

Cultural Invasion via Electronic Media and Its Impact on Pakistan's Youth

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Abstract

Culture has always been an integrated part of any society. Culture itself has vast meaning, and it varies around the globe. Every society, every tribe, every household has its cultural values. The impact of electronic media can weaken the cultural values among the youngsters who, in the majority, use electronic media frequently. This paper depicts how the foreign cultures in Pakistan have been invaded via electronic media, including social media, and how it impacts Pakistani society's younger minds. This paper also includes what kind of impact local, regional, and global media can cause on the young generation of this society.

Keywords: Culture, Electronic Media, Social Media, Pakistan, Cultural Invasion

Introduction

Culture is a diverse term. Each person has a different perspective on what culture is. What people agree upon, however, is that culture is shaped by a person's placing, his observations in life, and his opinions as he grows up. Cultural values entail the traditions and customs passed down from generation to generation. In conclusion, culture is a rich terminology and holds deep regard in people's hearts. It is crucial to understand culture because it is constantly evolving. There is no time limit when cultural impacts are slowed

down, but rather it is accelerated and, most importantly, changed to time. In short, we move towards speaking about cultural evolution.

When we speak about cultural evolution, there are different opinions about what shapes up the culture. A person's observations, his/her way of life, and impacts of other factors in his/her life are all different catalysts to cultural evolution. Most importantly, an essential element in shaping a person's opinions and presentation is the constant consumption of data sets.

Youth is recognized as a group mainly influenced by cultural globalization through media (Dolby and Rizvi, 2008). Considering that youth aged 15-25 wake up, their phone is the first thing they draw attention to. The mobile phone acts as a watch, a newspaper, and a communicator all in one. When a person sees his/her phone the first thing in the morning, he is consuming a data set followed by watching television and discussing social media posts with his/her colleagues. At the end of the day, he/she may have formed an opinion about something based on the data consumed through electronic media. In short, his cultural definitions may also be challenged, and a piece of media information may have also triggered perceptions.

So, does electronic media have an impact on cultural evolution impacting youth? Yes! Not just in Pakistan but in any part of the world, ideas are shaped by what we see, consume, and associate with. This paper will discuss how media impact youth and how our culture is slowly dismantled through what is shown on electronic media.

As Pakistan is a developing country, it may face some negative media impacts on society. It was further stated that Pakistan is under the heavy influence of the western media and might adopt the culture of the west very soon (Juni, 2014). Dato (2010) believed that the

young generation is more intended to incline towards the information given by the global media, which is leading to anxiety issues in youth. Mustafa et al. (2015) highlighted the role of electronic media and discussed how the Indian culture is penetrating our society. They were of the view that new cultural trends were started as a result of this world is turning into a global village

Saqib (2015) stated that the latest technologies had changed the world drastically. He said that the news channels that run 24/7 could influence our lives regarding political communication. Foreign Cartoons and Kid shows can also impact the youth of our country. Rawan, Dar, & Siraj (2018) concluded that cartoon programs might lead to identical learning among children. They suggested that cartoons and other animated programs can be used as a teaching tool for children under adult supervision.

Shahbaz (2004) emphasized the influence of daily transmission of Indian Soap on the social and cultural norms of the young Pakistanis. He concludes that the thinking pattern of the youth in Pakistan is under the influence of foreign culture. He also stated that this influence changes everything, including lifestyle, behaviors, food habits, fashion sense, language, etc. He also said that Pakistani youth have become more materialistic due to this influence. Rosen, Stefanone, & Lackaff (2010) indicated a difference among cultures, which may impact each other because of the way of communication on different networking sites.

In a study, Najia (2003) stated that the cable culture in Pakistan is the main reason this country is experiencing foreign cultural invasion. Similarly, a study done by Qurat-ul-Ain (1998) indicated that the national television of Pakistan, i.e., the PTV, is also under the influence of foreign media content and is promoting foreign cultural trends. Afira (2000) indicated that Satellite Television is one of the significant reasons for promoting new cultural

reasons and is also responsible for decreased social interaction among youth. With the help of satellite television, the youth is getting more addicted to the T.V. and is ignoring social norms. So, let us explore the impact of foreign content on the younger generation of Pakistan?

Electronic Media: What does it entail?

Simply put, electronic media involves anything that uses electronic devices through which people can view news, videos, multimedia presentation, or audios (Connell, 2015). Currently, television and computers are two forms of electronic media responsible for transmitting information to the general viewer. In addition, nowadays, social media has held a massive place in our daily routines as many people rely on it to get updates about different current affairs, television shows, and news from the world very conveniently.

Cultural Evolution Through Electronic Media

As established above, culture is changed by different opinions formed in our daily lives. People are sometimes wary of the content created and shown on social media and televisions because they believe that youth is impacted by what they see. We will see if this is true or not in the case of Pakistan. We will now discuss the different sections related to electronic media and their impact on the youth of Pakistan.

News Bulletins

News bulletins are primarily seen on televisions, including prime-time talk shows. Many people are large followers of such shows. One does not know the relation of news bulletins and culture; however, the topics and the type of arguments, including the language of the guests, be it politicians, analysts, musicians, or any other, have a profound impact on youth. For example, a youth watching a news bulletin with news about recent incidents of rapes and

listening to a T.V. anchor using the language “Person B was raped” would learn to speak this in his daily life. However, if the T.V. anchor tweaks and uses the vocabulary of “Person C raped Person B,” this would immediately take the stereotype away from who the victim is and why people must remain silent about such heinous crimes. T.V. journalist Maria Memon was lauded on social media when she used her platform to put forth a supportive plan for those who have been raped and how she was called upon to change the narrative and stigma attached around it.

Entertainment Shows

Most people watch television to get entertainment and to feel light after dealing with the daily stresses of life. Entertainment content made in Pakistan is regulated through Pakistan's electronic media regulatory authority (PEMRA), and this authority was created in 2002 (PEMRA). This authority aims to control the content coming on television and to listen to the complaints made by the general viewer. Usually, entertainment shows in Pakistan previously were made in the era of PTV and are still lauded as some of the classics. However, with many private TV channels such as Geo, A.R.Y., HUM TV, and others, people are now exposed to various shows with different opinions. They are also somehow a bit open about what they show on television.

The entertainment industry has widely impacted the culture of Pakistan. It is not only through the shows made in Pakistan but also what is shown to the viewers here. Previously, there was no ban on Indian channels such as Star Plus and Zee, where television soaps were popular in India and Pakistan. Shopkeepers were keen to sell ornaments, jewelry, and clothing by giving it the label of Star Plus. There have been many stores where *Saris* were sold by the name of the lead actresses in the Star Plus dramas. Consequently, our youth was impacted

into buying such products and dressing up similarly. Furthermore, it was observed that many viewers started adopting Hindi words in their daily lives as well. Such is the impact of electronic media on culture.

As tensions began to accelerate between India and Pakistan, the Supreme Court of Pakistan banned Indian content and spoke widely about how it has transformed the culture of Pakistan. They blatantly spoke against the Indian culture and how different it is from Pakistan (RFE/RL, 2018). The content which India makes is more inclined towards nationalism. The content tries to portray Muslims as the villain in every movie or drama (Zargar, 2020)

After some time, there was an influx of Turkish dramas coming in Pakistan, dubbed in Urdu. Television channels such as Urdu 1 and See T.V. were primary in making this breakthrough (Siddiqui, 2012). In this way, Turkish culture seeped in and made its way in Pakistan and impacted the people. During the past two years of COVID-19, Ertugrul was one of the top-rated shows on Netflix, which was then shown dubbed in Urdu on PTV. Prime Minister Imran Khan wanted the Pakistani youth to watch the show and learn more about Islamic values and customs (Frontier Post, 2020). Gradually, the drama became popular among Pakistani youth, and people started learning Turkish words and even paid visits to Turkey (Bhutto, 2020).

The youth of Pakistan are mainly drawn to entertainment and adapt to how people dress up and speak daily. Currently, online streaming platforms play a huge role in this as they seek to promote a variety of shows and cultures. There is, of course, no such regulation present on social media, and people are exposed to a variety of cultural programs. Netflix is one of the most popular and easily accessible online streaming platforms that has even replaced television dramas and shows. People are always drawn towards it because of ease of access

and availability. Netflix has a variety of shows, from Spanish to Korean content. Through this, Pakistani youth is exposed to the culture of different countries, and such content has created a market, especially in South Asia, particularly India and Pakistan. The recent Netflix show *Squid Game* (Holner, 2021), a Korean show depicting poverty and survival, has been especially famous since its premiere in September 2021. The show was top-rated for the year, and its costumes and games shown in the show have become widely favorable worldwide. The show spoke about children's games especially played in Korea; however, due to Netflix, people around the globe, including Pakistan, were made aware, and restaurants even offered to change their menu according to the candy game shown in the series.

Speaking of the influence of Korean content on youth, musicians of Korea have especially become famous with their official merchandise being sold in Pakistan as well. *BTS* (Pardo, 2021), a Korean boyband, is touted as one of the largest groups globally and has been responsible for promoting a soft cultural image of Korea in the world. Naturally, it is all a testament that cultural projection is essential and can easily influence youth.

Since the tussle between India and Pakistan, the content of Indian movies has been tilted towards promoting nationalist sentiments and the use of dialogues against Pakistan. Such sentiments provoke the youth of the country and lead them to believe that what is shown is correct rather than fact-checking and making their perception.

ISPR in Pakistan contributes to making television plays that depict the sacrifices given by forces in the line of war. For example, *Ehd-e-Wafa* was a series about four youngsters joining forces and then going on in their respective fields. Currently, an ISPR produced play, "*Sinf-e-Ahan*," is being shown on ARY Digital that depicts the story of five young females who, despite being challenged and discouraged by their families joined armed forces (Daily

Pakistan, 2021). This, in the long run, can serve to promote a positive image and encourage females to apply for military as well.

Cartoons/Kids Shows

These cartoon channels focus on children's attention (Mahsud, Rawan, & Yaser, 2009). Children nowadays are exposed to mobile gadgets and tablets and can see what they want to without any regulation. This is especially dangerous because they are not stopped and can quickly learn anything from the internet. Since children do not have a concrete understanding of culture, they can form ideas and perceptions based on what they see. In addition, their personality traits such as dressing up, walking, and speaking are also heavily influenced by what they see. Therefore, it is vital to understand that children take up what they see, and they must be regulated into how much screen time is allowed to them.

Social Media

The recent and most important factor in cultural invasion is the use and frequency of social media. Currently, people are more interested in what is going on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube rather than televisions. Furthermore, social media is also an influencer because many people use it to earn by making content. Therefore, the youth can either take a positive or negative influence depending on their viewing.

Many forms of hate speech are seen on social media based on culture, linguistics, race, and gender. Many youths actively take part in social media without realizing the harmful impacts on their offline spaces. Hate speech can shape and form a person's opinion even if they choose not to speak about it directly. It can have a destructive impact on cultural influences, and clashes can also accelerate due to it.

Impact of Local, Regional, and International Media on Youth of Pakistan

Different forms of media such as global, regional, and local have shaped the mindset and perspectives of the youth of Pakistan. Each of these types has been influential regarding cultural references shaping the upcoming generations. We will look at the impact of each form individually.

Global Media

Global media was dominated mainly by the United States of America (USA). The US media was influential, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, when generations adopted the youth's mannerism shown in their local series. The impact of US media was so strong that the very few cinemas in Pakistan were forced to showcase their movies such as Jurassic Park, Star Wars, and Jumanji. In addition, comedy movies such as Home Alone and Stuart Little became favorites for children and adults both and were touted as 'family movies.' Similarly, classic movies such as Singing in the Rain and Godfather were then used in cultural references in Pakistan. Again, in the music scene, the uprooting of US-based boybands such as Backstreet Boys and NSYNC helped create the local music scene in Pakistan. Many Pakistani groups such as Vital Signs, Junoon, Awaz, and Strings took influence from the western boybands of that time. They were catalysts in promoting the US media in Pakistan as well.

Even now, generation after generation, sitcoms such as Friends and Seinfeld are widely popular in Pakistan and have been influential in shaping the cultural ideals and pop culture in Pakistan. Apart from the US, many other countries like Spain, Korea, UK are also producing such content which is popular among the youth.

Regional Media

Regional media includes the media outlets in our South Asian region. Out of the South Asian area, Indian movies and programs remained hugely popular in Pakistan. One of the most critical factors in this popularity was the similarity of language. Indian movies included Hindi, which is understood in Pakistan, and therefore, Bollywood movies remained a part of Pakistan with generations watching them. Whether it is classical movies, lighthearted comedy, drama movies, or art movies, Pakistan was influenced by it. Many actors and actresses received admiration from fans in Pakistan as well. In terms of culture, their shown traditions and customs have somewhat been adopted in Pakistan. Such as, in Pakistani marriages, the Mehndi function has no significance in our religion, but it has been adopted by watching movies and what is shown in them. Bollywood songs are an essential factor in Pakistani weddings as well.

Local Media

Local media includes dramas, movies, and overall content created in Pakistan by Pakistanis. Local media has evolved since the era of PTV and has been shifted to more private channels such as GEO Entertainment, ARY Digital, and HUM TV. Previously the content was more severe with the appropriate language used as well. However, we have seen various dramas about harassment, abuse, rapes, divorces, remarriage, and transgender people. The diversity of these topics is something that the upcoming generation is adapting with as they are open to new shows and ideas; however, our previous generation does not approve of such issues to be spoken of openly. Sitcoms have always been popular among the young and adults alike. Previously, Kollege Jeans Family Front had dominated as lighthearted shows; however, now Bulbulay has taken over with every child and every household knowing the

dialogues by heart. In the music scene, our local media has helped bring some of the best melodies, including the culture of Ghazals and Qawalis, which are famous around the region.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, we can say that the human mind is very vulnerable. It can adopt what it sees. Positive content on electronic media can help shape the bright future for Pakistan. In this regard, here are a few recommendations:

1. The work of regulatory authorities is critical to decide, in consultation with all stakeholders, about what comes under the realm of culture (with particular reference to the ideological genesis of Pakistani society and state) and how our media content conforms to it.
2. The youth must be educated to make moral choices in what they see on media.
3. Children must be kept under check, and the content shown should always be appropriate for their ages (parental control).
4. Social media cannot be controlled or regulated completely. Still, organizations owning the most used social platforms in Pakistan (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) should be engaged at the highest level to ensure that they comply with our social values and national interests.
5. Creative, attractive content based on “Pakistanyat” as a culture with morality and values conforming to the ideology of Pakistan needs a bottom-up approach, too. Therefore, media houses, individual media professionals and faculty members, and students of media departments of various universities should be encouraged to produce such content through financial incentives and awards for recognition.

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