

## CULTURAL IMPACT OF TELEVISION DRAMAS ON WOMEN IN SINDH: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CONTRAST OF THE INDIAN AND PAKISTANI PROGRAMS

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### Abstract

*This paper explores the cultural influence of television dramas on women in Sindh, Pakistan, and with specific focus on Indian and Pakistani television. Television dramas do not just serve as a source of entertainment, they are also effective instruments of cultural transmission and social change. The sample used in the research was 300 female respondents who live in Hyderabad and who present various age groups, educational levels and different social classes, thus they were gathered using a quantitative research design. The results were subsequently extrapolated to the entire situation of women in Sindh. The study was based on three key dimensions: the viewership pattern, preference in content and the socio-cultural impact of viewing drama. It was found out that although both Indian and Pakistani dramas are rather popular, Pakistani content is preferred more, mostly because it seems much closer to local traditions, values, and societal norms. Pakistani dramas were identified to support cultural identity through depicting stories based on indigenous realities, family setups, and social problems that were pertinent to women in Sindh. Conversely, Indian dramas which were a mass consumption were linked to significant cultural changes. It was also stated that respondents incorporated the aspects of Indian media contents, i.e. the use of language and fashion styles, as well as practices within interpersonal relations, which eventually led to a slight but meaningful change in their life preferences and cultural-orientations. These results indicate that the Pakistani dramas reinforce the continuation of the culture, whereas the Indian dramas are the stimulant of the cultural hybridity and social change among female viewers. On the whole, the paper highlights the two-sided nature of television dramas in its maintenance and remaking of cultural values. It gives an understanding of the larger argument on media globalization, identity making and accommodation of traditional and modern cultural practices amidst women in Sindh.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Influence, Pakistani Dramas, Indian Dramas, Women, Sindh, Media Consumption, Media and Society.

### 1. Introduction

Television dramas have been known to be a formidable source of cultural communication that influences the perceptions, behaviors, and values in societies. Dramas have a prime position in family entertainment and discussion in Pakistan and more so in Sindh. They are not mere items of leisure but also serve as instruments of cultural transmission and with the aid of the same, how people, particularly women perceive their roles in the society and family. Considering the growth of the satellite television and online streaming media, the availability of both local and foreign drama content has been highly integrated in the life of women. The popularity of the

Indian and Pakistani dramas by women in Sindh indicates an existing negotiation process between the cultural stability and change. The Pakistani dramas are broadly viewed as the reflections of the local practices, social problems, and family life, which tend to address the local cultural contexts. On the other hand, Indian drama although appealing due to glamour and entertainment value can present the elements of different culture, which may not be acceptable by the locals. They are linguistic borrowings, changes in fashions, and alterations in interpersonal relations potentially endangering or reconstituting the existing cultural practices in Sindh. This point of crossing cultural closeness and cultural difference renders the necessity to examine the effects of drama audience on females, which are conventionally considered as the bearers of cultural continuity at home. Media consumption may cause women to make choices, behavior, as well as perception, which can affect the wider societal set up. Thus, this paper aims to comparatively analyze the cultural impact of Indian and Pakistani dramas on the women in Sindh and the empirical results of a representative sample of the female respondents in Hyderabad were collected. Investigating the habits of the viewer, the preferences on the content and the influence of socio-cultural factors, the research also helps gain a better perspective on the significance of media in formation of cultural identity in the globalized, but locally based society.

## 2. Literature Review

Television dramas have become the primary means of entertainment and cultural communication in South Asia which has influenced not only the leisure practices but also changed cultural norms and social values. The impact of media on the perceptions of the audience is one of the long-standing concerns of scholars, and television dramas are especially important because of their appeal to the narrative and emotional appeal. As it is made out in the literature, the dramas are not confined to entertainment purposes, but they are also tools of cultural socialization and behavioral modelling. The theoretical basis of this impact can be traced to Gerbner Cultivation Theory (1964) in which the scholar claims that the long-term exposure to television leads to the formation of the perception congruent with the reality shown on TV. The audience starts internalizing drama narratives that form their cultural perspective and social actions respectively. On the same note, the Social Learning Theory (1977) provided by Bandura emphasizes upon the role of observational learning in which people imitate actions, attitudes, and values depicted by the media characters. These frameworks can be used to give important information on how women in Sindh can learn to embrace linguistic utterances, fashion styles, or behavior patterns that are exhibited in the televised stories through consistent exposure to Indian and Pakistani dramas. The empirical research in Pakistan has recorded continuously that the television dramas play a very major role in the formation of cultural orientations. Indicatively, Altaf et al. (2015) found that the Indian dramas affected the rural women in Pakistan, especially regarding dress, language, and domestic communication. It suggests that the media that is exposed to them imparts cultural practices that are not aligned with the indigenous practices. On the same note Zia et al. (2017) noted that cable television plays a very strong cultural agent in redefining household norms, decision-making structures and social practices of Pakistani society. These investigations demonstrate how much drama watching has pervasively penetrated our daily existence and impacted on cultural reproduction and change. Nevertheless, studies also indicate that Pakistani dramas have maintained a special position in enhancing continuity of cultures. In a study by Iqbal and Lodhi (2019), the Pakistani dramas are more appealing to the local audience due to their topicality to the social problems, the organization of families, and moral concerns that are relevant to the Pakistani society. Pakistani productions are more rooted in reality as unlike the Indian dramas which tend to romanticize lavish lifestyles and melodramatic misunderstandings, Pakistani productions

provide settings that reflect the values and social realities of the natives. That is why Pakistani dramas are liked by most women as they see it as a relatable and yet culturally accurate show. Simultaneously, researchers, including Khan (2020), believe that Indian dramas are also the agents of cultural hybridity, which implies new ways of viewing gender roles and family authority as well as the way of life. As an illustration, Indian dramas have been marked with strong female characters, intricate marital relationship and westernized fashions that are very different with the conservative image in the Pakistani drama. These kinds of representations make women watching them challenge old standards and explore new cultural behaviors, which result in gradual changes in the language, dress, and social interactions. The international cultural impact by media is not the preserve of Pakistan. South Asian comparative studies indicate that media globalization causes an erosion of cultural boundaries. Thussu (2007) has pointed at the increased superiority of Indian media throughout South Asia, which is able to establish a shared cultural space, and at the same time disrupt local traditions. This is particularly true in Sindh where Indian dramas have somehow retained high viewership despite the government ban because of their deep cultural infiltration.

However, there is a gap in literature. Although several studies report the role played by Indian dramas in influencing Pakistani women, there exists little empirical research on the specific region of Sindh, which is a region of language, culture, and social peculiarities. Further, there are extremely limited studies that focus on a comparative analysis of the impact of the Indian and Pakistani dramas on the same research framework. The current literature focuses on the impact of the Indian content or the cultural enforcement that the Pakistani productions provided, but does not analyze the interaction of two personally.

Against these gaps, the current research can be said to add to the debate by examining the role of both the Indian and the Pakistani dramas in the cultural identities, behaviors, and daily practices of women in Sindh. Placing this questioning into the frames of Cultivation and Social Learning theories, the study does not only elaborate on the existing research but also gives meaning to the influence of media in the context of a particular cultural context. The comparative method offers a deeper insight to the interaction between global media flows and local customs with useful implications about the bargaining between cultural persistence and alteration between women audiences in Sindh.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The design used in this study was a quantitative and survey-based study that aimed at investigating the cultural impacts of the television dramas used by women in Sindh, Pakistan. The quantitative research design was taken due to the fact that it would be possible to measure it objectively, perform statistical analysis and generalize the results to a broader population.

#### **3.1 Research Design and Instrumentation**

The collection of data was done using a structured questionnaire. The tool was divided into two parts (a) demographic (age, education, income, and language) and (b) Likert-scale questions based on the viewership behaviors, the preference of TV contents, and the perceived cultural impact. All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale with Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

#### **3.2 Population and Sample**

This research was aimed at the women in Sindh where Hyderabad was the centre of interest since it is a culturally diverse location and accessible. Random sampling was used to have a

sample size of 300 women with representation of various neighborhoods and socioeconomic groups.

### 3.3 Pilot Testing, Reliability, and Validity

To optimize the questionnaire, a pilot survey was done involving 30 respondents. The analysis of reliability generated a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82 which shows high internal consistency. The content validity was determined by the expert reviews of the faculty members specializing on media and cultural studies.

### 3.4 Data Collection and Ethics

The data was collected during the period of two months in community settings, learning institutions and homes. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was taken and the respondents assured of confidentiality. The institutional review board was obtained with respect to ethical approval.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis of data was done through SPSS version 26. The demographic characteristics were summarized using the descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, percentages). Cross-tabulations, chi-square tests were used to investigate the relationship between demographics (e.g. age and education) and drama preferences and the mean comparison tests were used to determine the difference in cultural perceptions.

## 4. Data Analysis

The 300 women were studied in order to profile the demographic features and pattern of media consumption.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>	10–20	152	50.7
	21–30	85	28.3
	31–40	44	14.7
	41–50	19	6.3
<b>Education</b>	Matric	41	13.7
	Intermediate	125	41.7
	Bachelor	51	17.0
	Master	67	22.3
	PhD	16	5.3
<b>Language</b>	Sindhi	101	33.7
	Urdu	175	58.3
	Other	24	8.0
<b>Monthly Income (PKR)</b>	0–25k	39	13.0
	26k–30k	61	20.3
	31k–40k	74	24.7
	40k+	126	42.0

### Interpretation

Most of the respondents (50.7) were young women aged between 10 and 20 years, which validated the fact that young audience is the most active viewers of television dramas. Education wise, the highest percent was Intermediate-level women (41.7%), then there was the Bachelor/Graduation (17.0%), and finally the Master degree holders (22.3%). This means that

majority of the respondents were either undertaking or have just finished mid-level education and they are very open to cultural influences as depicted in dramas.

In terms of language, over half (58.3) were Urdu speakers, but a large percentage (33.7) was also Sindhi, which is indicative of the multicultural nature of Hyderabad. Income levels showed that 42 percent of the participants were in households with an income above PKR 40,000 each month indicating that media consumption is not limited to the low-income groups but is common across economic groups. Cross-tabulations revealed important insights:

Younger respondents (10-20 years) also on the new dramas in India especially due to their glamour and fashion ability

Women in the 30 and above age bracket were attracted towards the Pakistani dramas because they thought they aligned culturally and realistically highlighted social issues. Education as well played a role in media perception: Intermediate respondents were more accepting to the Indian dramas and the Graduates and Master degree holders were critical in that they saw the cultural reinforcement of the Pakistani dramas and also the hybrid influences of Indian content. In general, the results prove that age, education, and socioeconomic status are the determining factors affecting the way women in Sindh watch and react to television dramas.

## 5. Results and Discussion

These results show that an enormous percentage of the respondents (76.7%) tend to Pakistani dramas primarily on the basis that they are quite comparative to the local traditions, families and cultural values. The observation does not only confirm that the indigenous media content is more effective among the Sindh audience but also enhances the cultural identity but also provides entertainment.

The age turned out to be one of the significant factors which condition the use of media. The young women between 10-20 years (50.7% of the audience) form the most audience. This age group was more sensitive to the Indian dramas since it was more appealing to their fashion, language and the entertainment characteristic and the older respondents were more inclined to Pakistani dramas as they were more realistic and relatable to them.

It was also found that language also had impacts on viewers. The majority of the Urdu speaking respondents (58.3) provided that they were exposed to both Pakistani and Indian drama implying that in the linguistic familiarity; cross-border consumption becomes uncomplicated. Comparatively speaking, the Sindhi speaking females were identified as more loyal to Pakistani dramas because it was deemed to be more culturally relatable.

The consumption pattern also depended on the socioeconomic status whereby 42 percent of the individuals in the high-income families (PKR 40,000 and above) spent more time watching the television, online and same shows. All these results suggest that the age, education, language and income intersection is the determinant of viewing habit, as well as the effect of the culture of drama exposure.

## 6. Conclusion

This study confirms that the television dramas have a major role to play in the shaping of the cultural ways and practices of Sindhi women. The findings illustrate a great attachment to the local culture, family and social traditions because 76.7% of the interviewed considered the Pakistani dramas to be more reflective of the latter. By providing the stories presupposing the reality of the native population, Pakistani dramas may be considered the instrument of the culture continuation and the preservation of the social norms among the female audience. At the same time, this research paper also indicates the growing cultural impact of Indian dramas, particularly those that are produced by young women. These plays introduce the external cultural relationships such as the use of language, modernized attire and altering the nature of



interrelations among people which is gradually changing the thought process and the status of living standards. This kind of duality underscores the multidimensionality of the process of media consumption whereby, local identity is preserved and put to test by the cross-national cultural flows. It has also been indicated in the discussion that age, education, language and income are important variables that determine the preferences of dramas and the cultural influence. The young respondents and those who are in the intermediate education were more receptive to the Indian dramas and the older and well educated women were more tendentious to Pakistani content. On the basis of these findings, it is implied that policymakers, regulators and media producers must come up with culturally sensitive messages which are not only entertaining but also safeguard the conventional values. Moreover, it would also be valuable to extend the area of the target study to the rural areas of Sindh and incorporate the qualitative interviews and focus groups to acquire more knowledge on how women ruminate and negotiate their culture. This type of design will provide a deeper insight. overall perspective of how media has changed its position of shaping cultural identity in Pakistan.

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