Attitude of University Students towards Cultural Openness in Pakistan

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Abstract
Culture holds strong position in the social value system in Pakistan. It portrays vibrant colors of diversity and pluralism; however, the growing complexities of issues surrounding culture are significantly influencing young people towards cultural extremism. In this regard, the role of society as well as education is significant. The study is designed to find the attitude of students towards cultural openness, and to unearth, how well they comprehend its role in changing society. The research design is framed under quantitative survey method. Population includes all the students, studying at university level in Karachi, Pakistan. Sample includes all the undergraduate/post graduate students, who took Pakistan Studies/Islamic Studies as majors. Sample size n=250 was determined through random sampling. Cultural sensitivity scale was drafted, which was validated through content validity, and was piloted to check reliability. For ethical consideration, respondents signed consent letter. Findings disclosed that majority of the respondents share global cultural values; however they are highly influenced by their defined cultural boundaries. Their tolerance level is correlated to their cultural sensitivity. They have certain reservations on religious grounds, and their decisions are greatly influenced by cultural ideology. It is suggested to strengthen global cultural openness and plurality among higher level students through value education. Curriculum at higher education level should be revised. Contextual resources should be drafted to immerse global cultural values and to develop rational and critical thinking skills. Further, global exchange programs should be initiated at higher level to give global cultural exposure to the students.

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Introduction
Human societies are bonded together through cultural values — a source of social connectivity, which contribute to social changes and promote

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social justice. It broadens the horizon of understanding and influences attitudes and behaviors.[1]

Globalization encouraged the universal notion of cultural diversity. It is a symbol of social cohesion[2] and attribution of humanity, which flourishes democracy, and promotes tolerance and social justice.[3] According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[4] cultural miscellany promotes plurality of identities. This notion is reaffirmed by the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.[5] The proponents view it as a medium of global interaction, which nurtures human values, unites cultural differences, and maintains dynamics of change, while the opponents view it as a root of conflict.[6]

Cultural globalization facilitates the transformation of cultural attributes.[7] It enhances cultural uniqueness; however, it is often viewed as threat to cultural identities.[8] With increase interactions, 'culture' has immersed antagonism and caused imbalance in society due to complexities of attitudes, contradictions of ideas, and diverse level of acceptance.[9] In addition, what makes culture more threatening is its

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[1] Angela Leung, Chi-Yue Chiu & Ying-Yi Hong, *Cultural Processes: A Social Psychological Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.171-72.

[2] Maykel Verkuyten, *Identity and Cultural Diversity: What Social Psychology Can Teach Us,* Routledge, 2013, pp.3-5.

[3] *See* 'Cultural diversity must for promoting tolerance', *The Nation*, 1 December 2009. Accessed 4 December 2014, http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/14-Dec-2009/Cultural-diversity-must-for-promoting-tolerance

[4] UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* Accessed 19 December 2014, http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html

[5] UNESCO, *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005).

[6] Ulrike Niedner-Kalthoff, *Producing Cultural Diversity: Hegemonic Knowledge in Global Governance Projects,* Camous Verlag, 2015, pp.21-22.

[7] M. Kazemi, 'Globalization in Viewpoints of Opponents and Advocates', *Dawn,* 28 August 2001. Accessed 13 January 2015, www.dawn.com

[8] John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp.79-81.

[9] Wood Carter, 'Conceptualizing cultures of violence and cultural change', in C. Stuart (ed.), *Cultures of Violence: Interpersonal Violence in Historical Perspective,* Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.87-96.

interpretation within defined boundaries. Another predictive basis is cultural ignorance, which often leads to undesirable outcomes.[10]

It is observed that few Asian communities have reservations over cultural changes, and consider it as conspiracy to penetrate western cultural values, while damaging their traditional social and ethical value system.[11] The question arises, does globalization really pose threat to traditional cultures, or are there other elements, which led to contradict cultural changes? In the view of researcher, cultural diversity and acceptance to cultural changes are often resisted either due to clash between local and global ideologies or strong attachment towards some traditional values (even if it poses threat to their own culture). Many countries are practicing violence, discrimination, and other forms of human rights abuses in the name of culture, which raise question over the universality of 'cultural diversity'. It has also been noticed that due to ignorance, cultural diversity has led many people towards aggression.

Culture has greater influence on youth identity. Generally, young people living in the Asian countries exhibit greater association to their culture. Their connectivity to their cultural norms and customs are mainly grounded in their value system; however, due to technological advancement and global interconnectedness, many young people are now liberating themselves from traditional boundaries and constructing their own sets of values.[12] This trend is expanding global-mindedness and providing them arena to view culture from the angle of diversity. For many, disconnection of young people from their cultural values, and accepting cultural diversity pose threat to traditional cultural systems; however, it is a point to ponder, is cultural openness really a threat or opportunity? Exploring self-identity and practicing cultural diversity (on rational grounds) has no harm unless it is against human values. Cultural openness can be seen from two angles: some young people show resistance towards traditional culture (or few cultural practices), while other are not willing to think beyond traditional culture — both the situations may led towards cultural extremism.

[10]   Wendy Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World,* Pine Forge Press, 2008, pp.35-44.

[11]   Mohamed El-Shibiny, *The Threat of Globalization to Arab Islamic Culture: The Dynamics of World Peace,* Dorrance Publishing, 2005, pp.18-19.

[12]   Shirley Steinberg, Priya Parmar & Birgit Richard, *Contemporary Youth Culture: An International Encyclopedia,* Vol.2, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006, p.3.

The culture of Pakistan is a mixture of pluralistic traditions.[13] Its cultural basis lies in the Islamic value system. Religious uniformity, rights and responsibilities, family system, habits — all these cultural attributes shed light on rich Pakistani mores. In his book, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, the author defined Pakistani culture as multi-dimensional.[14] During the past few decades, Pakistan has witnessed social and cultural transformations, which has raised more challenges than opportunities.[15] The notion of cultural diversity within Pakistan is under threat due to interference of extremist ideologies. The multi-layered political ideologies have also badly affected the essence of cultural ideology. In addition, individual's attachment to religious and cultural ideology often draws line between traditional cultural values and cultural openness. Many people, particularly educated one are in favor of multiculturalism and diversity; however, due to weak governance and law and order situation, alongside social and cultural barriers, as per set by society, cultural diversity is often subjected to violence.

Since independence, Pakistan faced countless challenges, particularly cultural violence has manifold and faded off cultural hybridism. On one side, Pakistani culture portrays pluralism, while on other side it has stirred breaching of human rights. In the name of culture, many dogmatic and inhumane practices, which are rooted in violence, are routinely observed in Pakistan such as honor killing, rape, dowry, domestic abuse, gender discrimination, sexual harassment. Refusing to bend towards such traditional practices often result in severe consequences. This on-going violence in the name of culture has given birth to new sets of human rights abuses in Pakistan. The involvement of young people in these abuses is apparent these days. The divergence between lived culture and imagined one is turning into a gaping chasm.[16] High imprint of culture has dominated thoughts and actions on human psyche. Many people in Pakistan are moving from collectivism to individualism due to lack of interconnectivity.

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[13]   Iftikhar Haider Malik, *Culture and Customs of Pakistan,* Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006, pp.120-36.
[14]   Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country,* Penguin Books, 2012, p.16.
[15]   Mohammad Qadeer, *Pakistan - Social and Cultural Transformations in a Muslim Nation,* Taylor & Francis, 2006, pp.19-22.
[16]   Mohammad Qadeer, 'The conflict between Pakistan's lived and imagined culture', *Dawn*, 19 October 2012. Accessed 13 January 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/757887/the-conflict-between-pakistans-lived-and-imagined-culture

The concept of fabricated culture is significantly making its mark in Pakistan. People are now more compounded within traditional barracks, mainly due to self-will, force or fear. They are sensitive to discuss about cultures due to fear and terror. Individual consciousness is often concealed by heaps of traditional norms. It has also raised challenge of cultural extremism in Pakistan. Lack of tolerance is prominently havocking issues. A research study shared that extreme passion of cultural dominance in Pakistan often rise anger without rationale.[17] Reports pointed Pakistan as tolerance deficit society on the basis of prevailing incompatible ideology[18] and human rights abuses.[19]

Youth in Pakistan are vibrant and full of hopes. They have significant role in bringing peace to the world. Due to transitions in society, generation gap, and technological revolution, they are now defining their own aspirations and sets of values. Friends and media play important role in changing their mindsets towards cultural openness. They are highly influenced by the western culture.[20] It has immersed and has greatly changed the lifestyle of people. Due to technological encroachment,[21] identity crisis is steeping among young people. A research study was conducted to explore the attitude of people towards cultural globalization. The results drawn from the study revealed that with the advancement in technology, moral values among young people in Pakistan is declining.[22] The ongoing cultural clashes in the name of language, sect, etc., have fabricated cultural sensitivity, particularly

[17]   PILDAT, *Multiform Youth Extremism in Pakistan- Discussion Paper. Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency,* PILDAT, 2013.

[18]   Hussain Zaidi, (16 January 2011). 'Is Pakistan a tolerance-deficit society?', *Dawn*, 6 January 2011. Accessed 18 January 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/599134/is-pakistan-a-tolerance-deficit-society-2

[19]   Zoya Hasan, *Democracy in Muslim Societies: The Asian Experience,* SAGE Publications India, 2007.

[20]   Al-Karim Datoo, 'Media and youth identity in Pakistan: Global-local dynamics and disjuncture' *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences,* 2:1 (2010), pp.192-215.

[21]   Mohammad Siddiqui Seddon and Fauzia Ahmad, *Muslim Youth: Challenges, Opportunities and Expectations,* A& C Black, 2012, pp.132-39.

[22]   Ashraf Kayani, Khalil Ahmad and Aamir Saeed, 'Perceptions about Cultural Globalization in Urban Pakistan' *Research Journal of South Asian Studies,* 28:1 (2013), pp.127-38.

among young people. These cultural divides often lead them towards identity crisis, and motivate them towards cultural extremism.

Respecting and adapting elements from other cultures pose no harm unless people are consciousness about their cultural roots and utilize cultural strengths to create harmony; however, dominance of one's culture over other often creates gaps and detaches people from global mindedness. With increase complex social and cultural relations, the world now looks forward to accept culture of non-violence to enable sound environment, and find possible solutions to the problems without indulgence in sadism.[23] In this regard, the role of young people is central. Their positive attitude is crucial for promoting the concept of pluralism and diversity. In order to influence younger generation towards cultural acceptance, knowing their current attitude is crucial for strategizing futuristic immersion of multiculturalism. Previous local research studies do not cover this aspect. This research study should be seen as the first step towards finding trends of young people towards cultural openness.

Research questions
1. What is the attitude of university students towards cultural openness?
2. Are they prepared towards accepting cultural diversity?

Methodology
The research design is framed on the paradigm of quantitative survey research. Population for the study includes all the students, studying at university level in Karachi, Pakistan. Sample includes all the undergraduate/post graduate students pursuing degree in either Pakistan Studies or Islamic Studies. The rationale for drawing sample from these subjects is based on the fact that elements of multiculturalism, diversity and pluralism are entailed in these two subjects. Whether or not these subjects influence their attitude and prepare them towards cultural openness would be divulged from this study. Through purposive sampling, five institutions were chosen from Karachi. Total sample size n=250 (50 from each institution) was selected through random sampling. The Munroe Multicultural Attitude Scale[24] was adapted to draft cultural

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[23] IFRC, *The Red Cross Red Crescent approach to Promoting a culture of non-violence and peace.* (Geneva, Switzerland: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2011).

[24] Arnold Munroe, 'The Munroe Multicultural Attitude Scale Questionnaire' *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, Vol. 66, 2006, pp.819-34.

sensitivity scale. It was validated through content validity. It was later piloted and passed through statistical test for ensuring reliability (Cronbach's Alpha= .83). The researcher analyzed data using tables and basic statistical calculations.

Limitations
The research study finds the attitude of university students towards cultural openness, and does not cover practicing aspects; however, this baseline research widens the scope of future researches, which can be conducted in ethnographical settings to relate attitude with cultural practices.

Analysis:

Table 1: Showing the Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Gender

S. No	Gender	Total	Mean	Variance	SD
1	Male	182	125	6498	80.61
2	Female	68			
		250			

Due to disproportionate random sampling, majority of the respondents selected for this study are male.

Table 2: Showing the Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Age

S. No	Age	Total	Mean	Variance	SD
1	17 - 20	170	125	4050	63.63
2	21 - 24	80			
		250			

Majority of the participants are between the age of 17-20.

Table 3: Showing the Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Knowledge about Different Religions

S. No	Responses	Total	Mean	Variance	SD
1	Yes	247	125	29768	172.53
2	No	03			
		250			

All the respondents possess knowledge about different religions.

Table 4: Showing the Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Knowledge about Different Cultures

S.No	Responses	Total	Mean	Variance	SD
1	Yes	235	125	24200	155.56
2	No	15			
		250			

Majority of the respondents said that they possess knowledge about different cultures.

Table 5: Showing the Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Travelling

S.No	Responses	Total	Mean	Variance	SD
1	Yes	7	125	27848	166.8
2	No	243			
		250			

Majority of the respondents never visited any country

Table 6: Showing the Responses of Respondents towards Cultural Sensitivity

Items	SA	A	U	S	SD	Mean	S.Dev
1. I prefer making friends, who belong to other religion	54	116	58	18	4	50	43.52
2. I understand that social barriers exist in Pakistan	55	125	45	25	0	50	46.90
3. I understand that all religious beliefs differ from each other	110	110	25	5	0	50	55.56
4. I understand sexual preferences may differ	70	120	50	10	0	50	48.47
5. I understand that gender-based inequities exist	67	150	17	8	8	50	61.04
6. I accept the fact that languages other than English are spoken	77	128	28	17	0	50	52.16
7. I do not understand why people of other cultures act differently	45	55	50	75	25	50	18.02
8. I am sensitive to respecting religious differences	105	111	4	15	15	50	53.17
9. I am sensitive to differing expressions of ethnicity	30	135	70	5	10	50	53.96
10. I am emotionally concerned about racial inequality	55	100	65	30	0	50	37.58
11. I am sensitive toward people of every financial status	60	100	45	30	15	50	32.59
12. I am not sensitive to communicate in language other than English	50	105	35	45	15	50	33.54
13. I don't care people on the basis of their social status	80	100	40	30	0	50	40
14. I do not act to stop racism	10	25	90	75	50	50	33.35
15. I actively confront gender inequities	50	65	105	15	15	50	37.74
16. I do not actively respond to contest religious prejudice	25	75	105	35	10	50	39.05

17. I am helpful to others who face language barriers	70	140	35	5	0	50	57.55
18. I avoid interfering when witnessing bias based on people's preferred sexual orientation	10	50	115	60	15	50	42.27
19. I have been to church/temple	10	65	35	70	70	50	26.69
20. I have read the Bible	5	30	50	80	85	50	33.72
21. Pakistan is a terrorist country	10	20	50	35	135	50	49.87
22. I love people of other countries	60	135	20	15	20	50	50.867
23. I like socialize with any one from any culture	60	125	40	10	15	50	46.50
24. I am influenced by western culture	10	55	30	55	100	50	33.72
25. I dislike calling myself Pakistani	10	15	5	30	190	50	78.81

Major findings:
1. Overall, the attitude of university students towards cultural openness is positive for most of the items, with few reservations on cultural grounds.
2. Majority of the respondents possess knowledge about different religions and cultures.
3. Majority of the respondents think that social and cultural barriers do exist in Pakistan.
4. Majority are sensitive towards respecting religious differences and differing expression of ethnicity.
5. Majority of the respondents are neutral in their decision towards stopping act of racism; towards challenging gender inequities; in responding to contest religious prejudice.
6. Majority are neutral when it comes to witnessing biasness based on sexual orientation.
7. Majority never visited any religious place other than mosque.
8. Majority did not read religious books of other religion.
9. Majority have caring nature for the people of other countries.
10. Most of the respondents like socializing with people belonging to other cultures.
11. Majority of the respondents are not influenced by western culture.

12. Most of the respondents hold sense of patriotism and are optimistic towards their country.

Discussion
Culture is the foundation of every society, which shapes attitude, develops habits and ideas,[25] reflects human nature and greatly supports development. In this changing world, culture still holds strong position. It cultivates the spirit of unity and develops positive attitudes towards the process of development.

Cultural liberty is an important dimension of human emancipation.[26] It helps people to explore self-identity, and empowers individuals towards openness; however there is a strong association between culture and intellect, as well as between culture and emotions. Both either allow or disallow people to think rationally for showing openness towards global cultural values.

The cultural diversity in Asia fosters mutual cooperation, and promotes communal bonding,[27] but few Asian communities hold some cultural reservations.

Pakistan is a value-oriented community, whose cultural assets are historic. The regional expressions enliven Pakistani heritage and contextualize mixture of various strata. Pluralism in Pakistan is expressed in the form of self-expression, art and architecture, ethnicity,[28] which highlight spectrum of diversity and offer profusion of penetration.[29]

There is a strong hold of cultural and religious values in Pakistan, which often contradict with global cultural beliefs. What makes situation more sensitive is the emergence of fabricated cultures and extremist ideologies in Pakistan. This conflict between multi-layered ideologies is posing threat to the survival of pluralism and diversity. From the angle of human rights, fabricated and outdated norms, cultural differences and lack of unification due to ignorance has raised social conflicts among the people of Pakistan. Violence in the name of culture, ethnicity, language, and many other malpractices are weakening Pakistan's social value system. The political system is struggling to

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25 Carol Ember, *Anthropology,* Pearson Education India, 2007, pp.81-88.
26 Maider Marana, *Culture and Development- Evolution and Prospects. UNESCO Working Paper 1* (Spain ???: UNESCO Etxea, 2010).
27 Jawad Syed, and Mustafa Ozbilgin, *Managing Cultural Diversity in Asia: A Research Companion,* Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010.
28 Mohammad Qadeer, *Pakistan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp.18-35.
29 Iftikhar Haider Malik, *op.cit.*, pp.220-26.

balance ideological polarities,[30] but failed to stabilize situation. In such scenario, it is crucial to promote cultural openness to bring uniformity in global society.

Young people in Pakistan are curious to explore their self-identities. They desire to seek commonalities between cultures to build stronger connections between them. In today's context, the multicultural phenomena have empowered young people to define their own cultural values. It is being noticed that youth have more influence of friends and colleagues (environmental influence) than of family to set their cultural boundaries.

In Pakistan, thinking beyond traditional cultural values is often subjected to criticism, but a good number of young people are now curious to participate in global cultural practices. Most of them keep balance between traditional and global cultural values, but are against superstitious cultural practices. On the one side, due to social and cultural boundaries, many young people are forced to trail traditional cultural practices (even if the defined practices are falsified); while on the other side, other young people take traditional cultural values as the source of their identity and are least interested to participate in global cultural diversification. These clashes between different cultures and ideologies are influencing them towards cultural extremism.

Four skills are important to show competency of cultural diversity: understanding culture as multilevel and multidimensional; understanding personal and institutional barriers; practicing culturally centered communication skills, and designing and implementing cultural competence.[31] Weighing the present findings into these skills reveal that majority of the respondents understand different cultures as well as barriers associated with it; however, its practice cannot be ensured.

Majority of the respondents have positive attitude towards cultural openness. They possess positive feelings towards patriotism. Majority of the respondents understand global responsibilities and share global cultural values. This attitude reflects global trends and dilutes cultural biasness.[32]

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[30]   Mujahid Chak, *Islam and Pakistan's Political Culture* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[31]   Mikel Hogan,. *The Four Skills of Cultural Diversity Competence,* Cengage Learning, 2012, p.8.

[32]   Richard Lewis, *The Cultural Imperative: Global Trends in the 21st Century,* Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2003.

Majority of the respondents endorses the existence of gender inequities, racial discrimination, and other social and cultural barriers in Pakistani society; however, they are neutral in their decision to challenge racism and gender inequities. These neutral responses could be due to authoritarian cultural practices, lack of preparedness towards acceptance, or because of sensitivity towards these areas.

Understanding global issues and considering it as global consensus is closely associated with collaborative intercessions. This positive transition is notified by studies in Asian context.[33] With special reference to cultural closeness,[34] respondents of this study are highly influenced and diluted within their own cultural boundaries. Although most of the respondents supported the notion of multi-diversity by marking their concern towards others, but at the same time, a good number of respondents showed sensitivity towards contesting religious prejudice. It shows strong hold over their cultural values.

Resistance towards other cultural elements can also be drawn from the results, which showed that most of them have never visited any other religious places or read any other religious books, either because of societal or cultural pressures or due to their strong beliefs over local cultural values. In addition, most of the respondents showed caring nature for the people of other countries, but have never been abroad.

From the results, the researcher make connection that there is a gap between accepting and practicing cultural openness. Although majority of the respondents showed global mindedness, but still, there is a gap between ideas and realities.

Beyond cultural boundary, there exists cross-cultural adaptability, which is important for young people's intellectual development. Their tolerance tendency is characterized by their cultural characteristics. This result can be correlated to their emotional attachment on racial grounds. Although respondents possess knowledge about different cultures and religions; are open towards others, and are willing to make friends from other religions, but in terms of their personal attachment to other religions, they have certain reservations.

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[33]   UNICEF, *Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity,* New York: UNICEF, 2011.
[34]   Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils, *Youth in transition: the challenges of generational change in Asia,* Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils, 2005, pp.13-17.

Recommendations

Due to inadequate teaching of cultural elements at higher education institutions, students are partially prepared to practice cultural openness.[35] It is important for students to sensitize diversity challenges to limit conventional ways of thinking. Promoting knowledge about multiculturalism through education can possibly help in shaping positive social attitudes to deal with social issues comprehensively and collectively.[36] In order to attain cultural miscellany, educational institutions are required to understand changes and foster critical thinking skills among students. In this domain, teachers play decisive role in awakening and encouraging creative potentials. Human rights education and multicultural education should be introduced as separate subjects. Visits to other countries can also help them to interact with multi-diverse audience and understand other cultures more deeply.

Conclusion

Cultural openness is the real essence for tackling global issues effectively. Cultural extremism can only led to violence. The need of time is to understand values and beliefs of young people. It is important to dissolve existing cultural barriers, and understand identity of young people. To tackle social and cultural barriers, optimistic thinking should be promoted. Attitude towards global culture should be strengthened among young people by developing sense of equality.

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[35] Barbara Putz-Plecko, *Background Report on Cultural education: The promotion of cultural knowledge, creativity and inter-cultural understanding through education* (Paris: Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe, 2008), p.2.

[36] Carl. Grant and Christine Sleeter, *Doing Multicultural Education for Achievement and Equity,* Routledge, 2011.