

Navigating the Juncture of Western Influence on the Culture and Society of Pakistan

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Abstract

Background: Every nation is identified by its unique culture, norms, and values. Pakistan's culture is a blend of Islamic principles. The Westernization has greatly influenced Pakistan's culture in urban areas.

Research Aim: To investigate and explore the impact of Western culture on Pakistan's culture and its society.

Methodology: This study will employ a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data was gathered from interviews with 10 respondents and the quantitative data was gathered from reviewing the previous literature for a diverse perspective.

Results: It was found that Western culture has helped in navigating global challenges. The positive and negative influences showed that after globalization Western culture played a prominent role in framing and altering the culture of Pakistan.

Conclusion: The Western culture prevalence with its positive and negative impact is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. The integration of

Westernization into the culture of Pakistan is driven by economic, technological, socio-cultural and historical factors.

Keywords: *Western Influence, Pakistani Society, Pakistani Culture, Westernization.*

Introduction

Culture is defined as a tradition and customs followed by people which form their beliefs, behavior, values, and norms (Reisinger & Turner, 2012). It is the culture that differentiates the residents of one country from another, it can be said that the culture reflects the systems and collections adopted historically in certain countries or developed by the influence of some ethnic or subgroups in the society (Greif, 1994). Presently, the world is a place where people living with different ethnic groups, societies, and cultures are interacting with each other. According to Inglehart (2015), the world is changing rapidly, and with regard to that the values of individuals are also changing. Modernization plays a vital role which is influencing social and cultural values since it is the process of social change that is itself influenced by industrialization (Lubelcová, 2012).

Pakistan is a country that was established on the basis and principle of Islam. Pakistan's culture is based upon the principle of Islam which emphasizes the significance of Islamic history (Zaman, 2018). Pakistan is a diverse culture which is different and distinct from other cultures. Since the last century, globalization has affected the culture of Pakistan, and the people living in this country are seen to be more inclined towards Westernization (Sultana & Bukhari, 2020). It was observed that Western culture is spreading increasingly through media and the internet. According to Goel (2021), the culture in any country is reflected in music, writing, language, dialect, religion, dress, food, and festivals, the influence of Western culture has affected Pakistan financially, socially, culturally, and also politically (Mumtaz & Salway, 2009).

The rise of globalization has resulted in the rapid diffusion of Westernization through media which has not only altered Pakistan's culture but also the societal norms. The nuances of this intersection required an in-depth examination of the Western cultural influence in different spheres of life and society. This study will unravel the complexities and provide insight into how Westernization has influenced the individual's identity and culture.

Research Aim

This study has been carried out to investigate and explore the impact of Western culture on Pakistan's culture and its society. This study aims to investigate the influence of Western culture

on shaping perceptions, values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the influence of Western culture on various aspects of Pakistan's culture.
- To analyze the extent of Western cultural element adaptation within the society of Pakistan.
- To evaluate the implication of this intersection on the identity, norms, culture, and social practices in Pakistan.

Research Gap

The existing literature often discusses the positive or negative aspects of Westernization which lacks a comprehensive understanding. This study aims to investigate the nuanced examination of both negative and positive aspects of the culture and society of Pakistan.

Literature Review

Culture is a Latin word that means to cultivate. This word was closely linked to the cultivation of agriculture and soil (Evans, 1975). Presently, the word culture means the behavior, beliefs, norms, and values of a specific group of people (Sternberg, 2013). It can be said that culture is a comprehensive way of life that includes ethics, manners, religion, art, rituals, language, food, music, and art (Pyae, 2018).

The culture and society of Pakistan have undergone various changes and transformations since its independence which is still in continuation (Ahsan, 2003). According to Starr (2019), after the period of Cold War in the early 1990s, the emergence of macroeconomic policies resulted in the liberalization and privatization of the business and government sectors, which also brought about the advancement of information technology which resulted in the introduction of TV channels through dish antenna. Historically, Pakistan has been on the verge of diverse civilizations experiencing the impact of Persia, Central and South Asian regions (Bose & Jalal, 2022). In the contemporary era, western culture has a profound influence on the various aspects of Pakistan including fashion, language, media, education, and lifestyle (Riaz & Arif, 2019). The infusion of Western culture has generated a dissertation on the preservation of cultural authenticity as well as progress and modernity. It was observed that the less developed countries were mostly inspired by Western culture because of the quality of life that was brought about through scientific technology and economic development (Ahmad, Sewani, & Ali, 2021; Babu, 2006).

This study focused on exploring the factors that became the reason for the increasing influence of Western culture as well as the positive and negative impact of Western culture on

Pakistan's culture and society.

Factors for the Increasing Prevalence of Western Culture

The increasing prevalence of Western culture in Pakistan can be due to several historical, economic, societal, and technological factors. Some of the factors are listed below;

Colonial Legacy

Before independence, Pakistan was the part of sub-continent which was under the rule of British colonials, their rule has resulted in a lasting impact on the various aspects of Pakistan's society which includes education, governance, language, culture, legal system, and economy (Ali, 2009). According to Jhatial et al. (2014), the influence of colonial and post-colonial policies has resulted in the formation of economic, political, cultural, and national systems.

Globalization

Globalization means the movement of trade and technology to make the world more connected and interdependent (Weiss, 1999) whereas, cultural globalization means the transmission of values, ideas, and norms around the world, which would help in building social relations (Weiss, 1999). The rapid increase of globalization has facilitated the transmission of information, ideas, and cultural products through trade across borders. In Pakistan, the Western culture has been derived from globalization through media, trade, and the internet (Mahmood, 2019).

Social Media Influence

The media has played a significant role in the spreading the Western culture to different nations. Social media has the power to influence the overall preferences of one's individual with short content (Arora et al., 2018). Nowadays, modernization is taken as adopting Western culture which is considered a need of the hour and important in the rapidly changing world (Pelizzo et al., 2023). Media is the key element that is bringing Westernization to Pakistan's society and culture. According to Riaz and Arif (2019), Western television shows and movies have marked their role in shaping the perception and beliefs of an individual. The widespread availability of Western culture through Western media content contributes to the integration of Western culture into Pakistan's culture (Ittefaq et al., 2021).

Advancement in Technology and Education

Technology through the evolution of media has greatly influenced the culture (Nyarko, 2022), since people are getting access to information on an immediate basis, the media and other

technology have resulted in framing the culture. On the other hand, education promotes and transmits the culture of a society (Aguilar & Montoya, 2013), culture and education are interwind to each other. The advancement of technology and the education system have resulted in shaping the modern institution of Pakistan and improved the quality of education (Rana & Tuba, 2015). According to Kanu (2005), the adoption of Western-style education in educational and professional environments plays a crucial role in adoption of the Western ideas and practices in daily life.

Economic Globalization

The economic relationships with Western countries in terms of trade and international relations have resulted in the exchange of ideas, goods, and services (Rehman et al., 2021). Economic globalization is associated with cultural globalization, which not only widened the scope within the realm of the economy but also in the domains of social, political, cultural, and political (Ali, et al., 2020; Steger, 2023).

Growing Urbanization

Urbanization means the population living in the urban areas. It was observed that in Pakistan, there is a speed-up population shift in the population of urban areas from the rural areas (Tariq et al., 2022). Urbanization in Pakistan has resulted in the exposure of diverse cultures and ethnicity. The urban areas are the hub of all the major economic activities and are also considered as the focal point for the adoption of Western culture (Salemink et al., 2017).

These are some of the prominent factors discussed for the prevalence of the Western culture in Pakistan but it is to note that the dynamics are complex and the extent of Westernization varies across different segments of the society of Pakistan.

Positive Impact of Westernization

Educational and Technological Advancement

The impact of Westernization on the education system resulted in the development of critical thinking and research that encourages students to engage in scientific and other developmental studies (Rani, 2023). The integration of Westernization in the educational system of Pakistan resulted in the students seeking higher education in Western countries that promote cultural exchange, improve quality of life and more economic opportunities. The adoption of English as a medium of instruction in educational institutions would help the students in the interaction with the international market (Manan et al., 2017). According to Akhtar et al. (2022), Western influence

promotes the integration of technologies in educational institutions which promotes technological literacy among students.

Promote Gender Equality

Westernization has played a vital role in promoting gender equality in Pakistan, this led to an emphasis on education for women which will lead to empowering women and more diverse career paths (Hussain, et al., 2023; Razzaq, 2022). Westernization has influenced a shift towards the acceptance of women in the professional sector breaking the traditional role of women and has encouraged them to participate in various professional sectors (Ahmad, Ali, & Sewani, 2021; N. A. A. Rahman, 2007). This influence has not only affected the role of women in the household but also promoted legal reforms for women in Pakistan, which include amendment of family laws and criminal code (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021; Othman, 2006). Westernization has also increased awareness regarding women's rights and protects them against discrimination.

Diversity in Culture

According to Riaz and Arif (2019), Western culture has a great influence on Pakistan's fashion, people have adopted Western clothing with the fusion of traditional attire this blend is prominently noticeable in urban areas where there is a mix of diverse cultures. The fusion of English language phrases and expressions into Urdu has led to cultural fusion in communication (Khan, 2009). Westernization has influenced the cuisine of Pakistan; the introduction of fast food and different Western-style meals reflects a diverse culinary influence (Awaan & Nawaz, 2015).

Negative Impact of Westernization

Cultural Erosion

Western influence has led to an emphasis on the English language which has degraded the Urdu language in Pakistan (Haidar et al., 2021). It was observed that the companies and other organizations offer jobs to those who know English well, this emphasis is destroying the importance of national and other regional languages. The dominance of Western media promotes their culture and projects the Western society as the best in terms of economic stability and other benefits which reflects a negative image of the new generation (Iwabuchi, 2010). In Pakistan, the people prioritize the Western culture, food, education, language, values, political system, economy, fashion, celebration, and family system based on adopting Westernization (Baig et al., 2018).

Social Fragments

The influence of Western culture could divide people into different social fragments.

According to Tahir (2019), the adoption of Western lifestyle, goods, food, and education can only be affordable to the wealthier segments of society. The Western educational model and quality education would contribute to a divide between the people who have access to modern education and those who do not (Niyozov & Memon, 2011). Likewise, it was observed that Pakistani society has been divided into classes such as upper, middle, and lower (Ahmed, 1990). According to Sultana and Bukhari (2020), the upper classes are found to be Westernized and follow such lifestyle that cannot be affordable for all, this has cut their connection with the local people and places. According to Memon (2022), the British educational system can be afforded by people of the elite and higher class.

Identity Crisis

The infusion of Western culture into Pakistan's culture would create a society with a hybrid culture (Aslam & Dar, 2022). The younger generation due to the heavy exposure to Western culture may experience a distinct cultural reality which would create conflict between different age groups (Foner, 1984). Westernized culture is a mix of such values that are odd with the traditional and religious values of Pakistan, this would create an identity crisis in the individuals as they try to negotiate between Pakistani culture and Islamic values and Western culture (Muazzam et al., 2021; Imran, et al., 2023).

Methodology

Data Collection

To examine the impact of Western culture on Pakistan's culture and its society, a mixed-method approach is used for quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data was gathered from interviews with 10 respondents with the help of purposive sampling technique and the quantitative data was gathered from reviewing the previous literature for a diverse perspective.

Data Sampling

This research has been carried out on the student of the public sector university; the student voluntarily participated in the study. The interview was conducted with the help of structured questions, the respondents were asked to give a brief answer (Hafeez, Iqbal, & Imran, 2021).

Ethical Consideration

Before initiating the research, all potential ethical considerations were made. Verbal and written consent were taken voluntarily from the respondents for which if they agreed they had to

sign the given ethical form.

Results and Discussion

The interview was based on the focused group discussion from which multiple factors were identified and discussed regarding Western culture influence. Out of which we have discussed the prevalence factors and their positive and negative impact. The interviewees were asked to give statements regarding their perception of the reasons, positive and negative aspects of Western culture's influence on the culture of Pakistan that we have discussed below in detail.

The participants were asked to share their outlooks regarding the main three themes of our study. The discussions involved hefty remarks of respondents from a myriad of aspects. However, to ensure a fair representation of each participant's perception of the topic, they were asked to summarize their perception in a single-line statement after the discussion of each theme so that it could be reported in the results. A similar approach was followed for reporting the outcomes for each theme (Thomas, Khan, & Ahmad, 2022).

Findings Regarding the Prevalence Factors for the Western Culture in Pakistan

Each of the respondents was asked a question regarding the prevalence factors of Western culture in Pakistan, the respondent highlighted various factors. Out of which we emphasized some of the factors and asked the respondent to summarize their answer in one line statement.

The prevalence of Western culture in Pakistan is a complex phenomenon with various factors, but the findings of this study suggest that the one factor that is contributing the most is the influence of media on the younger generations through the internet, social networks, and other TV programs are altering the preference to Western music, fashion, food, and lifestyle. This finding was in line with the study of Riaz and Arif (2019), which suggests that Western TV serials and movies greatly influence the preferences of the young generation. Globalization has emerged as another important factor, the interconnectedness of nations through trade and media has accelerated the exchange of ideas, norms, culture, and information. This study finding was similar to the study by Mir et al. (2014), which states that today's world is socially interconnected through globalization, in Pakistan globalization has led to the prevalence of Western culture in Pakistan. The respondent believed that the imprint of British institutions, education, and politics has led to the influence of Western values in the culture of Pakistan. the finding was similar to the finding of Sökefeld (2005), which states that colonization was not just a matter of the past but had a great influence on the culture of Pakistan. Likewise, modern education in schools and advanced technology played a role in

disseminating Western culture. This finding was consistent with the study of Sultana and Bukhari (2020), which claims that the modern education curriculum with the touch of technology resulted in the prevalence of Western culture in Pakistan.

Table 1. Statement of the respondents regarding factors for the prevalence of Western culture.

<i>What do you think are the factors for the prevalence of Western culture in Pakistan's culture and society?</i>		
<i>Factors</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Statement</i>
<i>Globalization</i>	<i>P1</i>	<i>Western culture prevails in Pakistan through trade.</i>
	<i>P5</i>	<i>Western culture influenced Pakistan's culture through globalization.</i>
<i>Media Influence</i>	<i>P2</i>	<i>The dominance of Hollywood movies embedded Western culture in our society.</i>
	<i>P6</i>	<i>TV programs and channels are changing perceptions of people according to Western beliefs.</i>
	<i>P9</i>	<i>Media is the key element which is bringing Westernization to Pakistan's society</i>
<i>Colonization</i>	<i>P3</i>	<i>The colonial era left a lasting impact on Western culture in Pakistan.</i>
<i>Effect of Urbanization</i>	<i>P4</i>	<i>Urbanization led to the influence of Western culture on Pakistan's culture and lifestyle.</i>
<i>Economic Globalization</i>	<i>P7</i>	<i>Economic trade is often accompanied by cultural globalization which includes modernity.</i>
<i>Role of Education</i>	<i>P8</i>	<i>The modern education system in institutions has influenced people to adopt Western practices.</i>
<i>Technological Advancement</i>	<i>P10</i>	<i>Advanced technology has accelerated our access to Western culture through media and the internet.</i>

The growing urbanization has become a cultural hub where Western and local cultures intersect. Urbanization was also found a factor in the study conducted by F. Ahmed (1996), stating that with an increase in urbanization, the intersection of ethnicity and classes has occurred on different levels. Lastly, the respondent believed that economic globalization opened cultural diversification. This finding was similar to the study of Rana and Chishti (2019), who state that economic globalization has opened the way for the prevalence of Western culture in Pakistan.

Findings Regarding the Positive Influence of Western Culture in Pakistan

Each of the respondents was asked a question regarding the positive influence of Western culture on the culture and society of Pakistan and was asked to give their beliefs and thoughts. Out

of which we emphasized some of the factors and asked the respondent to summarize their answer in one line statement.

Table 2. Statement of the respondents regarding the positive influence of Western culture in Pakistan

<i>Can you share your perspective on the positive influence of Western culture on the culture and society of Pakistan?</i>		
<i>Factors</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Statement</i>
<i>Modern Technology</i>	<i>P1</i>	<i>Westernization has resulted in the introduction of modern technology.</i>
	<i>P10</i>	<i>Westernization may result in innovation and transformation in technology.</i>
<i>Cultural Fusion</i>	<i>P2</i>	<i>Cultural fusion helped people to know about the details regarding other cultures.</i>
	<i>P4</i>	<i>Western culture has resulted in diversity and creativity.</i>
	<i>P9</i>	<i>Cultural diversity would be more inclusive in understanding the challenges regarding cultural boundaries.</i>
<i>Gender Equality</i>	<i>P3</i>	<i>Westernization has promoted women's education.</i>
	<i>P7</i>	<i>Western culture has empowered women to play an active role in media.</i>
<i>Educational Advancement</i>	<i>P5</i>	<i>Western culture promotes a dynamic curriculum such as science, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).</i>
<i>Quality of Life</i>	<i>P6</i>	<i>Westernization has improved the quality of life.</i>
	<i>P8</i>	<i>Western influence may lead to the introduction of new industries that would help make people's lifestyles better.</i>

The prevalence of Western culture has brought about positive changes in the culture and society of Pakistan. One notable impact is cultural fusion which has given rise more vibrant and unique cultural identity. This finding was similar to the study of Shabir et al. (2023), which states that the amalgamation of East and West cultures gives rise to cultural diversity. Technological integration driven by the adoption of Western technologies has made access to information and communication easy. This finding was similar to the study of Raza et al. (2020), which claims that different communication technologies have made the access of information available to a larger group of audience. The participant believed that Western culture has empowered the role of women in the society and workforce, this was consistent with the study conducted by Baig et al. (2018),

which stated that Westernization has decreased gender discrimination in Pakistan. The participants believed that the Western education system has empowered and encouraged the students to compete on a global level. This finding was similar to the study of Khalid and Khan (2006), which claimed that the Western education system has encouraged a class-based system from primary to secondary. The finding also suggests that the influence of Western culture has improved the quality of life for the people living in Pakistan which was also proved by the study of Baig et al. (2018), suggesting that the adoption of Western culture will improve the quality of life.

Findings Regarding the Negative Influence of Western Culture in Pakistan

Each of the respondents was asked a question regarding the negative influence of Western culture on the culture and society of Pakistan and was asked to give their beliefs and thoughts. Out of which we emphasized some of the factors and asked the respondent to summarize their answer in one line statement.

The prevalence of Western culture has not been without negative influence. One of the major negative factors observed was the influence of English where the adoption of English will lead to a sense of detachment from the national and regional languages. This finding was similar to the study of HAQ and Smadi (1996), which claims that detachment from the native language will lead to the diminishing of Pakistan's culture. The participants viewed the excessive prevalence of Western culture will leading to the clash of values between the religious and cultural values of Pakistan. This impact was similar to the study of Sultana and Bukhari (2020), which suggests that Western culture is opposing the direction of Islamic teaching and Pakistan's tradition. One of the negative impacts is the adoption of Western culture and lifestyle will lead to economic and social disparities. This finding was in line with the study of Baig et al. (2018), only upper-class society adopting Westernization which is degrading the middle and lower-class society in Pakistan. The influx of Western culture will lead to the dilution of traditional practices and culture causing a cultural shift. This finding was similar to the study of K. M. Rahman (2014), which states that Western cultural impact has eroded the cultural heritage and moral values of individuals.

To conclude, the amalgamation of Western culture with the culture of Pakistan has helped in navigating the global challenges. The positive and negative influences showed that after globalization Western culture had played a prominent role in framing and altering the culture of Pakistan.

Table 3. Statement of the respondents regarding the negative influence of Western culture in Pakistan

<i>Can you share your perspective on the negative influence of Western culture on the culture and society of Pakistan?</i>		
<i>Factors</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Statement</i>
<i>Influence of English</i>	<i>P1</i>	<i>The influence of English is making the national and regional languages of Pakistan weak and undervalued.</i>
	<i>P5</i>	<i>An individual who knows English is preferred in organizations.</i>
	<i>P7</i>	<i>A shift towards the English language may lead to an identity crisis.</i>
<i>Clash in Values</i>	<i>P2</i>	<i>Western culture is based on modernization which opposed Islamic teachings.</i>
	<i>P3</i>	<i>Western culture may lead to a clash of values between urban and rural regions.</i>
	<i>P9</i>	<i>Western culture contrasts the history, religion, and civilization of Pakistan.</i>
<i>Classes Division</i>	<i>P4</i>	<i>Western cultural influence would create division in classes on an economic basis.</i>
	<i>P6</i>	<i>Western culture and lifestyle can only be afforded by elite classes.</i>
<i>Erosion of Traditional Values</i>	<i>P8</i>	<i>Excessive Western influence may lead to loss of cultural identity.</i>
	<i>P10</i>	<i>Western culture may lead to the erosion of the traditional values and cultural practices of Pakistan.</i>

Conclusion

To sum up, the prevalence of Western with its positive and negative impacts is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in the cultural and societal contexts of Pakistan. The integration of Westernization into the culture of Pakistan is driven by economic, technological, socio-cultural, and historical factors. In Pakistan, the positive influence of Western culture was observed in the fields of education, gender equality, cultural diversity, and technology. However, these positive impacts are accompanied by challenges in Pakistan which include the erosion of values, economic implications, economic disparities, and social division. Pakistan needs to address these challenges to enjoy the benefits of global influence with the perseverance of its cultural heritage.

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