

Perceptions about Cultural Globalization in Urban Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The present paper analyzes the perceptions about cultural globalization in urban Pakistan. A household survey was carried out in different socio-economic strata of Lahore in 2011. Information was attained from the adult members available at the time of interview. The study has explored knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of both genders towards cultural globalization and its influence on the values and culture of Pakistani society. Findings of the present study showed that globalization increased job opportunities and improved the life quality of the people. Information and communication technologies had improved the parent-child relationships and given more social voice and autonomy to the Pakistani Women. However, information and communication technologies led to a decline in Pakistani traditional moral values by spreading obscenity and negativity and made life costly and stressful.

KEY WORDS: Cultural Globalization, Information and Communication Technologies, Traditional Values, Market Capitalism, Local Identities

Introduction

Globalization refers to the compression of the world and increased awareness of the individuals in socio-cultural realms across the world (Robertson, 1992). Globalization has intensified flow of transcontinental values and interactions between individuals, groups and regions of the globe (Held and McGrew, 2002). Transcontinental flow of values and connections envelop economic, political, technological, social, and cultural aspects of individuals and groups of people (WHO 2006). Although globalization has economic, political and cultural dimensions; it is cultural globalization that helps shape other facets of globalization. Cultural globalization refers to specific values and beliefs that are

largely shared around the world (Castells, 2009) through information and communication technologies. Thus, mass media and information technology are instrumental in spreading global cultural values across the globe.

Globalization is understood and analyzed in terms of three corner debate: the hyperglobalists, the skeptics and the transformationalists. The hyperglobalists focused on economic aspect of globalization. They viewed globalization as direct threat to the nation states in terms of creating global market that erodes autonomy and sovereignty of states (Held and McGrew 1999). In other words, globalization is instrumental in creating consumer society to benefit the world capitalistic system. Therefore, globalization introduces those cultural values that may directly or indirectly promote and safeguard interests of capitalists. Against this backdrop, globalization is understood and interpreted in terms of adverse economic consequences for developing societies like Pakistan. In other words, cultural globalization widens inequality gap and creates economic insecurity. Wealth-producing resources are largely owned by private sector and not subject to customary control of the state (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000).

Some analysts, for example, Wells (2001) viewed globalization as synonym to Americanization. Similarly, Rothkopf (2000) held, "it is in the best interest of America that we all converge to the same cultural way". Such an imperialistic view of globalization may pose threat to indigenous cultures and local identities. Culture is complete way of living in a society and it is handed down from generation to generation. Depriving the people of their cherished values creates a sense of resentment and also insecurity.

To the skeptics, globalization is a myth and it lacks clarity in terms of economic interdependence (Hirst and Thompson, 1996); while the transformationalists have attempted to synthesize the two polar debates in terms of structural transformation and its consequences for political, social and economic change (Giddens, 1990; Held and McGrew, 1999). Thus, globalization is multidimensional process that entails both positive and negative consequences.

Therefore, it remains instructive to ascertain whether or not cultural globalization poses threat to local cultures by rapid flow of alien values and ideas through information and communication technologies. The present is was an attempt to analyze the perceptions of people about cultural globalization in urban setting of Pakistan. In doing so, the researchers endeavored to assess the level of awareness or knowledge of the individuals about cultural globalization and their perceptions about foreign and local cultural values and traits. The levels and patterns of adoption of foreign cultural values were also assessed.

Research Methodology

Sample

A survey was carried out in 2011. The target population of the survey was adult members of the households from the selected localities of urban area of Lahore. Purposive sampling (Non-probability) technique was used to interview the final sampling units. The researchers interviewed only one adult member from every 4th household of each randomly selected blocks of the selected localities of Lahore. One enumeration block from the following localities of urban Lahore was selected to interview the respondents.

- i. Defense Housing Authority (DHA) and Gulberg (higher income residential areas)
- ii. Allama Iqbal Town and Johar Town (upper-middle and middle-income residential neighborhoods)

Respondents were also interviewed from lower socio-economic strata. In this regard, one katchi Abadi (squatter) from southern part of Lahore was selected and the researchers interviewed 169 respondents from the selected localities of Lahore. Keeping in view the differential educational attainments of the respondents of different socio-economic strata, interviews schedule was used as a tool for data collection.

Major Findings

Table 1 shows percent distribution of the respondents by age, location of residence, qualification and marital Status. More than one half of the respondents (both males and females) were young and aged up to 35 years. However, a tiny proportion of respondents (8 percent males and 5 percent females) were aged 51+ years. Overall, majority of the respondents were young. It was due two factors: first, availability of the respondents at the time of the interview; second, older persons were reluctant and relatively less familiar with the concept of globalization. A substantial number of respondents (50 percent females and 25 percent males) were from Defense Housing Authority (posh residential area of urban Lahore). However, greater proportion of males compared to females was from other socio-economic neighborhoods of Lahore. It is important to note that smaller percentages of both males and females were from Gulberg (upper socio-economic neighborhood). It was due to high refusal rate from Gulberg. More than three-fourth of the respondents were literate and had graduate level educational attainment.

Income related information seems to be skewed. Most of the respondents reported their monthly household income below Rs 30,000. It is understandable that people are usually reluctant to report their real monthly household income due to various reasons. Table1 shows that 44 percent males and 38 females were single

(unmarried). On the other hand, majority of the respondents (53 percent males and 57 percent females) were currently married, while 3 percent males and 5 percent females were divorced.

Table 1 Percent distribution of the Respondents by age, location of residence, qualification and marital Status

Characteristics of the respondents		
<i>Age (in years)</i>	Male (N=125)	Female (N=44)
≤ 30	27.0	35.0
31-35	25.0	28.0
36-40	17.0	14.0
41-45	13.0	10.0
46-50	10.0	8.0
51+	8.0	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Location of residence</i>		
Defense Housing Authority	25.0	50.0
Gulberg	7.0	2.0
Allama Iqbal Town	23.0	16.0
Johar Town	22.0	20.0
Katchi Abadi (Squater)	23.0	11.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Qualification</i>		
Graduate	67.0	64.0
Undergraduate	26.0	16.0
Matriculation	6.0	11.0
Middle	1.0	7.0
Primary	0.0	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Monthly Household Income (in Pk Rs)</i>		
≤25,000	25.0	41.0
26,000-30,000	29.0	35.0
31,000-35,000	32.0	21.0
36,000 and above	14.0	4.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Never Married	44.0	38.0
Currently Married	53.0	57.0
Divorced	3.0	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 2 indicates percent distribution of the respondents by their familiarity and understanding about the concept of globalization. It is important to note that an overwhelming majority of the respondents were aware and had understanding about the concept of globalization. Although mass media and information technology are important in infusing awareness about globalization, respondents educational attainment could largely be attributed to their familiarity and understanding about cultural globalization.

Table 2 percent distribution of respondents by their familiarity and understanding with globalization

Response about familiarity with the word "globalization"		
	Male	Female
Yes	93.0	86.0
No	3.0	8.0
Not sure	4.0	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Statement about Understanding the Concept of Globalization		
Yes	78.0	75.0
No	3.0	2.0
Not sure	19.0	23.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Only small proportion of respondents did not have clear understanding of the concept of globalization. The respondents were mostly from Katchi Abadi (squatter) of Lahore. Their less familiarity and understanding about cultural globalization could be attributed to their low educational attainments and less exposure to information technology.

Table 3 shows internet, Cable Television (CTV) and telephone facilities available to the respondents. Internet facilities were available to almost two-third of the respondents and 92 percent of the respondents had cable TV and mobile/wireless telephones. This shows that these facilities were available to overwhelming majority of the respondents. No major differences were observed between male and female respondents with regard to availability of information technology. However, majority of the respondents from lower socio-economic neighborhood (Katchi Abadi) had less access to information technology except availability of mobile phones. Only a few respondents, particularly males had access to internet café to watch movies.

Table 3 Distribution of the Respondents regarding Internet, CTV (Cable TV) and Mobile/Wireless Telephone Facilities at Home

	Male	Female
Internet	70.4	75.0
Yes	29.6	25.0
No		
Total	100.0	100.0
CTV (Cable TV)	93.6	88.6
Yes	6.4	11.4
No		
Total	100.0	100.0
Mobile/Wireless Telephony	93.6	86.3
Yes	6.4	13.7
No		
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 4 delineates the opinion of the respondents about the extent to which the three contemporary technologies; internet, mobile and CTV have influenced the

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family relationships. Among the respondents, 47 percent of males and 46 females agreed that information technologies had weakened the family relationships. A little more than one-half of both the males (54 percent) and females (55 percent) expressed their concerns about weakening relationships due to modern technologies. It is evident that majority of both females and males were worried about weakening family ties. It is important to note that such a concern was expressed by the respondents from posh areas of Lahore.

With regard to the impact of mobile phone, 49 percent of the total respondents agreed that the use of mobile telephone had significantly increased the parental control over children. Availability of mobile phone helped parents to keep in touch with their children when they were away. Of this one-half of the respondents 46 percent were males and 57 percent were females. One fourth of the respondents disagreed with the statement under reference and almost same proportion of the respondents was not sure whether mobile/telephone use increased the parental control on their children. In Pakistani family system, parents are usually believed to exercise their maximum control with regard to mobile/telephone usage by their children.

Table 4 percent distribution of respondents by their opinion about the impact of information technology on family relations and parental control

Perception about Impact of Modern Technology such as Internet, Mobile Telephone and CTV on the Family Relationships		
	Male	Female
Weakly Influenced	10.0	16.0
Moderately Influenced	37.0	30.0
Strongly Influenced	54.0	55.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Impact of Mobile/Telephone on Increased Parental Control over Children		
Agree	46.0	57.0
Disagree	26.0	20.0
Not Sure	27.0	23.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Perceptions about Impact of Free Electronic Media on Traditional Lifestyle, Language and Dress of the people		
Strongly Changed	75.0	89.0
Moderately changed	23.0	11.0
Unchanged	2.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 4 shows that 79 percent of the total respondents showed strong agreement with the question that free electronic media has strongly affected the traditional lifestyle, language and dress of the people. Of this 79 percent, females constituted 89 percent and 75 percent were males. All female respondents agreed that media has strongly or moderately changed traditional values. They opined that media and information technology had negative impact on their traditional system of culture and values. It had given way to invasion of foreign culture and new trends which may pose serious challenges in the years to come.

Information was ascertained about the perceptions of the respondents regarding free access to information technology and its link with creating domination of Western values in Pakistani society. Majority of the respondents' (82 percent males and 74 percent females) perceptions were affirmative (Table 5). 69 percent of the total respondents agreed that free access to information technology had created domination of Western values in Pakistani society. Only 6 percent (7 percent males and 2 percent females) of the total respondents disagreed with this opinion; whereas 18 percent males and 16 percent females were not sure about it. It may safely be concluded from this finding that information technology, although deemed to be good in certain respects, was considered as a tool for spreading Western values and creating cultural imperialism. Such a perception might have negative consequences for keeping pace with the changing globe.

However, the data in Table 5 show that the respondents were equally divided on Americanization of Muslim Culture and values. In terms of gender differences, more males than females agreed to the statement. At the same time, one fourth of the respondents were 'not sure'.

On the contrary, the study population viewed information technology as an important tool for improving the life quality of the people and generating trained manpower in Pakistan. Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents (86 percent males and 89 percent females) perceived that use of modern technologies such as mobile phones and internet has significantly improved the quality of life of the people in Pakistan.

Table 5 Percent distribution of respondents by their perceptions about domination of western values

Perceptions about free access to information technology and its relationship with the domination of Western values in Pakistani society		
	Male	Female
Agree	74.0	82.0
Disagree	7.0	2.0
Not Sure	18.0	16.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Perceptions about "Globalization is another version of Americanization of Muslim Culture and Values		
Agree	41.0	30.0
Disagree	38.0	34.0
Not Sure	22.0	36.0
Total	100.0	100.0

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Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents (69 percent males and 64 percent females) agreed that free trade with other countries had sharply affected the job market for trained manpower and increased job opportunities in Pakistan. However, about one third of the respondents were not sure about it.

The data in Table 6 show that two third of the respondents agreed that Internet had improved their knowledge and awareness about the common destiny and interdependent future across the globe. One fourth of the respondents was not sure about it.

Table 6 Percent distribution of respondents by their perceptions about information technology as a tool for improving quality of life and generating trained manpower in Pakistan

Impact of modern technologies such as mobile phones and internet improvement of the quality of life in society		
	Male	Female
Has Improved	86.0	89.0
Has Declined	10.0	7.0
No change	5.0	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Effects of free trade with other countries on the job market of pakistani trained manpower		
Increased Job Opportunities	69.0	64.0
Decreased job Opportunities	2.0	5.0
Not Sure	29.0	32.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Role of Internet in the Improvement of Knowledge and Awareness about the Common Destiny and Interdependent Future across the Globe		
Increased Awareness	69.0	64.0%
Created Confusion and Clash	6.0	11.0
Not Sure	26.0	25.0
Total	100.0	100.0

With regard to information about the influence of English and Indian movies on Pakistani traditional values, majority of the respondents (71 percent males and 84 percent females) agreed that the entertainment provided by English and Indian movies had directly led to a decline in traditional moral values of Pakistani society (Table 7). However, 26 percent males and 16 percent females were not sure about the linkage. It is important to note that none of the women disagreed with the statement under reference, which indicates that women were more concerned about moral values of Pakistani society.

A substantial number of the respondents (61 percent males and 77 percent females) favored that the only way to preserve cultural identity lies in ethically responsible censorship code for media and Internet facilities (Table 7). Only a few respondents did not agree to the censorship. However, a sizeable proportion of the respondents was not sure about it.

Table 7 shows that more than two third of the female respondents and a little more than one-half of the male respondents have disagreed with the statement that sexual content in movies makes them more entertaining. Only a tiny proportion of the male respondents agreed with the statement under reference. None of the female respondents agreed with the statement. However, a tiny proportion (8

percent) of males agreed with the statement. Overall, the response could be attributed to traditional moral standards of Pakistani society.

Table 8 presents percent distribution of respondents by their perceptions about the influence of internet on traditional values, knowledge enhancement and awareness about job opportunities. The data show that 62 percent males and 66 percent females agreed that online chats and membership of virtual communities such as youtube, Orkut, Face book etc had led to a decline in their traditional cultural values and are corrupting Pakistani youth through obscenity and negativity. A significant number of the respondents (29 percent males and 27 percent females) held the partial truth of the statement. Consistent with the previous findings women seemed to be more concerned about their traditional values and culture. It may be argued that women, in Pakistani society, are generally at disadvantageous position in terms of their access to educational facilities, internet and other means of information technology, in turn limited exposure and acceptance of the modern values.

Table 7 Percent distribution of respondents by their perceptions about the impact of English/Indian movies on Pakistani values

Relationship of English and Indian movies with the decline in Pakistani traditional moral values		
	Male	Female
Agree	71.0	84.0
Disagree	2.0	0.0
Not Sure	26.0	16.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Opinion about ethically responsible censorship code for media and internet facilities for preservation of Pakistani cultural identity		
Favor censorship	61.0	77.0
Disapprove censorship	2.0	5.0
Not Sure	37.0	18.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Opinion about Sexual Content in movies makes them more entertaining		
Agree	8.0	0.0
Disagree	58.0	92.0
Not Sure	34.0	8.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 8 shows that majority of the respondents (88 percent males and 91 percent females) agreed that access to internet had increased opportunities to grow in education and knowledge. Only 7 percent of the respondents were of view that growth in education and knowledge remained the same. The data in Table 8 also indicate that majority of the respondents (95 percent males and 91 percent female) agreed that access to media and information had increased awareness about human rights and democracy. Only a tiny proportion of the respondents disagreed with the statement under reference. It is evident from the data that dissemination of information through media has enhanced public knowledge about democracy and protection of human rights.

Table 8 Percent distribution of respondents by their perceptions about the influence of internet on traditional values, knowledge and awareness about job opportunities.

Perceptions about decline in Pakistani traditional cultural values by obscenity which is spread through online chats and membership of virtual communities such as youtube, orkut, face book

	Male	Female
Agree	62.0	66.0
Disagree	29.0	27.0
Not Sure	9.0	7.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Has access to internet increased opportunities to grow in education and knowledge?		
Increased Opportunities	88.0	91.0
Decreased Opportunities	4.0	5.0
Remained the same	8.0	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Opinion about access to media and information has increased awareness about human rights and democracy		
Increased Awareness	95.0	91.0
Decreased Awareness	2.0	0.0
Remained the same	3.0	9.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 9 indicates that majority of the respondents 81 percent males and 77 percent females agreed that governance had improved significantly due to the use of internet and mobile technology. This is consistent with previous finding that information technology had contributed a lot in making the people aware about their rights. However, one fifth of the respondents stated that governance remained same.

Table 9 Percent distribution of the respondents by their perceptions about the influence of information technology on governance, women empowerment and their opinion about free access to internet

Has governance improved due to the use of internet and mobile technology?

	Male	Female
Significantly Improved	81.0	77.0
Remained the same	19.0	20.0
Significantly Declined	1.0	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Has Internet and exposure to media has given more social voice and autonomy to the Pakistani Women		
Agree	85.0	86.0
Disagree	2.0	0.0
No Change in status	13.0	14.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Free Access to information on Internet/Mobile Connectivity should be available to all age groups (including Children)		
Agree	52.0	54.0
Disagree	30.0	36.0
Not Sure	18.0	10.0
Total	100.0	100.0

The data in Table 9 show that the majority of the respondents, 85 percent men and 86 percent women, agreed that internet and exposure to media had given more social voice and autonomy to the Pakistani women. The data indicate that modern technology had given the Pakistani women more voice. They were more aware of their rights due to information and communication technologies (ICT). Only 13 percent of the respondents stated that ICT had very little effect on social voice and autonomy to women in Pakistan.

Regarding survey question, 'Free Access to information on internet/mobile connectivity should be available to all age groups (including Children)', interesting response came up. The data in Table 9 show that an equal proportion (a little more than one-third) of both males and females expressed their disagreement that free access to information on internet/mobile connectivity should be available to all age groups (including Children). Similarly 58 percent males and 54 percent females agreed that free access should be given to everyone including children. This split of opinion reflects that society seems to be concerned about this issue and gives it importance. Majority of males and females viewed that access to information technologies is positive for the transmission of knowledge and skills to children.

Discussion

Globalization, albeit, complex with regard to its multifaceted ramification, the findings of the present paper seem to support transformationalists' position which synthesizes hyperglobalists and skeptics' polar debate. The findings of the present study revealed that most of the respondents believed that globalization had improved their life quality and created more opportunities for jobs and employment. Information and communication technologies had improved the relationships between individuals and increased parental traditional control. Internet had been helpful for increase in knowledge and awareness about the common destiny and interdependent future within the country and across the globe. Internet and exposure to media had given more social voice and autonomy to the Pakistani Women. Governance improved due to the use of internet and Mobile technology. Media and information had increased awareness about human rights and democracy. However, respondents were also concerned that modern technology (Such as Internet, Mobile, and Cable TV) had made life costly and stressful.

Increasing cultural flows seem to have threatened societal contexts and introduced various cultural traits alien to their native cultures. Lifestyles, media portrayals and contents shown in films could challenge the traditional values and moral standards of local cultures. Ethically responsible censorship code for media and internet facilities were deemed necessary for preservation of cultural identity. Sexual content in English and Indian movies had led to a decline in Pakistani traditional moral values by spreading obscenity and negativity, particularly among youth. Some of the respondents felt that globalization was another version of

Americanization of Muslim culture and values. They termed Islamic values (such as respecting elders, compassion to children, honesty, truth, etc) were essential to preserve their cultural identity and keeping the society intact from alien cultural invasion.

Apart from speedy cultural flows, globalization seems to be important in diffusing abstract knowledge that remains constant and applicable in any context (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000). Against this backdrop, the findings emanating from the present study showed that a substantial number of respondents agreed that free access to internet should be given to everyone including children. They viewed that access to information is everybody's right and proper information can help remove ignorance from the Pakistani society. However, free access to information does not mean access to obscenity and vulgar items. This finding clearly warrants policy intervention with regard to regulation of goal oriented information technology that can help attain progressive and stable society.

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