

Media and Cultural Change: Examining the Influence of Indian Dramas on Youth in District Karak

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of Indian Dramas on the culture of Pakistan in District Karak. As the availability of foreign television programs via satellite and online platforms has risen, the Pakistani audiences have become highly attracted to the Indian television programs, especially among the women. The study used survey as its methodology to examine viewing habits and perception concerning the cultural impact of such dramas. The results indicate that most Indian dramas are popular as 84.2 percent of the respondents watch their shows regularly. Over 55 percent of the respondents feel that these plays affect many elements of Pakistani culture particularly on the way they use language, life and styles adopted during marriages. Respondents observed that they had adapted some words, style of dressing and rituals that they watched in the Indian television. Nevertheless, the study suggests that such influence does not result in the total substitution of local cultural values as well. Rather, the outcomes indicate that there is a process of cultural adjustment to and integration, especially among the younger women. The study concludes that although the Indian drama is an indicator of subtle cultural changes, Pakistani identity in terms of culture is mostly preserved, but it is in a state of constant development due to media exposure.

Keywords: Indian Television Dramas; Youth Culture; Cultural Imperialism; Media Influence; Language Change; Wedding Rituals; Cultural Hybridization.

Introduction

One of the most effective agents of socialisation in the contemporary world is the mass media. In developing societies where television remains a major media platform, exposure to foreign media content often leads to changes in lifestyle preferences, systems, values, and cultural orientations. Satellite and cable TV in Pakistan have made Indian entertainment media available to large audiences through channels such as Star Plus, Zee TV, and Sony Entertainment Television. Indian soap operas like Sath Nibhana Saathiya, Mohabbatein, and Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi have also been popular among the masses, especially women and young people.

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The language and cultural aesthetics of Indian dramas are easily accessible to Pakistani people due to their cross-border similarities. Nevertheless, cultural proximity does not negate cultural impact. Instead, it can increase identification processes. The current research focuses on how Pakistani youth are affected by watching Indian dramas, with respect to language use, modes of dress, social activities, and perceptions of culture. The localisation of media impact in a semi-urban area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with a focus on district Karak, will provide a localised insight into its impact (Anwar et al., 2023).

Objectives of the Study

1. To test the degree of exposure of female youths in district Karak to Indian television dramas.
2. To examine how the youth in Pakistan were perceived to be influenced by the Indian dramas on their cultural values.
3. To examine the role of Indian dramas in language patterns among the female youth.
4. To investigate the influence of Indian dramas on the dressing habits and the suitability of fashion in young people.
5. To examine how Indian dramas have influenced social rituals, especially the wedding rituals, in district Karak.
6. To assess whether media exposure will lead to the hybridisation of culture and not the total replacement of culture.

Literature Review

There has been debate among scholars about the impact of foreign media on indigenous cultures, especially during globalisation and transnational media flows. Initial media scholars posited that long-term exposure to foreign media content would influence audience members' perceptions, values, and daily practices by normalising external cultural elements (Schiller, 1973). The view is supported by Baran (2004), who noted that media settings shape symbolic realities and perceptions in day-to-day activities. Expanding on this argument, subsequent scholars have noted that the effects of the media are not universal but vary across cultural contexts, including language, modes of dress, ways of socialising, and the performance of symbolic rites.

There is substantial research supporting the explanation of cultural change, with television exposure as an important explanatory variable. Using cultivation theory, Gerbner et al. (2002) contended that high television media consumption leads audiences to perceive reality as mediated onscreen. Where foreign dramas pervade the entertainment timetable, there is a high probability of learning a new culture, imitation and attitudinal change through prolonged exposure. It is especially applicable to drama genres, which rely on repetition, emotional appeal, and identification with characters. In the Pakistani setting, Zia (2009) found that women's lifestyle and reading behaviours shifted in response to increased exposure to cable television, supporting the power of television in socialisation.

The use of language has become a key variable in the research of media influence. According to Nabi and Oliver (2009), entertainment media introduce language styles, phrases, and manners of talk to the audience in subtle ways, which are likely to be absorbed subconsciously. Research conducted in South Asian settings has shown that regular exposure to media content in foreign or hybrid languages may also affect the day-to-day speech behaviours of youth and women, who are usually the main consumers of serial dramas (Rahman, 2018). Likewise, Sarwar, Batool, and Munir (2025) demonstrate that television media content is also a factor in changes in the uptake of cultural values and communication patterns among Pakistani youths. Language influence can

hence not be considered a communicative one but rather a symbolic one, representing changes in cultural identity and social membership.

Dress and fashion adoption is another variable identified in the literature. Crane (2012) reveals that visual media effectively condition the aesthetic preferences through constantly displaying culturally coded dress codes and standards of beauty. In South Asia, empirical research has also indicated that televised dramas often shape viewers' perceptions of what is considered modern and desirable clothing, despite resistance to direct imitation due to religious or cultural constraints (Ali and Batool, 2020). Saleem and Sadiq (2021) also observed similar trends in the Pakistani setting, noting that people selectively choose which aspects of fashion to follow and which cultural principles to preserve. The given selective imitation reinforces the idea that media influence may be indirect rather than direct, suggesting that behaviours are not fully adopted.

Another significant variable in media and culture research is the social ceremonies and rituals, especially weddings. Weddings are very symbolic cultural events, hence sensitive to mediated representation. Kraidy (2005) claims that world media promote cultural hybridity, allowing locals to take selective foreign influences without adopting the structures of the indigenous. South Asian empirical evidence indicates that the decoration of weddings, music, and the order of ceremonies are increasingly influenced by television shows, even in strictly conservative or semi-urban societies (Ahmed and Raza, 2022). Shahani et al. (2025) have documented the observable cultural impacts of Indian and Pakistani television dramas on women in Sindh, especially in their ceremonial practices and dress code, which supports the use of ceremonies as a site where media intervenes.

The new scholarship has also focused on parasocial interaction and emotional involvement as mediating factors of cultural influence. According to Tukachinsky (2011), consistent exposure to fictional characters induces one-sided emotional attachments, making viewers more receptive to the values and lifestyles portrayed on screen. Hefner and Klimmt (2025) continue to conclude that exposure and related emotional bonds to the figures lead to eventual attitude change towards out-group cultures. Such processes of parasocial interaction are especially prevalent among youth audiences due to identity formation and aspirational viewing behaviours.

In total, the modern literature indicates that foreign television dramas shape culture through cumulative media exposure, entertainment motivation, language adoption, aesthetic preferences, and ritualistic practices. Instead of creating a direct cultural substitution, these variables foster slow dynamics of cultural hybridisation and negotiation (Khan, 2024). Viewers are active interpreters, adaptors, and selective users of mediated cultural components in their daily lives. This literature forms a solid basis for investigating the influence of the Indian television dramas on youth cultural perceptions and practices in district Karak.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is based on Schiller's (1973) Cultural Imperialism Theory. According to the theory, media content from economically strong countries spreads to other countries, compelling people to adopt values and a particular lifestyle. The same media messages that have developed over time shape specific worldviews and make foreign cultural standards a matter of course.

Though current scholars claim that viewing audiences are active negotiators of media meaning rather than passive recipients, there are still factors that would ensure cultural imperialism in an environment where entertainment is dominated by foreign media. This framework is used in the current research to determine whether Indian dramas serve as cultural transmitters that influence youth in district Karak.

Research Methodology

This study used a cross-sectional survey design to determine the perceived impact of Indian dramas on young people. The sample included the female residents in the district Karak. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample of 120 respondents from Tehsil Karak and Tehsil Takht-e-Nasrati. A structured demographic and attitudinal questionnaire was used to collect data.

The questionnaire included questions gauging television viewing, preferences for dramas, attitudes toward cultural and language influences, dress emulation, and influences on social rituals. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS to produce descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and mean values.

Hypotheses Testing summary

In the research article titled cultural influence of Indian television dramas on the youth in Pakistan: survey study of district Karak, a series of hypotheses was formulated to test whether exposure to the Indian television dramas can heavily affect the cultural patterns of female youth in district Karak. The primary hypothesis (H1) was that exposure to Indian dramas has a significant role in shaping cultural patterns, whereas the null hypothesis (H0) was that it has no effect. The research findings provide strong support for the overall hypothesis. Most respondents were highly exposed to Indian dramas (84.2%). Moreover, 64.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Indian dramas influence Pakistani culture, 64.2% believed they influence language use, and 69.2% affirmed that the marriage ceremony is influenced by Indian dramas. All these findings show that Indian television content influences cultural perceptions and certain social behaviours. Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

Regarding the sub-hypotheses, H1a stated that exposure to Indian dramas has a significant effect on perceived cultural values. This hypothesis is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected, as a larger proportion of respondents (64.1% of the total) agreed that they were affected by culture. On the same note, H1b proposed that Indian dramas have a profound effect on language use among young women. This hypothesis is also confirmed, as 64.2 per cent of the interviewed stated that language patterns are influenced, and that media exposure is one of the factors that helped provoke subtle linguistic changes. H1d, which analysed the impact on wedding ceremonies and social rituals, had the strongest empirical support, with 69.2% of respondents reporting noticeable effects in this area. This reaffirms that, in a culture of ceremonies and aestheticism, it is particularly vulnerable to media influence.

Nevertheless, H1c, which suggested that Indian dramas have a strong influence on dress preferences, was only weakly supported. Though 26.7% of respondents admitted that they partially imitate Indian dress styles, 65% said they personally do not like Indian dress patterns. This shows that there is a societal-level impact, but not direct personal adoption. Thus, the evidence for H1c is partially confirmed, suggesting that dress is a comparatively inert cultural domain compared to language and marriage ceremonies.

In general, the hypothesis test demonstrates that Indian television dramas have a tangible and noticeable effect on youth culture in the district of Karak, particularly in its symbolic and ritualistic aspects. The results confirm that media exposure promotes the idea of selective cultural adaptation and hybridisation rather than total cultural substitution.

Data Analysis and Results

The results show that 92.5 per cent of respondents watch television regularly, and 91.7 per cent mostly watch dramas. Only 84.2% of them specifically said they watched Indian dramas. The

most-watched channel was Star Plus. Regarding cultural perceptions, 53.3% accepted, and 10.8% strongly accepted, that Indian dramas influence Pakistani culture. Equally, half of them said yes, and 14.2% strongly agreed that Indian dramas affect language patterns. Though 65% said they do not wear Indian dress styles themselves, 26.7% admitted they are incomplete imitators in society. In addition, 69.2 per cent stated that Indian dramas affect wedding ceremonies, suggesting that ceremonial aesthetics is particularly vulnerable to media influence.

The hours spent watching dramas were quite moderate, with 55.8% spending less than 1 hour per day. Entertainment was the main reason (79.2%), suggesting that the cultural influence might be indirect rather than direct. The research findings indicate a high television penetration among the respondents, with 92.5% reporting regular viewing. This shows that television remains a powerful source of entertainment and information among the sampled population. Moreover, 91.7% of respondents strongly preferred dramas over other programs, such as news or movies. This underscores the cultural and popularity of drama content in shaping audience perceptions and everyday media consumption patterns.

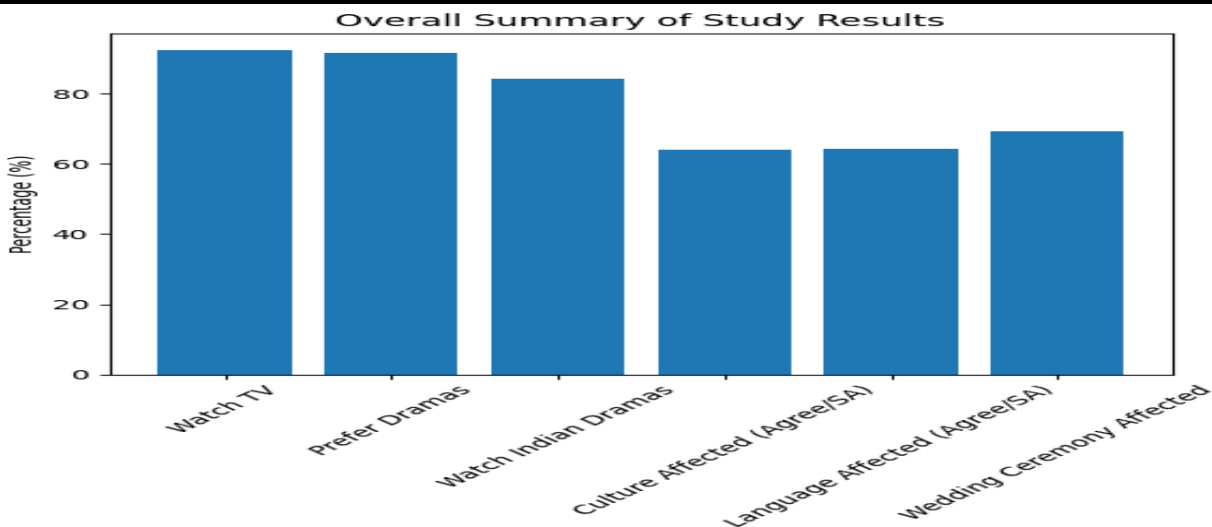
Indian dramas are also quite popular, with 84.2 per cent of respondents indicating that they watch Indian drama serials. Such a mass exposure indicates that the cross-border media content has a visible impact on viewers. In the analysis of perceptions of cultural influence, 64.1 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Indian dramas influence Pakistani culture. Most people (64.2%) also thought that Indian dramas affect language use, suggesting that media exposure can contribute to slight linguistic changes and the use of expressions or accents.

Moreover, most of the respondents said that they never attend any Indian cultural events; however, 69.2 per cent of them felt that Indian dramas shape wedding ceremonies in Pakistan. The implication of this finding is that media influence might operate indirectly, especially in the practice of ceremonies and social practices, rather than through direct appropriation of wider cultural practices. On the whole, the findings demonstrate that exposure to Indian dramas regularly leads to the cultural diffusion of perceptions and behaviours in areas such as language and wedding rituals.

Table 1: Summary of Major Findings

S. No.	Study Indicator	Percentage (%)
1	Television Viewership	92.5
2	Preference for Dramas	91.7
3	Exposure to Indian Dramas	84.2
4	Perceived Cultural Impact (Agree/Strongly Agree)	64.1
5	Perceived Language Impact (Agree/Strongly Agree)	64.2
6	Wedding Ceremony Influence	69.2

Overall, the table indicates that while television and drama consumption are widespread, the cultural influence of Indian dramas is more pronounced in symbolic and ceremonial aspects of culture rather than in direct personal adoption, supporting the notion of selective cultural integration rather than complete cultural replacement.

Figure 1: Overall summary of study results

The graphical fraction indicates that the television exposure and the drama consumption among the respondents are high. Over four-fifths of the respondents said that they had viewed Indian dramas, and that almost two-thirds felt that cultural practices, language use, and wedding ceremonies had been affected. This trend indicates that Indian films have been used as an important cultural force especially in ritual and language aspects.

Discussion

The results of the research indicate a delicate and complex role of Indian television dramas in the cultural attitudes and ways of living of the female youth in district Karak, Pakistan. This effect is not causal in the simplistic sense of the word but rather a result of complex socialization, exposure mechanisms as well as formation of tastes and tendencies towards culture. A considerable percentage of the respondents claimed to watch Indian dramas on a regular basis and more than half said that watching the programs has an influence in their cultural perceptions. These trends go hand in hand with the previous studies on the role of media influence and indicate that the Indian dramas can be viewed as an effective cultural text in relation to which viewers can read social norms and values. The cultural imperialism theory states that media products of culturally dominant producers may enter the local cultural frames and alter them, disrupting the native cultural norms by broadcasting narratives, actions, values, and approaches which are not native (Schiller, 1973). The evidence at the current study contributes to this theoretical framing by showing that repeated exposure to culturally foreign media content is associated with evident difference in attitudes and tastes among media consumers.

Among the most recurring trends, there is one associated with language influence. Sixty-five percent of the respondents supported the claim that they watch Indian dramas which influences their language preferences and use and more than 14 percent strongly agreed with this impression. Language is a delicate but effective cultural identifier, not only a pattern of communication, but also social identity and cultural belonging. The results are in line with those studies showing that after frequent exposure to foreign media languages, it is possible to receive the expressions of language, its idioms, and even accent forms in the local context, especially those of the young audience (Sarwar et al., 2025). The fact that indigenous language or language patterns are distorted

or hybridized is something that should be the subject of scholarly research because it implies that the media can trigger a gradual transformation in common communicative practices- a phenomenon that cultivation scholars refer to as incremental creation of perceptual realities due to media exposure.

It is interesting to note that the impact of the Indian dramas on the practice and aesthetics of the weddings became one of the most evident themes in the findings. Although the idea of the wholesale dressing styles borrowing was generally rebuffed by the respondents, most of them did recognize the indirect use of Indian inspired dresses in the local marriage ceremonies. This trend is in sync with the idea of cultural hybridity when certain elements of the foreign culture are assimilated in the indigenous practices without supplanting the entire cultural repertoire (Khan, 2024; Shahani et al., 2025). This hybridization implies that the cultural identity of Pakistanis is still strong in many ways, however, some of their aesthetic and ritualist elements turn out to be the matters of negotiation between the traditions and the international media standards.

In addition to observable cultural identifiers, it seems that Indian media content also affect the orientations of attitude towards the foreign cultures. Intercultural communication studies have proposed that the exposure to foreign media tends to establish more parasocial relations with the characters and the culture outside the immediate social circle, creating a sense of reducing distance and in some cases the development of positive attitudes towards the culture portrayed (Hefner & Klimmt, 2025). This study did not directly measure the parasocial phenomena, but the levels of drama viewing were high and the level of emotion can be relevant in how the youths conceptualize their cultural other and their limits of culture. These perspectives are not limited to conventional cultivation models but they emphasize the way in which the global circulation of media may both support and disrupt regional cultural identities. Interestingly, although the audience numbers are high and the cultural influences are stated, the direct imitation of Indian dress and social patterns was not accepted widely among respondents. This brings out another important difference between perceived influence and behavioral adoption. It highlights the fact that media influence can be internalized cognitively as well as socially debated, people can learn to appreciate local traditions consciously and internalize mediated cultural patterns in their perception and tastes subconsciously. This duality can be reflected in other similar cultural situations, where viewers selectively consume media products, preserving the fundamental values and incorporating the external ones (Shahani et al., 2025).

Lastly, although this research is on Indian media content, it should be put in context of global media flows. The impact of the Turkish and Korean dramas on Pakistani youth has been reported in the scholarship as proposing that various sources of foreign material can be contextualized into a wider trend of cultural negotiation as a result of media globalization (Saleem and Sadiq, 2021; youth perspectives on Korean dramas, 2023). The impressions of these comparative analyses support the thesis that television dramas are not a closed cultural text; they constitute one of the strands of a broader transnational media ecology that influences the current youth cultural experiences on various fronts.

Conclusively, the discussion shows that Indian movies serve as important cultural power of the young people in district Karak. They can be felt both directly and indirectly: the direct rejection of the foreign cultural practices is still high, but the language use, ritual principles, and attitudinal receptiveness are changing, which indicates that cultural negotiation is taking place. Such a subtle topography provokes new studies that incorporate other theoretical concepts like parasocial contact theory and media globalization and demands more diversified approaches to comprehend how

global media circulations influence the culture sensibility of the younger generation in Pakistan and other countries.

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