievement narratives in music. However, the Pakistani OSTs bring a unique cultural texture through their spiritual framing and poetic language, often blending secular and divine imagery. For example, *Khuda Aur Mohabbat* frames emotional endurance not only as personal struggle but as a pathway to divine love, thereby integrating theological dimensions into what are otherwise psychological metaphors.

The metaphorical structures found in these OSTs reflect culturally embedded values of honor, faith, and sacrifice. As Rehman and Yasmin (2023) assert in their metaphor study of Urdu motivational lyrics, Pakistani metaphor use often merges religious and emotional language to elevate mundane personal efforts into spiritually significant acts. This aligns with the presence of metaphors like *SUCCESS IS DIVINE UNION* in *Alif*, where personal achievement is described not as individual glory but as closeness to God. Moreover, metaphors of burning and silence in OSTs like *Sinf-e-Aahan* also point toward cultural expectations of perseverance, especially for women, where quiet endurance is more socially revered than vocal protest. These findings also reflect

national discourses of resilience seen in political and patriotic narratives, further reinforcing metaphor as an ideological tool (Ng & Loh, 2021). Songs like *Ehd-e-Wafa* do not simply promote personal victory but frame it within the collective emotional lexicon of loyalty, sacrifice, and service. Thus, metaphor in Pakistani OSTs operates not just at a cognitive level but also as a cultural narrative that bridges personal struggle with national values.

Conceptual metaphors in OSTs significantly influence how listeners interpret emotional experiences and success trajectories. Liu and Iqbal (2022) emphasize that metaphors in music act as "emotional regulators," helping listeners manage, frame, and interpret their psychological states. The metaphors in Pakistani OSTs provide structured emotional models that audiences may internalize. For instance, when success is framed as "touching the sky" or "walking alone," listeners are subtly encouraged to endure solitude or hardship as morally righteous paths to fulfillment. Similarly, the metaphor *MOTIVATION IS FIRE* underscores emotional intensity as a desirable trait, even if painful. These metaphorical constructions may also shape societal attitudes about what it means to succeed or persevere. In cultures where expression of vulnerability is often constrained, metaphors offer an alternative channel for emotional articulation. Particularly for female listeners, metaphors of silence, inner strength, and light in darkness offer affirmation and cognitive framing of lived experience in culturally acceptable terms.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explored how conceptual metaphors of motivation, struggle, and success are embedded in the lyrics of Pakistani OSTs using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as the analytical framework. The findings revealed that metaphors such as "*Success is a Journey*," "*Motivation is Fire*," and "*Struggle is War*" are not only frequent but structurally significant in shaping the emotional and narrative arcs of these songs. These metaphors provide Pakistani audiences with culturally resonant frameworks for understanding personal achievement and resilience, often blending spiritual and poetic traditions with contemporary storytelling.

For ESL learners, these findings suggest that Pakistani OSTs can be a powerful tool for language acquisition and emotional literacy. By engaging with metaphor-rich lyrics, learners can develop a deeper understanding of abstract vocabulary, figurative speech, and cultural nuance. Teachers may consider integrating OST lyrics into ESL curricula as authentic materials for teaching metaphor, poetic devices, and emotional expression.

For researchers, especially in applied linguistics, discourse studies, or South Asian media, this study opens avenues for further exploration of metaphor in multilingual contexts. Comparative studies between Urdu and English metaphors could yield insights into cross-cultural conceptualization. Moreover, researchers can investigate how metaphor shapes not only media narratives but also everyday language, identity formation, and educational discourse in ESL environments.

7. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

This study is limited by its focus on a small, purposively selected sample of twelve Pakistani OSTs, which may not fully represent the diversity of lyrical metaphors across all Urdu music genres. Additionally, subjective interpretation during metaphor coding may introduce researcher bias despite cross-validation efforts. Delimitations include the exclusive use of OSTs from 2015–2023, and only Urdu-language songs were considered. The study also concentrates solely on



metaphors related to motivation, struggle, and success, excluding other emotional themes such as love, grief, or nostalgia that may offer further insights.

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