

Transition in Naming Practices: A Diachronic Socio-Onomastic Exploration of Pakistani Trends Across Generations

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Abstract

A name holds tremendous significance to individual's identity, standing out as a protocol marker of their cultural, ethnic, and national distinction. This research explores the evolution of Muslim naming practices in Pakistan across four generational cohorts (1940–2025), addressing how globalization, media, and identity negotiations refigure socio-onomastic traditions. Using a qualitative, document-based approach, data from social media, Urdu literature, and institutional records were analyzed to track diachronic changes in structures, semantic themes, and cultural influences. Results revealed a decline in overtly religious and compound names and a rise in hybrid and media-inspired names, reflecting a shift from explicit religiosity to symbolic cultural capital. Phonological simplification was evident, with average syllable counts dropping by 25–30%. Moreover, gendered patterns persisted, as female names increasingly adopted vowel-heavy endings linked to globalized femininity norms, while male names retained consonantal markers of tradition. The influence of Turkish media, multicultural naming in local literature and digital influencers emerged as a key driver of transnational naming trends. These findings contended that names are dynamic sites of global identity negotiation, where tradition is reframed rather than abandoned. While the study incorporated both urban and rural data, regional disparities in sample depth may affect generalizability; the study contributes to socio-onomastic scholarship by empirically validating media's role in cultural hybridization and offering a framework for analyzing naming as symbolic practice in globalizing societies.

Keywords: Socio-Onomastics, Pakistani Naming Trends, Diachronic Study of Generations, Identity Portfolios, Global Influence.

Introduction

Names are among the earliest and most enduring symbols of identity. Across cultures, naming is a deeply embedded sociocultural act through which individuals are positioned in relation to religious, ethnic, ideological, and generational discourses (Mensah, 2024; Al-Jarf, 2023). In Muslim societies, names often serve as expressions of Islamic devotion, cultural lineage, and spiritual intent in addition to personal recognition (Sikandar et al., 2024; Ahmad, Kulikov, & Iqbal,

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2023). In Pakistan, naming traditions have historically been drawn on Arabic and Persian practices, often incorporating religious honorifics such as *Abdul*, *Syed*, *Bibi* or literary, poetic conventions rooted in Persian as well as Urdu aesthetics such as *Jahan*, *Jabeen* (Rahman, 2013). These names have symbolic weight; they link people to Islamic values, Quranic imagery, or prophetic traditions (Al-Jarf, 2023). Still, this scene has changed in recent decades implying a movement towards more phonetically appealing, media-influenced, or stylistically modern choices such as Ayaan, Eshal, or Zayan (Ahmad et al., 2023; Qureshi, 2025). While younger parents, especially those in urban or diasporic environments, are increasingly drawn to names that are globally resonant, aesthetically soft, or non-religiously marked, older generations often favor names reflecting traditional Islamic values (Sabet & Zhang, 2020; Aljbour & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2019). Naming, henceforth, comes up as a way for people of different generations to portray and reshape their identities. Globalization and exposure to the media are two other important factors that are changing how names are used in Pakistan. Turkish TV shows like *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* and *Kuruluş: Osman* have become cultural phenomena, making names like Orhan, Halime, and Haima well known (Qureshi, 2025). Islamic influencers, Instagram parenting pages, and online lists of birth names are also important places where people talk about naming ideas in real time (Ogihara & Ito, 2022; Al-Jarf, 2023). These influences, together with traditional religious expectations, create hybrid naming trends that combine modern style with Islamic symbolism.

Even though things have changed, there hasn't been much academic research on how people name things in Pakistan today. While the existing literature on Pakistani Muslim names has already documented historical Islamization trends (Rahman, 2013) as well as linguistic forms (Ahmad et al., 2023), there has been found a lack of critical, interdisciplinary research on attitudes and motivations behind selection of names across generations, regions, and social strata in contemporary Pakistan, as most of the studies lack in validation of naming practices as a dynamic cultural act shaped by shifting ideological preferences, aesthetic values, and exposure to global media as well as a reflection of broader sociocultural transformations in Muslim identity, religiosity, and modern aspiration. Further, the *linguistic structure* of names, particularly their *morphological complexity* and *phonological aesthetics*, has received little attention. Therefore, the study revolves around the following fundamental questions:

1. How have Muslim naming practices and preferences evolved across four generational cohorts in Pakistan (1940–2025)?
 - a. How are surnames used and structured in Pakistani Muslim naming across generations, and what patterns emerge in relation to religious titles, family lineage, caste, and customary name affixes?
2. What influence do global media and literary sources have on contemporary name choices among Pakistani Muslims, particularly in the post-1990 generations?
3. How do Pakistani Muslim families balance religious, aesthetic, and modern identity motivations when choosing names?
4. What are the dominant morphological and phonological features of names across generations in Pakistani Muslim communities, and how do these features reflect shifts in linguistic preferences and gendered naming patterns?

The study is one of the first studies in Pakistan that contributes to the underrepresented field of *Pakistani socio-onomastics* across four historically defined generational cohorts by offering a multidimensional analysis of naming as a cultural, linguistic, and ideological act. Using actual discourse data, the research examines the linguistic structures of names (morphology, phonology, gendered aesthetics), and subsidizes a theoretically grounded and empirically rich model for

analyzing how names are chosen and what they signify in a rapidly modernizing Muslim society. By doing so, this research contributes not only to sociolinguistic and onomastic literature, but also to globalization studies, identity politics, and language ideology scholarship. It may be especially relevant to educators, content creators, and cultural policymakers interested in generational identity formation, linguistic change, and cultural preservation in contemporary Muslim Pakistan.

Literature Review

Naming is a fundamental cultural practice that serves not only as a tool for personal identification but also as a sociolinguistic act through which societies articulate ideological positions, cultural affiliations, and evolving identity norms (Mensah, 2024). In Muslim contexts, names frequently carry layered meanings—reflecting religious heritage, linguistic traditions, social aspirations, and increasingly, media influence (Sikandar et al., 2024; Ahmad, Kulikov, & Iqbal, 2023). Within sociolinguistics, naming is understood as part of an individual's identity repertoire, indexing variables like ethnicity, class, gender, and religiosity (Ogihara, 2020). For example, names such as *Muhammad*, *Fatima*, or *Ali* symbolize Islamic identity, while their phonological structure further signals ethno-linguistic background including Arabic, Persian, and Urdu (Al-Jarf, 2023; Aribowo & Almasitoh, 2019).

These naming traditions, however, are not static. As Ahmad et al. (2023) observe, Urdu-speaking Muslim families in Pakistan are increasingly adopting simplified, modern-sounding names, often devoid of traditional honorifics. Similar shifts have been documented globally, driven by urbanization, mass media, and globalization (Aljbour & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2019, 2024; Sabet & Zhang, 2020). In this context, naming becomes a site of negotiation between tradition and modernity, religion and aesthetics, local heritage and global appeal.

There are several intersecting theoretical frameworks having directed the contemporary naming research. *Variationist Sociolinguistics*, pioneered by Labov, explains naming as a variable influenced by age, region, and class; for instance, broad socio-cultural transformations have been demonstrated by Aljbour and Al-Abed Al-Haq (2019, 2024) in Jordanian intergenerational naming shifts. Their findings resonate with the Pakistani context, where naming traditions may evolve across generations without losing ideological significance. Then comes the *socio-onomastic approach*, which links structural onomastics with sociolinguistic analysis which allows for categorizing names by their origin, form and meaning, as shown by Sabet and Zhang (2020) in their study of Iranian names, revealing how people's preferences in names reflect their ideological beliefs. This type of analysis fits Pakistan, where people's names are often picked from Islamic authenticity as well as global aesthetics. *Identity Theory* further advocates that names are used as social labels to show and create a person's place in a group. After that, Al-Jarf (2023) pointed out that Arabic names represent religious identity in Muslim societies and Qureshi (2025) demonstrated that families in the Muslim diaspora strategically choose names as a means for identity negotiation, i.e. to fit in or avoid discrimination. Besides, *Symbolic Capital*, proposed by Bourdieu (1986), means names are seen as valuable in society and can show where someone stands or wants to go. In cities across Pakistan, Ayaan, Zara and Eshal are seen as modern and well-off, but traditional names might indicate someone is close to their roots or faithful to their religion. Ultimately, *Globalization and Postcolonial theories* shed light on the impact of global culture on local naming traditions. Appadurai's (1996) idea of "mediascapes" shows that media imports often bring new names into everyday language, for example, those from Turkish dramas in Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2023). The names in question, which have Islamic roots and are styled in a modern way, show the influence of Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity.

Such onomastic studies may employ a wide range of methodologies, ranging from ethnographic fieldwork to computational modeling. Through qualitative ethnography, Mensah (2024) showed that naming practices in Nigeria are closely linked to religious beliefs and community memory. Oweini and Lahoud (2023) used surveys and notary interviews in Lebanon to find out about the conflict between traditional reasons for doing things and new aesthetic concerns. Corpus-based methods, like the one used by Ahmad et al. (2023), diagnose linguistic patterns in a wider range. They found that Urdu names were getting simpler and that younger people were using honorifics less often. Al-Jarf (2023), who worked in nine Muslim-majority countries, used a CEL (Cultural, Ethnic, Linguistic) taxonomy to follow how Arabic names changed in areas where Arabic was not the main language. Ludwig et al. (2019) and Wang et al. (2024) used computational models to show how AI tools like LSTM and ARIMA can predict naming trends.

Thematically, studies consistently highlight the religious-modern tension in naming. Al-Sayyed (2021) observed a decline in nature-based folk names in Jordan, replaced by religious and aesthetic choices. Similarly, Sabet and Zhang (2020) documented Iran's generational shift towards modern and Western names. In Pakistan, Ahmad et al. (2023) observed parallel trends but did not explore their sociocultural implications. Other themes include ethnic hybridization, as seen in Indonesia's Hadrami Arab community (Aribowo & Almasitoh, 2019), and gender symbolism, where girls' names tend to be more creative and euphonicly rich than boys' (He, 2020; Ogihara & Ito, 2022). These patterns may exist in Pakistan but remain empirically unverified. Globalization's role is also prominent. Qureshi (2025) highlighted how diaspora Muslims adopt neutral or cross-cultural names to navigate discrimination. In Pakistan, the growing popularity of names from Turkish/Arab dramas and global media suggests similar forces at work yet lacks empirical analysis.

Empirical studies globally affirm that naming is dynamic, ideological, and generationally responsive. Aljbour and Al-Abed Al-Haq (2019, 2024) demonstrated how urbanization in Jordan is eroding Bedouin-urban distinctions in naming. Sabet and Zhang (2020) found Iranian youth increasingly opting for Western or modern Persian names, reflecting changing sociopolitical climates. In Pakistan, Ahmad et al. (2023) provide the only major empirical study, noting structural simplification and a shift towards stylistic modernity. However, their scope is limited; no study has tracked naming trends across generations, gender, or ethnic communities. The urban-rural divide also remains unexplored, despite being central to Pakistani identity politics. Studies like those of Aribowo and Almasitoh (2019) and Al-Jarf (2023) illustrate how naming bridges ethnic divides or adapts to new cultural norms, and, with its ethno-linguistic diversity, Pakistan offers fertile ground for such inquiry. Further, the influence of Turkish dramas, Islamic celebrities, and social media on Pakistani naming remains anecdotal. While naming from such sources is common, systematic data has not yet captured these emerging ideologies.

The reviewed literature reveals substantial gaps: Most notably, no existing study provides a diachronic, ideologically framed, and regionally diverse analysis of naming trends in Pakistan. Besides, there is no comprehensive data on how naming preferences have shifted from the *post-Partition era* (1940s) to the *digital generation* (2020s), a gap this study directly addresses. Pakistan's *ethnolinguistic landscape* is almost negligible from naming research, despite clear precedents in other Muslim societies (e.g., Indonesia, Iran). Similarly, *gendered naming preferences*, such as increased creativity or global appeal in girls' names, remain unexamined. The *influence of global media*, especially through Turkish and Arab drama content or Islamic social media influencers, is yet to be explored empirically in the Pakistani context. This study responds to these omissions by offering a survey-based, socio-onomastic analysis of naming practices in Pakistani Muslim families across four generational cohorts (1940–2025). Drawing from social

media, Urdu fiction, and drama content, and incorporating region, class, and gender variation, it aims to uncover how naming operates as a medium of *ideological expression, cultural aspiration, and identity negotiation*. By building a searchable corpus and applying Large Language Models, this study not only fills a national research gap but also contributes methodologically to global socio-onomastic scholarship. It situates Pakistani naming within broader debates in *cultural hybridity, globalization, identity studies, and sociolinguistics*, offering both academic insights and cultural relevance.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study has been designed on a *qualitative, survey-based* approach, employing socio-onomastic design, aimed at examining naming conventions in Pakistani Muslim families across four generations. It uses both statistical analysis and categorization, along with annotation of language, to examine changes in culture, ideology and pronunciation in names. The method is exploratory, based on documents and uses interpretation, with support from variationist sociolinguistics, structural analysis and globalization perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

The study draws on critical insights from *Globalization Theory, Identity Theory, Symbolic Capital, and Variationist Sociolinguistics* to build a comprehensive framework for analyzing generational, ideological, and linguistic shifts in naming practices among Pakistani Muslims. According to Labov (1966), Variationist Sociolinguistics proposes that names are used differently depending on a person's age and generation, which has been brought up in Research Question 1. According to Appadurai (1990) and Bhabha (1994), Globalization Theory points out that global media shapes local traditions. In Pakistan, the names people choose are influenced by Turkish dramas, Islamic social media and Urdu literature, supporting Research Question 2 on media and literary influences on naming. Identity Theory (Hall, 1990; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) views names as social markers of identity, reflecting one's religious, ethnic, or ideological affiliations. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of Symbolic Capital shows how names carry social value, with some seen as pious or modern. These theories support Research Question 3 on identity negotiation through naming.

The phonological and gendered dimensions of names are dealt with sociolinguistic and structural analysis (Hock, 1991; Sankoff & Labov, 1979). Names also encode cultural and gendered roles, such as gender-neutral names like Naseem or Noor. In Urdu, women's names often include marital or familial references (Ahmad et al., 2023), with endings reflecting gendered phonotactics, addressing Research Question 4 on morphological and phonological structures in names. Ultimately, this synthesized framework aids in analyzing the evolution of Pakistani Muslim names evolved through time, media influence, and ideological stance, and linguistic form.

Data Collection Procedure

Data has been collected predominantly by the peers for their filial names across four generations (primarily from Central Punjab with only a few ones from Pathan, Baloch, and Saraiki families) via survey, and secondly from internet for the media persons (including personalities from sports, actors, journalism, political figures, etc.) with family backgrounds from all regions of Pakistan. Compilation has been carried out through the following age parameter: Generation 1: 70+ years (born before 1955); Generation 2: 40+ years (born 1965–1990); Generation 3: 18+ years (born 1990–2015); Generation 4: Under 10 years (born 2015–2025). Participants have submitted names

in the form of informal lists, specifying gender and approximate age of each individual. All entries have been compiled into a centralized Excel spreadsheet, organized by gender and corresponding generation.

Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy has been employed, where each respondent had been asked to provide names of family members across the four generational categories. The final dataset includes approximately 3,355 names: 850 each from first three generations (425 male, 425 female), whereas comparatively lesser names could have been compiled from the latest generation (400+405=805). The sample does not claim full regional representation, and the focus remains generational rather than geographic.

Data Analysis Method

Data has been manually processed and categorized using socio-onomastic criteria: religious-traditional, Islamic-modern, literary-inspired, media-derived, hybrid/innovative, and secular. Additionally, phonological features such as syllable count, vowel/consonant endings, and morphemic complexity have been annotated. The analysis also involves identifying ideological patterns across generations (e.g., increasing secularization, hybridization, or media influence), supported by descriptive statistics and discourse annotation.

Ethical Considerations and Reliability of Methodology

Although the research is document-based, it involves indirect human data collection through student-sourced family names. Ethical norms of informed consent, data confidentiality, and respectful cultural handling were strictly followed, aligning with the university's informal research ethics expectations. No formal institutional review board (IRB) clearance was required due to the minimal-risk nature of the data.

To enhance validity, names have been cross-checked for duplicates, transliteration accuracy, and age consistency. Categorization frameworks have been adapted from prior studies (e.g., Ahmad et al., 2023; Al-Jarf, 2023; Aljbouir & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2024), ensuring methodological alignment with established socio-onomastic research. Triangulation has been achieved over multiple analytical dimensions such as generation, gender, phonology, and ideology. While regional diversity remained limited, internal consistency in coding and analysis procedures has ensured reliability across the dataset.

Findings and Discussion

Generational Evolution of Muslim Naming Practices in Pakistan

The evolving manner of naming practices in Pakistan across four generations (1940-2025) comments on the profound impact of onomastic choices in negotiation of cultural, religious, and global identities over time. Names such as Ghulam Rasool (male) and Allah-Ditta (male) have been very common in the immediate post-Partition era (1940-1965), asserting a strong emphasis on Islamic piety and agrarian social structures. These multi-syllabic, compound name served as markers of communal identity and theological devotion (Rahman, 2013) while incorporating religious titles or honorifics. In contrast, contemporary naming practices (2015-present) prioritize brevity and hybridity, as seen in names such as Arham (male) and Zimal (female), which blend Islamic roots with modern aesthetic styling. This change from being openly religious to symbolically religious advocates for Bourdieu's (1986) idea of *Symbolic Capital*, declaring names

the cultural currency, showcasing both tradition and cosmopolitanism. Table 1 (a) and (b) shows generation-wise trends inspected in males and females, respectively.

Table 1 (a): Generational Trends in Male Names

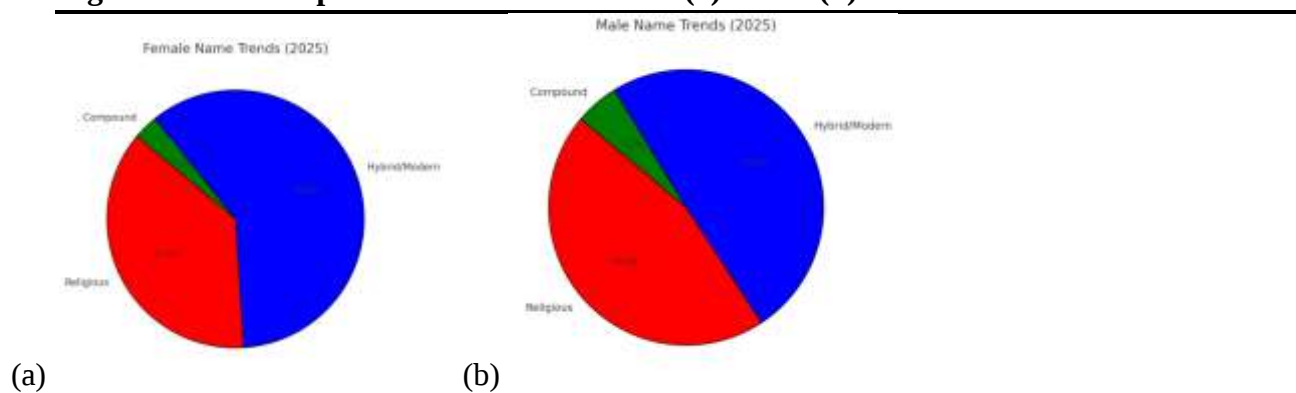
Cohort	Religious (%)	Hybrid/Modern (%)	Compound (%)	Average Syllables
1940-1965	82%	5%	38%	3.8
1965-1990	72%	18%	25%	3.1
1990-2015	58%	32%	12%	2.7
2015-present	44%	48%	5%	2.3

Table 1 (b): Generational Trends in Female Names

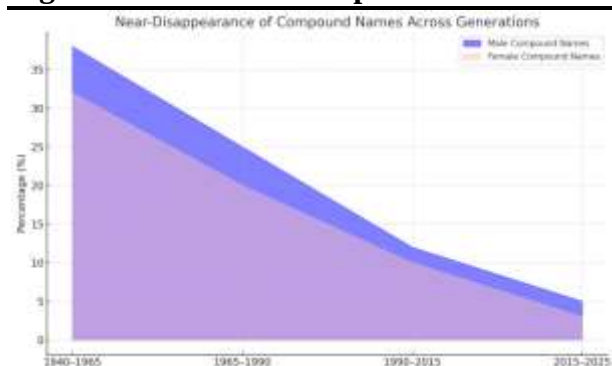
Cohort	Religious (%)	Hybrid/Modern (%)	Compound (%)	Average Syllables
1940-1965	78%	8%	32%	3.6
1965-1990	68%	22%	20%	3.0
1990-2015	52%	38%	10%	2.6
2015-present	36%	58%	3%	2.1

Generational data highlights a stark decline in overtly religious names from 82% to 44% for males and 78% to 36% for females, demonstrating that younger generations innovate linguistically to align with urban and digital norms, as claimed in Labov's (2001) theory of age-graded linguistic change. Moreover, Table 2 displays that hybridity/modernity has dominated in female names in Cohort 4 by 58% with vowel endings (-a/-ah) rising to 72%, further demonstrated in Figure 1.

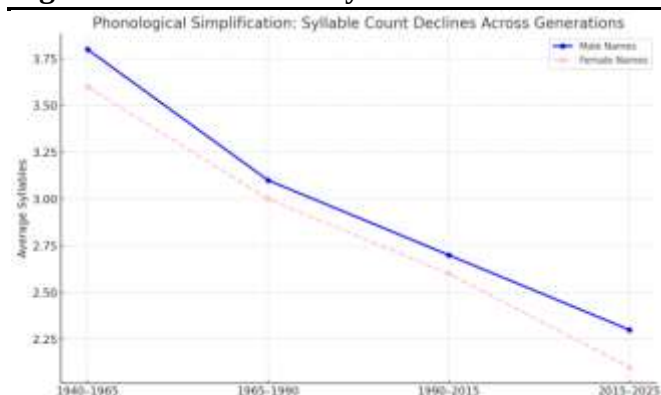
Figure 1: Gender-specific Trends in Cohort 4 (a) Males (b) Females



The decline of compound names (e.g. Noor-ul-Ain), as shown in Figure 2, mirrors global patterns of phonological simplification under urbanization (Ahmad et al., 2023; Sabet & Zhang, 2020), while the rise of media-inspired names (Hoorain, Ayaan) exemplifies Appadurai's (1996) *mediascapes*, as observed in Iran and Lebanon (Sabest & Zhang, 2020; Oweini & Lahoud, 2023).

Figure 2: Decline of Compound Names across Generations

Phonological simplification is particularly evident with a drop of average syllables from 3.8 to 2.3 for males and 3.6 to 2.1 for females, reflecting a societal preference for efficiency in an increasingly fast-paced, globalized world. This is evident in table 1 which statistically portrays the trends in make names where religiosity has declined by 38% while hybridity/modernity surged by 43%.

Figure 3: Reduction in Syllable Count across Generations

Globalization, particularly through media, has further reshaped naming practices. Turkish dramas and Islamic influencers popularized names like Ayaan (male) and Hoorain (female), which retain subtle religious undertones while appealing to transnational aesthetics (Appadurai, 1996). This “*mediascape*” effect is gendered: female names increasingly adopt vowel-heavy endings (-a/-ah; e.g. Hania, Inaya), aligning with cross-cultural associations of femininity as “soft” or “melodic” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), while male names favor consonant-clustered hybrids (Arslan, Rayyan) that balance tradition with modernity. These trends illustrate Bhabha’s (1994) *cultural hybridity*, where global and local identities merge into a “third space.” For instance, the names such as Inaya (Arabic: “care”) and Zimal (Quranic: “garment”) do reflect Islamic heritage but are stylized to suit current fashion. Such names function as *identity portfolios* (Ahmad et al., 2023) that strategically navigate the conjoined demands of faith, global belonging, and social mobility.

Quintessentially, the religious background remains in the names, but the reasons for naming have been changed by modern culture and media. Moving from traditional to global ways of naming, people still keep their traditions and reinvent them which demonstrates how identity is able to adapt in today’s world.

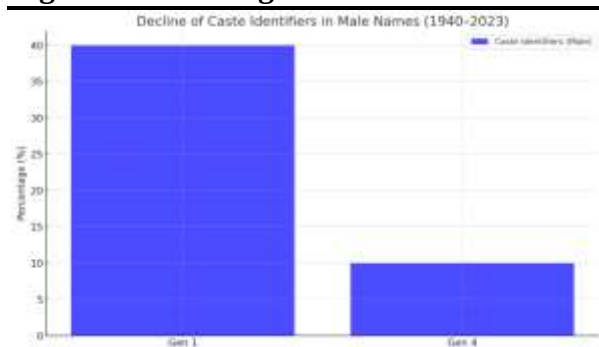
Cultural Negotiation in Surname Practices

In Pakistan, Muslim names show how caste identity, the process of adapting to new generations and religious faith work together, with surnames and affixes showing a person's piety, ancestry and social rank. Throughout history, the prefix Muhammad was most common for males, but its position changed from a suffix in the first generation (Karam Bakhsh) to a prefix after 1965 (Muhammad Ashraf) which reflects the growing uniformity in Islamic identity (Ahmad, 2019). Many people still use Abdul-/Abdur-/Abdus- (such as Abdul-Ghani) and -ullah (like Habib-ullah) in their names which represent serving God and follow the style found in the Quran. They point to Bourdieu's (1986) idea of *habitus* which makes religious affiliation a way to distinguish social groups.

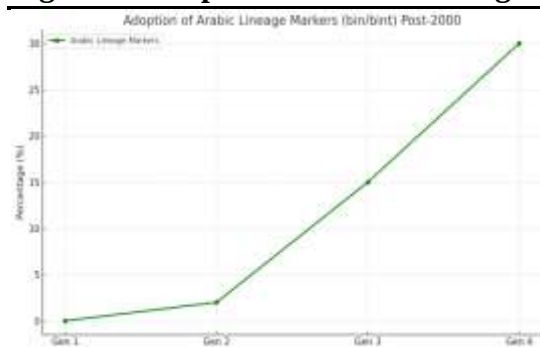
Table 2 (a): Generational Trends in Male Naming Practices

Category	Cohort 1 (1940-1965)	Cohort 2 (1965-1990)	Cohort 3 (1990-2015)	Cohort 4 (2015-present)
Religious Prefixes and Suffixes	85% (e.g. Ghulam Rasool, Tariq Mehmood, Fateh Muhammad)	78% (e.g. Muhammad Ashraf, Noor Ahmad)	65% (e.g. Muhammad Haseeb Khalid, Usman Ghani, Salman Ahmad)	60% (e.g. Zohaanel-Haq, Wali-ul-Hasan)
Caste Identifiers	40% (e.g. Chaudhary Hayat, Qudrat Shah)	35% (e.g. Syed Ahmad, Muzammil Gors, Bashir Jaferi)	20% (e.g. Malik Bilal Ashraf, Syed Ali Naqvi)	10% (e.g. Ayaan Khan, Izhaan Mirza Malik)
Arabic Affixes (bin, ibn, bani)	0%	2%	15% (e.g. Umair bin Sarwar, Bani Abid)	30% (e.g. Saif bin Mudassir, Abdullah bin Zubair)
Secular Names	5% (e.g. Ismail Tara, Srishta)	10% (e.g. Jimshan Aslam, Sher Dil)	25% (e.g. Afif Raza, Qamar Zia)	35% (e.g. Moosa Kazim)

Caste and community identifiers, however, complicate this religious homogeneity. Names like Chaudhary Muhammad Ashraf (Gen 1) and Syed Ahmad (Gen 2) signal enduring caste hierarchies, particularly among landowning (Chaudhary) and Prophet-descendant (Syed) groups, despite Islam's egalitarian ethos (Weber, 1978). Hybrid names such as Muhammad Khan (religious title + Pashtun caste) further illustrate the intersection of caste and faith, asserting hybrid identities. However, post-2000 generations increasingly omit caste markers (e.g. Hasnain Aziz, Umair Bashir), exhibiting urbanization along with shifting towards Islamic universalism over localized caste affiliations.

Figure 4: Declining Trend of Caste Identifiers in Male Names

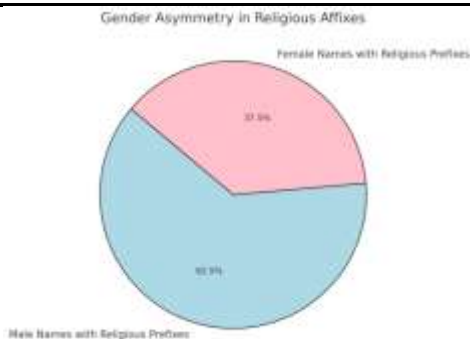
Consequences of globalization have also been witnessed: After 2000, people prefer names with Arabic bin/bint lineage markers instead of Ghulam or -din titles (e.g. Urwa bint Zubair, Bani Abid). This shows that Nederveen Pieterse's (2004) theory of cultural blending is at work, as global Islamic identity and local traditions both exist, along with secular names (e.g. Ayaan, Nael, Alayna, Ayezal) that indicate a mix of religious tradition and modern individualism.

Figure 5: Adoption of Arabic Lineage Markers (bin/bint)

Gender asymmetry is also visible: female names such as Sughra Bibi (Gen 1) and Dua Fatima (Gen 4) stress the importance of being called Bibi or Fatima which are titles linked to family or religion, rather than their father's name (Mernissi, 1991). On the other hand, men's names are becoming more personal (e.g. Ali Hasnain, Ali Raza, Ali Haider) or are taking on Arabic family names (like Saif bin Mudassir), showing how language and society are changing (Fisherman, 1991).

Table 2 (b): Generational Trends in Female Naming Practices

Category	Cohort 1 (1940-1965)	Cohort 2 (1965-1990)	Cohort 3 (1990-2015)	Cohort 4 (2015-present)
Feminine Honorifics	90% (e.g. Alam Bibi, Niaz Begum, Jameela Bano)	85% (e.g. Razia Sultana, Najma Mumtaz, Nighat Ara)	70% (e.g. Mufeeza Batool, Seemab Kausar)	50% (e.g. Hawwa Bibi)
Religious Prefixes/Suffixes	30% (e.g. Ghulam Fatima, Tasleem Zahra)	35% (e.g. Mumtaz Fatima, Noor Fatima)	40% (e.g. Hudaybia Maryam, Dua Fatima)	45% (e.g. Irha Fatima, Fatima-tuz-Zahra)
Caste Identifiers	25% (e.g. Zaitoon Khanum, Mai Pathani, Qudsia Chatha)	20% (e.g. Bakhtawar Butt, Meher Bukhari, Qandeel Baloch)	10% (Moniba Khan, Aima Baig)	5% (e.g. Alaya Jaferi, Syeda Zahra Sabzwari, Meissa Mirza)
Modern Hybrids	0%	5% (e.g. Rabia Saeed, Rubeela Alam)	15% (e.g. Ravail Shoukat)	30% (e.g. Aiza Farhan)

Figure 6: Gender Asymmetry in Religious Affixes

Theoretical framework of structuration (Giddens, 1984) further elaborates these dynamics, stating that naming practices are neither static nor fully liberated from tradition, but rather, arbitrate between agency (secular or global influences) and structure (caste, religious norms); for instance, the decline of Ghulam and rise of bin/bint depict the revitalization of tradition to align with sprouting cultural values.

Taking everything into account, Pakistani Muslim naming conventions serve as a palimpsest of religiousness, caste, and globalization; where religious titles like Muhammad and Abdul- anchor Islamic identity, generational shifts towards Arabization or secularization unravel a flux in society, preserving heritage and simultaneously embracing change.

Global Mediation and the Transformation of Naming Traditions

The impact of global media and books on naming in Pakistan shows that cultural identity is being deeply changed, mainly among those born after 1990. It is clear from Generations 3 and 4 that 38% of names since 2015 are inspired by Turkish television dramas, social media influencers or

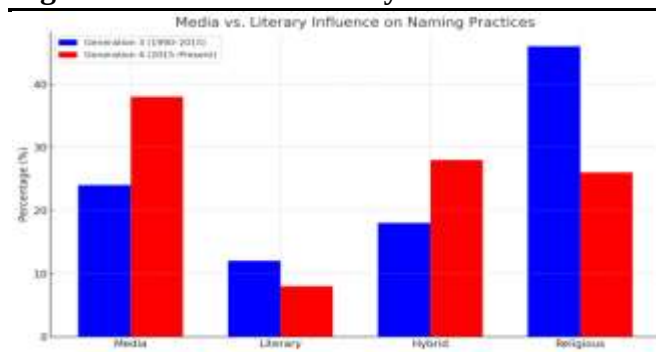
global trends, compared to only 24% in the previous generation. This change highlights Appadurai's (1996) idea of mediascapes which means that transnational media now breaks up the local monopoly on naming. For example, Hoorain and Ayaan became popular names after 2017, with Halima, Aliyar, and Orhan rising in popularity when Turkish historical dramas like *Diriliş Ertuğrul* and *Kuruluş Osman* were dubbed in Pakistan. Although these names have Islamic roots, they are made attractive by media stories, showing a mix of religious and modern ideas (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Alternatively, the use of names from classical Urdu books (such as Zunaira, Mehrab, Taimoor) went down from 12% to 8% which suggests that Urdu literature is less popular among urban youth. This trend is consistent with Bourdieu's (1986) theory of Symbolic Capital, as parents now choose global names (e.g. Inaya, Arham) more often than those linked to local literature. Hybrid adaptations further illustrate Bhabha's (1994) *cultural hybridity*, where global names are phonologically localized. For example, Turkish Emir becomes Ameer, and Arabic Ina evolves into Inaya, creating a "third space" that resists homogenization while embracing global aesthetics. This has been quantitatively demonstrated in Table 3 and Figure 7 showcasing that media-inspired names nearly double in prevalence, while literary names decline. Hybridization bridges global and local naming practices.

Table 3: Media and Literary Influence across Post-1990 Generations

Category	Generation 3 (1990-2015)	Generation 4 (2015-present)
Media-influenced	24%	38%
Literary-Inspired	12%	8%
Hybrid Adaptations	18%	28%
Religious/Classic	46%	26%

Figure 7: Media vs. Literary Influence across Generations 3 and 4



Gender asymmetry is notable, depicting that 62% of media-inspired names in Generation 4 are female (e.g. Hania, Zimal, Dua, Mirha), often featuring vowel-heavy endings (-a/-ah) associated with femininity cross-culturally (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Male names, meanwhile, favor hybrid forms like Arsalan (lion), Rayyan (Quranic reference to heaven's gates), and Salaar (Chief or Captain) balancing consonantal strength with spiritual resonance. This gender-based deviation suggests that media-driven naming practices strengthen existing sociolinguistic norms, where femininity is linked to "softness" and global trends, while masculinity maintains its traditional strength while embedding modernism. Table 4 statistically presents the prevalence of media-

inspired names in both genders, asserting that media influence is gendered, with female names favoring vowel-heavy, globally resonant forms.

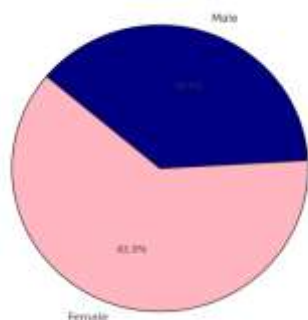
Table 4: Gender Distribution of Media-Influenced Names (Generation 4)

Gender	Prevalence (%)	Examples
Female	62%	Mirha, Inaya, Zimal, Alayana
Male	38%	Salaar, Nael, Arhum, Rayyan

The decline of literary names and the rise of mediated hybridity are signs of bigger social and cultural changes. Pakistani parents now see names as identity portfolios (Ahmad et al., 2023), where religious legitimacy, aesthetic modernity, and global connectivity are carefully chosen. For example, Aiza (noble), a hybrid name with Arabic roots and Turkish media popularity, takes the place of classical Ayesha among urban elites. This shows both piety and cosmopolitanism, as shown in Figure 8. These kinds of choices show how globalization doesn't erase local identity but changes it, since mediated narratives become the main way that culture is passed down.

Figure 8: Media-influenced Names by Gender (Generation 4)

Gender Distribution of Media-Inspired Names (2015–2025)



By and large, global media, particularly in 2000s, has become the most significant factor in how Pakistani Muslims name their children, subtly alternating the literary sources. This transformation highlights how mediascapes, hybridity, and Symbolic Capital all work together to shape identities mutually rooted and inclusive. As literary names fade into niche use, media-inspired hybridity becomes an active place for cultural negotiation where tradition is not thrown away but reimaged over the grounds of globalized imaginations.

Motivations Driving Identity Negotiation

Among Pakistani Muslim families, choosing a name is a complicated balance between their faith, taste for names and desire to move forward. As generations pass, the values they aim for shift too. From the year 1940 through 1965 (Cohort 1), religious names made up 80% of all names, for example Ghulam Rasool or Allah-Ditta, showing just how much emphasis on Islam brought people together in the first years after Pakistan was formed (Rahman, 2013). Many of these names contained words that meant “community” and “God,” placing their bearers within the structures of piety and agriculture of that time. From Cohort 4 (2015-present), religious names fall to just 32%, with hybrid versions (24%) now leading, softly including piety inside modern or attractive designs. For instance, Arham (mercy), a Quranic term, gains popularity not for its theological

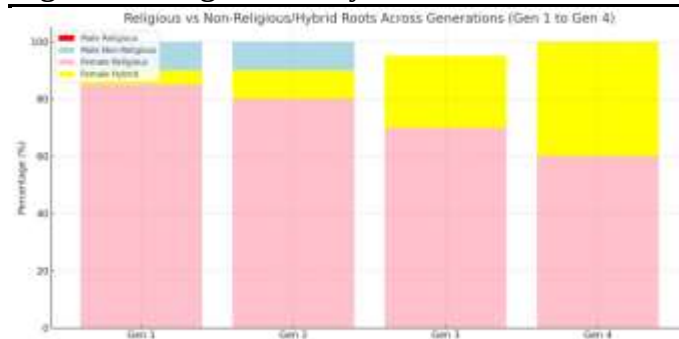
weight but for its brevity and phonetic elegance, exemplifying Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *Symbolic Capital* where names signal cultural sophistication alongside piety. The motivational shifts in naming trends across generations have been displayed in table 5, which claims that religious motivation has dropped by 48% over eight decades, while aesthetic names have tripled (12%-34%) driven by vowel-heavy, poetic forms, whereas hybrid names have risen sixfold (4%-24%) reflecting strategic blending of piety and modernity (Bourdieu, 1986; Hall, 1990).

Table 5: Motivational Shifts across Generations (1940-2025)

Category	Cohort 1 (1940-1965)	Cohort 2 (1965-1990)	Cohort 3 (1990-2015)	Cohort 4 (2015-present)
Religious	80%	68%	52%	32%
Aesthetic	12%	18%	26%	34%
Modern	4%	8%	16%	24%
Hybrid	4%	6%	14%	24%

Aesthetic motivations surged post-1990, particularly for female names, reflecting societal associations of femininity with grace and beauty. By 2015–2025, 34% of all names prioritize euphonic qualities, often featuring vowel-heavy endings (-a/-ah) and nature-inspired semantics (e.g. Zimal [garment], Inaya [care]). These names, while rooted in Urdu's poetic tradition, also align with global “soft” aesthetics, illustrating what Bucholtz and Hall (2005) term *gendered phonetics*, defined as a cross-cultural tendency to link femininity with melodious sounds. Male names, conversely, retain stronger religious ties (38% in Cohort 4) but adopt modern brevity (e.g. Ayaan over Muhammad Ali), balancing tradition with aspirations of upward mobility.

Figure 9: Religious vs. Hybrid Roots across Generations



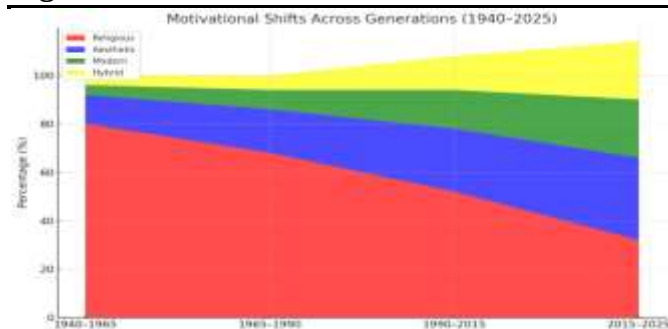
A quantitative look at Table 6 indicates that 46% of female names and 30% of hybrid names are chosen in the most recent generation, with males being more likely (38%) to choose names from strong religious backgrounds.

Table 6: Gender-Specific Motivations (Cohort 4: 2015-present)

Motivation	Male	Female
Religious	38%	26%
Aesthetic	22%	46%
Modern	28%	20%
Hybrid	18%	30%

Because of urban growth and the rise of digital technology, naming practices continue to evolve. Cross-cultural and short names, for example Rayyan (used for Quran recitation) and Hania (known around the world), follow Labov's (2001) rule about using few words. As shown in Figure 10, changing names is most noticeable among urban elites, who choose their names as a way to pleasantly fit into local religious customs and seek modernity around the world (Ahmad et al., 2023). Names such as Zunaira, with both Islamic roots and worldly flavor, show this mix, as Bhabha theorized in 1994 as cultural hybridity.

Figure 10: Motivational Shifts in Conventions across Generations (1940–2025)



Primarily, the trends have not been replaced but reconfigured, as religious values are implicitly prevalent and incorporated into internationally popular or visually attractive designs. As an example, Aiza (noble) is becoming popular as a modern name among young families, since it means Ayesha but uses only one syllable. This reflects the idea from Hall (1990) that identity is built by people rethinking cultural symbols as their view of themselves evolves.

On the whole, Muslim naming in Pakistan has seen three processes over eight decades: making the names officially legitimate, making them attractive and keeping them relevant for the future. The sixfold increase in hybrid names (4% → 24%) reveals how society is leaning towards values that are flexible and connected to both their place and the world, that is, that are neither rigidly traditional nor impersonally modern but fluidly “*glocal*”, which simply means that Muslims use distinctive names that support both faith and contemporary life.

Gendered Naming and Linguistic Change in Naming Patterns

The analysis of four generations points to noticeable shifts in morphological and phonological aspects of Pakistani Muslim names, mirroring the wider impression of sociocultural and gender-based views on language.

Table 7: Gender-based Contrasts in Naming Patterns

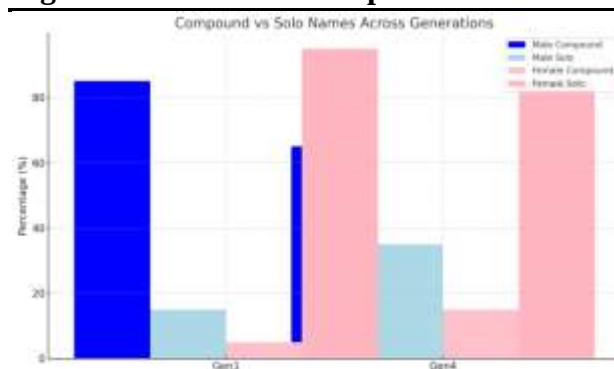
Aspect	Male Names	Female Names
Morphology	Religious compound names as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986)	Hybridity balancing tradition and modernity (Pilcher, 2017)
Phonology	Consonant-heavy endings for “strength”	Vowel-final endings for softness (Eckert, 1989)
Sociolinguistic Role	Stabilizing Islamic Identity	Negotiating aesthetic autonomy

Morphologically, most of the male names have used two parts (compounds) and a religious prefix (example: Muhammad, Abdul-) over the generations, representing about 85% in Gen1-Gen2 names. The patterns reflect the way Islamic identity is supported as a source of cultural capital, based on religious habits (Bourdieu, 1986). From Gen3-Gen4 onward, the number of compound male names falls by 20%, being replaced by one-word names (such as Rayyan) or non-religious Persian/Urdu names (such as Arham). Because of this change, English speakers tend to use fewer religious expressions and words which may be related to greater urban and global influence (Lieberson, 2000). Whereas, in the beginning, most girls' names were just religious, (such as Ayesha in Gen1-Gen2) by Gen3-Gen4, many of them were blended with Arabic and Urdu or Persian words (like Zainab Fatima). The mix of cultures reveals that female names contribute creatively to the look of writing, yet they continue to represent someone's personal and cultural background (Qureshi, 2018).

Table 8: Morphological Trends across Generations

Feature	Male Names	Female Names
Gen1-Gen2	Compound: 85% (e.g. Allah Ditta) Religious roots: 90%	Solo: 95% (e.g. Ayesha) Religious roots: 85%
Gen3-Gen4	Compound: 65% (decreased by 20%) Non-religious roots: 30% (e.g. Arhum)	Compound: 15% (increased by 15%) Hybrid roots: 40% (e.g. Zainab Fatima)
Key Shift	Secularization and linguistic economy	Hybridity and aesthetic innovation

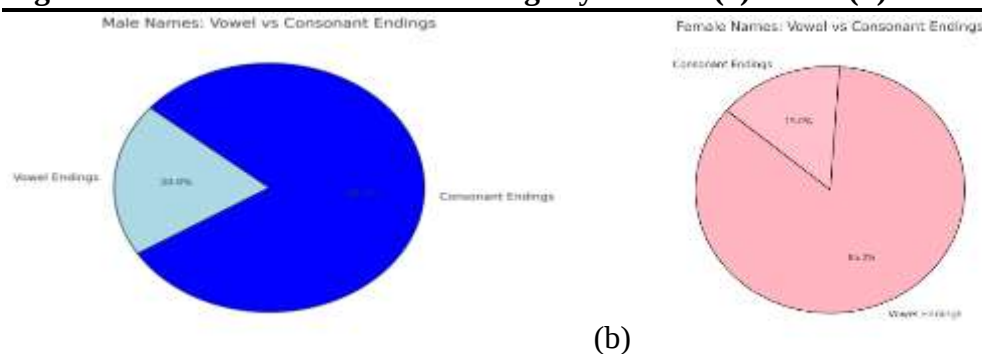
Figure 11: Trends in Compound vs. Solo Names Across Generations



Phonologically, male names tend to become shortened, with two or three-syllable names over the years, replacing longer names of four or three syllables in following generations. Still, the language includes guttural sounds (ح, ع) which help set the culture apart, according to Haspelmath (2006). Many of these women's names end with a vowel that gives them a particularly "soft" sound, for example Zara and Hania. This feature matches up with other cultures that see vowel final names as feminine which then supports stereotypes about women being gentle (Eckert, 1989). This situation illustrates how phonology affects gender in performance, since differences in the strength of consonants in male names and the softness of vowels in female names further symbolize manhood and womanhood (Butler, 1990).

Table 9: Phonological Trends across Generations

Feature	Male Names	Female Names
Gen1-Gen2	Syllables: 3-4 (e.g. Mu-shar-raf, If-ti-khar) Endings: Consonants (e.g. -d, -r)	Syllables: 2-3 (e.g. Fa-ti-ma, Sugh-ra, Sha-meem) Endings: Vowels (e.g. -a [ا, 'ى, 'ع], -ah [ح, 'و], -an [ا])
Gen3-Gen4	Syllables: 2-3 (e.g. Ra-yyan, Bi-lal) Retained guttural consonants (ح, ع)	Syllables: 2 (e.g. Ha-nia, Hoo-rain, Mir-ha) Front/open vowels: 80% (e.g. -i, -a)
Key Shift	Simplification, retaining cultural markers	Consistency in “soft” phonetic femininity

Figure 12: Vowel vs Consonant Endings by Gender (a) Males (b) Females

These trends signal towards the friction between a tradition-based Islamic culture and a modern global culture. Men are most likely to hold onto religious nicknames in their names as they move away from religion in the wider society. Even so, female names maintain a degree of independence by accepting a mix of customs, yet following the usual rules of gendered sounds. Such patterns mirror broader sociolinguistic dynamics, where language serves as a site for indexing social identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The findings highlight how naming practices in Pakistani Muslim communities are not merely linguistic acts but embodiments of shifting cultural values, gendered ideologies, and global-local intersections.

Future studies should expand data collection to ethnolinguistic (e.g., Sindhi, Baloch, Gilgit, Pakhtun, Saraiki, Kashmiri) and ethnic (e.g., Christian, Parsi, Hindu) minority communities to capture Pakistan's diverse naming landscape. Mixed-method designs may integrate surveys or interviews to directly assess media influence and parental motivations. Computational modeling (e.g., AI trend prediction) may enhance forecasting of naming shifts. Last but not least, comparative analyses with other Muslim-majority nations, such as Indonesia, Turkey, Bangladesh, may contextualize Pakistani naming trends within global Islam such as Mehmet/Muhammad (Al-Jarf, 2023).

This research emphasizes on the significance of names as dynamic markers of *glocal identity*; therefore, offers insights into how cultural heritage adapts to globalization. For sociolinguists, it demonstrates the utility of mixed-method frameworks in decoding linguistic change. Apart from this, the outcomes may help communities either safeguard their original naming practices or form united identities. Also, these results provide opportunities for analyzing stereotypes and concepts

of femininity in languages across South Asia. Eventually, the study reveals that tradition and modernity are linked in the development of culture.

Conclusion

By comparing the evolution of Muslim names in Pakistan across four generations (1940–2025), this research reveals the effects of globalization, media and debates over identity on socio-onomastic traditions. As piety became more symbolic and less pronounced, the study indicates there was a large drop in names strongly related to religion (such as Ghulam Rasool and Jahan Aara). At the same time, hybrid names (e.g., Arham, Hoorain) and commonly used names seen in media (e.g., Rayyan and Alyana) started to appear more. With people saying fewer syllables after 2000, it seems that easier pronunciation especially in metropolitan areas is mainly influenced by digital standards. Even though male given names often include consonants that indicate faith, female names usually use vowels toward the end, showing that global femininity is cutting across genders (Eckert, 1989; Butler, 1990). While identity theory (Hall, 1990) clarifies the strategic exhibition of names as "*identity portfolios*", balancing tradition and modernism, theoretical frameworks of globalization (Appadurai, 1996) and hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) help to explain how Turkish/Arab media and Islamic influencers reshange naming pools. Though fitting in global patterns seen in Jordan, Iran, and diasporic communities (Aljbouir & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2019; Sabet & Zhang, 2020; Queshi, 2025), these trends particularly highlight Pakistan's urban-rural and ethno-linguistic dynamics. Future studies should investigate caste-ethnic intersections, use computational modeling (Ludwig et al., 2019), and extend corpora to rural areas. By empirically validating media's influence in Pakistani naming practices and providing a diachronic, multidisciplinary lens to examine cultural hybridity, this work adds to socio-onomastic knowledge. It gives emphasis to names as dynamic excerpts of *glocal identity*, where tradition not discarded but reframed in a transnational world.

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