CULTURAL TRANSITIONS AND PAKISTANI CINEMA: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Maham Shams[1], Dr. Rao Shahid[2]

Affiliations:

[1] Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Media & Communication Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

[2] Associate Professor, Department of Media & Communication Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

Corresponding Author/s Email:

[1] maham.shams@iub.edu.pk

Abstract

This study examines the evolution of cultural expressions in Pakistani cinema from 1947 to 2024, analyzing how films reflect and influence societal transformations. Grounded in Media Representation Theory, the research investigates ten pivotal films per decade to trace shifts in gender roles, family structures, traditional-modern value conflicts, religious/ethnic identities, and international relations (IR). From Laary (1950) to Daghabaaz Dil (2024), each film functions as a socio-political artifact, capturing the anxieties and aspirations of its era. Pakistani cinema not only documents emerging social trends but also actively reshapes cultural norms through narrative innovation. Filmmakers emerge as both cultural archivists and agents of change, bridging media and societal discourse. The findings reveal how cinematic representations reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies, particularly in portraying women's agency, intergenerational tensions, and national identity debates. By juxtaposing historical and contemporary films, the study highlights the industry's responsiveness to geopolitical events, such as partition, Islamization, and globalization. Additionally, it explores the interplay between commercial constraints and artistic freedom in shaping narratives. This research offers novel insights into the symbiotic relationship between cinema and society, contributing to global scholarship on media's role in cultural preservation and transformation. It proposes future directions for cross-cultural studies on cinematic activism and the transnational flow of ideological narratives.

Keywords: Cultural Transition, Thematic Analysis, Pakistani Cinema, Traditional Values, Globalization.

Introduction

Pakistani cinema, also known as Lollywood, has experienced a tumultuous yet vibrant journey since the country's inception in 1947. Feature films originate from this production centre where Urdu along with regional languages constitute most of the content. The film industry based on Indian cinematic models changed after Pakistan became independent to properly show the distinctive social and political conditions of this new nation. The partition of India served filmmakers in mainstream studios as a political issue that would preserve the unbroken cultural elements including art and literature and music and the movies. Throughout the decades, Pakistani films have been instrumental in portraying societal values, norms, and transitions. These films serve not only as entertainment but also as rich historical and cultural documents that capture the evolution of public sentiment, identity, and cultural ideology. The execution of art and performance create a drastic change in the mind-set of people as well as creating international standards (Masood, 2023).

Importance of Cinema as a Cultural Artefact

Cinema, as a medium, holds a profound place in the cultural consciousness of a society. The powerful communication tool functions as a representation system, which develops and distributes ideological structures along with beliefs and identifiers. Movies in Pakistan serve entertainment while also instructing society while shaping public reception. This medium depicts all social definitions, gender requirements, religious faith systems, and various ethnic groups with precision. Visual storytelling allows filmmakers to test

conventional cultural beliefs through their narratives. Cinema serves as a cultural document, which showcases the historic along with political and social progression of its production environment (Saleem et al., 2020).

Statement of the problem

The vital impact of cinema on societal understanding has received minor academic exploration of its portrayal effects on Pakistani cultural development from 1947 to 2024. The social political and ideological changes in Pakistan's history have been both delineated in and transformed by cinema although researchers have not thoroughly explored this phenomenon. The research lacks clarity towards identifying which cultural modifications between different cinematic periods become most evident onscreen and how filmmakers either support existing societal frameworks or subvert them. The absence of thematic analysis on selected films demonstrates why researchers should conduct studies to understand the intricate connection between cinema and cultural evolution in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

This research examines the representation and management of cultural change in Pakistani cinema throughout its history from 1947 through 2024. This paper studied five films per decade through thematic analysis to reveal how film portrays and influences Pakistan is changing cultural patterns. The research adds important insights into how media platforms affect cultural dialogue because of its contribution to media research. Through this research, we would gain understanding about filmmakers who use motion picture tools either to oppose or assist social transformation projects while shaping public understanding of culture and national identity. The analysis shows how cinema serves as an essential tool for documenting the life stories and social conflicts alongside societal dreams as Pakistan endures rapid societal evolution.

Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyse key cultural transitions depicted in Pakistani films from different decades.
2. To examine the role of cinema in shaping or challenging prevailing cultural narratives in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. What cultural transitions are most visible in Pakistani cinema from 1947 to 2024?
2. How have selected films contributed to or resisted cultural change in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Through its cultural representation cinema contains the social values and struggles together with national aspirations of a society. The medium provides a dual purpose that both represents reality and acts as a tool to mold and redirect popular perception. The field of cinema is known to scholars for its ability to shape what people perceive as true circumstances in society together with their cultural alignments. Film production in Pakistan typically explores different themes about family honour alongside morality and nationalism combined with familial values among the national cultural story (Sarwar et al., 2024).

Cinema and Cultural Representation

Cinema serves as a powerful medium through which societies express, negotiate, and critique cultural norms, identities, and transitions. As a cultural artefact, cinema mirrors societal values, challenges traditional constructs, and offers narratives that can both preserve and transform collective consciousness. In the context of Pakistan, cinema has functioned not only as a source of entertainment but also as a reflective space for cultural ideation and contestation. Through character portrayals, storylines, dialogue, and symbolic representations, films present cultural identities and social dynamics that resonate with the lived experiences of audiences (Zhou & Iftikhar, 2024). By examining cinema through this lens, researchers can uncover layers of meaning related to gender roles, class structures, religious ideologies, and national identity.

Historical Overview of the Pakistani Film Industry

Immediately after Pakistan gained independence in 1947 the Lollywood film enterprise started up and established its centre of operations in Lahore. The initial fifty years running from 1950s through 1970s represent the peak of Lollywood's achievements because they featured deep narratives and outstanding musical compositions with societal themes. Paid entertainment and cultural manifestation found their primary outlet in the thriving motion picture industry (Yousaf et al., 2017). The Pakistani film industry suffered a major downturn in the 1980s and during the 1990s because it endured censorship from political powers combined with Islamization policies along with inadequate facilities and illegal distribution of Indian films.

Pakistani cinema faced additional difficulties in the 2000s until a new cinematic revival emerged in the middle of the 2010s, which became known as the "New Wave" period. Current Pakistani cinema steered its way toward handling complex social matters through enhanced storytelling techniques and technological advancements and urban audience backing. The film industry adapts and develops in sync with the changing cultural, political, and social trends in Pakistani society, as it exists today.

The Pakistani film industry known as Lollywood demonstrates the national social political cultural development through film from 1947 to the present. During the early post-independence era between the late 1940s and 1960s Pakistan released its first film titled *Teri Yaad* (In your memory) alongside *Shaheed* (Martyrdom) which depicted patriotic content alongside moral values focused on national sacrifice and family honour. The 1960s and 1970s became a time when creativity surged together with glamor and romantic atmosphere (Rehman, 2016). The cinematic landmarks of Pakistani film history included *Armaan* (1966) with its contemporary romantic storytelling and modern music and *Aina* (1977) which told a melodramatic tale depicting social class differences. The entertainment industry delivered people an escape route yet simultaneously it subliminally handled societal discussions on social strata alongside male-female dynamics and the modern versus conventional value systems (Cooper, 2020).

A transformative era occurred during the 1970s and 1980s because General Zia-ul-Haq introduced political instability and launched the Islamization policy. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the action films *Maula Jatt* (1979) and *Sher Khan* (1981) dominated Pakistani cinema screens while portraying rural masculine characters in feudal conflicts and vengeance stories. The energetic motion pictures served dual functions because viewers interpreted them as anti-authoritarian defiance while simultaneously reinforcing traditional patriarchal traditions (Nizami, 2023). The decade of the 1990s brought an artistic and financial downturn to the Pakistani film industry. Two major movies of the time *Choorian* (1998) and *Ghar Kab Aao Gay* (2000) achieved success yet failed to deliver complex storytelling beyond simple storylines marking a regression in creative and thematic growth.

The initial revival of Pakistani cinema started during the early 2000s through the release of *Khuda Kay Liye* (2007) which addressed extremist beliefs and Pakistanis' problem of identity after 9/11 events took place. Through *Ramchand Pakistani* (2008), viewers witnessed how border conflicts became human by following the story of a Hindu boy who stayed unjustly confined across the India-Pakistan border. *Bol* (2011) explored controversial topics about gender equality and family honour systems and transgender identities that led to widespread public arguments. The period from 2014 to 2016 saw *Dukhtar* (*Daughter*) handling child marriage and maternal courage but both *Actor in Law* (2016) and *Na Maloom Afraad* (*Unknown Person*, 2014) teamed up to use comic satire that analysed legal problems as well as urban challenges and official corruption (Shahzadi & Ahmad, 2018). Modern film productions surpass laws that previously governed the film industry. Director Shanavas Manoj handed Verna to audiences in 2017 as a hybrid analysis of sexual violence cultures and wrongful blaming of victims yet *Zindagi Tamasha* (*Life Circus*) encountered censorship that year through both themes of religious falseness and public persecution. *Joyland* (2022) became the initial Pakistani film to explore gender identity and sexual oppression in traditional Pakistani society.

The storytelling techniques of *Kamli* (2022) and Ishrat *Made in China* (2022) use artistic methods and psychological elements to tell their respective stories. Pakistan's motion picture sector began its history by showing national pride through conventional content then evolved through the years into a tool, which analyses societal issues while also becoming a stage for marginalized groups and cultural evolution (Nizami, 2023). The archive acts as a cultural storage facility and propels social development across Pakistani society. This part reviews earlier academic research about cultural transformations and Pakistani film industry through thematic investigation and related qualitative methodologies.

The research paper "*Cinema and Society: Film and Social Change in Pakistan*" was authored by Ali Khan and Ali Nobil Ahmad and published through Oxford University Press (2016). The study establishes its main objective to research how Pakistani cinema has developed while reflecting both cultural standards and political ideologies and shaping social values. The investigation focused on evaluating five major themes including gender roles, nationalism, urbanization, Islamic identity, and resistance. In his paper "*Exploration into Pakistani cinema: Introduction*" Ahmed (2016) investigates how political transformations together with

globalization affect Pakistani cinematic storytelling. Fewer people watch local films and this trend has worsened the downward decline because Pakistan produced more than 100 movies per year between the 1960s and 1980s yet the new millennium recorded only around 20 productions per year.

Masood and Bilal (2024) published "*The Socio-Cultural Identities of Local Films and Reception on Global Platforms*". This historical research examines how nationalism, gender, and ethnic groups appear in Pakistani film storytelling through thematic analysis. A change in Pakistani local film culture has been brought about by the resurgence of the local film industry in the last 20 years due to the emergence of digital technologies, and certain efforts have been made to use this medium to make a sociocultural influence. It is necessary to look into how local films are received on international platforms, even though they reflect the sociocultural identities of society. The research's conclusion indicates that local films will be promoted on international platforms to generate creative capital if creative input is paired with fresh concepts and modern digital technology.

Rizwan (2023) presents the study "*Outside the imagined community: Pashtun subjects in contemporary Pakistani cinema*". This paper presents an analysis of *Khuda kay Liye (In the Name of God)* (2007), *Jawani Phir Nahi Aani (Youth will not Come Again)* (2015), and *Karachi Se Lahore* (2015) to demonstrate how the national cinematic system supports the Pashtun/Punjabi binary. Through these films the Pashtun people perish from national representation because Pakistani society remains fearful of regional terrorism and the failure to unite nationally as one identity and the enduring divisions among different ethnic groups.

Sadiq et al. (2025) conducted a research study titled "*Women Portrayal in Contemporary Pakistani Films*" to determine how Pakistani films show women and identify beneficial and disadvantageous elements in their depiction. A qualitative study and critical discourse analysis are used to examine how women are portrayed in modern films according to specific themes. The findings demonstrate that modern Pakistani films, by addressing their problems and showcasing their hardships in a male-dominated society, support women's strong position in society and help to positively portray them. The women in this movie age overcome social barriers and accomplish their aspirations for emancipation. This study focuses on the feminist discourse around women's representation in modern film, which aims to create more equitable gender representation in movies to inform and inspire viewers. By lowering patriarchal attitudes, the study benefits women in society and creates new opportunities for cinema research. Additionally, it would make it easier for moviegoers to create policies that support fair gender representations in films and effectively use this medium to solve the problems facing Pakistani women.

Theoretical Framework

The Media Representation Theory serves as the research foundation because it demonstrates that films along with all media texts manufacture reality through their choice of presentation and their ideological perspectives. Stuart Hall explains that media representation creates meaning by using language together with imagery and symbols (Hall, 2024). The analysis considers Pakistani movies as texts that establish stories, which explore cultural elements and identity structures alongside social transformations. Through the content of films, audiences can understand how societies perform their roles as well as normalize their established customs alongside their developing changes. Through creative filmmaking processes, filmmakers exercise active meaning-development that includes selecting themes alongside characters and scenarios to support or oppose prevailing ideologies (Rojek, 2009). Through this theoretical method, the research analyses how Pakistani films during various decades have presented cultural adaptations and what effect their depictions have had on public opinions and traditional norms.

Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative methodology using thematic data analysis to study cultural changes that appear in selected Pakistani movies. Thematic analysis allows for the identification of recurring cultural motifs, character archetypes, and narrative structures that reflect societal values and changes over time.

The selection criteria for films include commercial success, critical acclaim, and cultural relevance. One significant film was chosen from each decade, representing the major cinematic trends and cultural discourses of its time. The films selected are:

Table 1
Selected Films

Decade wise	Films:
1947–1959	*Laary (False Promises)*
1960–1969	*Yakky Wali (Coach Woman)*
1970–1979	*Armaan (Desire)*
1980–1989	*Aaina (Mirror)*
1990–1999	*Hum Dono (Both of us)*
2000–2009	*Jeeva (An individual Soul)*
2010–2019	*Khuda Kay Liye (In the Name of God)*
2020–2025	*Bol (Speak)*
2020–2025	*London Nahi Jaunga (I will not go to London)*
2020–2025	*Daghabaaz Dil (Deceitful Heart)*

Data Analysis and its Interpretation

The thematic analysis of the selected films reveals several dominant cultural themes: gender roles and family values, modernity versus tradition, religious and ethnic identities, and the impact of urbanization and globalization. Coding sheet for thematic analysis is given below:

Table 2
Cultural Transitions of Films

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Code Description / Definition
Cultural Transition	1. Tradition vs Modernity	Conflict or coexistence between traditional values and modern lifestyles (e.g., dress, education, gender roles).
	2. Urbanization & Migration	Depiction of rural-to-urban migration, life in cities, or village abandonment.
	3. Changing Gender Roles	Representation of evolving roles of women and men in society, workspaces, and families.
	4. Globalization & Western Influence	Influence of Western culture on language, fashion, values, and aspirations.
	5. Religious and Sectarian Shifts	Representation of evolving religious practices or tensions, religious identities, or extremism.
	6. Technology and Media Penetration	Influence of social media, mobile phones, TV, and modern technology on daily life and youth.

Cultural Themes in Pakistani Cinema through the Lens of Media Representation Theory

The movies produced by Pakistan function as an influential medium to build cultural narratives and defend established norms and occasionally challenge them and therefore they serve as a prime location for representing media performance theory. Media functions more than as a mirror of reality by constructing reality through purposeful choosing what to present alongside considerations of how to frame content as well as by continuous repetition of elements (Xuepei & Bohier, 2021). Different cultural patterns dominate within the framework of Pakistani cinema. Movie characters reflect essential identities such as nationalities or ethnicities and rural or social class background as these group affiliations remain fundamental themes throughout films. Gender representation surfaces as an important theme because traditional hegemonic masculine characters and underrepresented feminine ones dominate the screen space but contemporary Pakistani cinema introduces alternative narratives, which disrupt patriarchal traditions.

Pakistani movies illustrate the complex partnership existing between its cultural evolution and societal relations. Since the media defines nearly every discourse based on the relationship between nation and culture,

it plays an ideological role in the evolution of Pakistani society. The Pakistani film industry requires cultural approval before it can display forbidden content such as violent abuse sequences and sexual elements as well as religious conflicts between sects. To a certain degree, the Pakistani film industry is likewise making every effort to raise awareness through cinema. Over the years, movies have evolved from first promoting national values to increasingly becoming platforms for opposing ideologies. Themes in screen media have been greatly impacted by a number of reasons, including social movements, political events, and technological advancements. The debut of internationally popular films and female directors. These films offer remedies in addition to presenting ideologies in a global framework.

Gender Roles and Family Values

Pakistani films present both conventional family traditions and gender portrayals in their stories together with breaking traditional social trends. Rehman (2016) employed Jorgensen and Philips' (2002) Discourse Theory to analyse the discourse of gender, religion, and culture in the films. Yousuf et al. (2017) used the socialist notion of feminism as their framework to examine the problems with patriarchal ideologies and how women are portrayed. In her review, Pakala (2017) claims that the film is thought provoking and touches on a wide range of topics that are extremely important to the world. Since their inception, filmmakers have known movies function powerfully as cultural records to track both how societies transform socially and historically and to provide entertainment. Women in *False Promises (Laary)* and *Coach Woman (Yakky Wali)* perform domestic work and fully accept traditional gender roles in contemporary film viewing.

Film directors subtly or subtly put components of present-day social and political conditions into their work thus making motion pictures valuable resources for understanding societal changes. In order to deduce a discursive event, the analyst examines the discourse within a broader framework of social relations. Cultural gender stereotypes between men and women are produced by the gender-based storytelling conventions that society has established thanks to the media representation theory. As a kind of social control, it also highlights the distinction between discourse and other social practices. It is predicated on historical, social, and political context. Screen audiences from the 1970s to 1980s watched *Arman (Desire)* and *Aaina (Mirror)* while these films depicted proper female characters although their main plots cantered on love and family values.

The current Pakistani film sector analyses gender relations through its release of *Bol (Speak)* and *Daghabaz Dil (Deceitful Heart)*. The character Zainab fights Pakistani patriarchy in *Bol (Speak)* by declining familial dominance. With films like *Khuda kay Liye* (*In the Name of God*) (2007) that feature complex subjects, the Pakistani film industry is not that ancient when it comes to a new cinematic renaissance. Because these film scenes demonstrate how society moved from rigid social conventions to a critical examination of old gender roles, toxicological production in Pakistan has experienced social change. From the stance that the media uses the universal language of English to propagate and instil beliefs around the world. The two aspects of globalization and the use of English as a discourse of power in Pakistani media are the focus of this study. Throughout the years, the national film industry has preserved Pakistan's cultural heritage by showcasing memories from the past while projecting upcoming prospects.

Modernity vs. Tradition

Since its beginning, Pakistani cinematic history has shown modern values conflicting with traditional values. The significance of national cinema in shaping the cultural and social norms of a nation-state and establishing shared objectives for advancement, harmony, and education has, in fact, never been fully appreciated. Movie production in early Pakistani cinema demonstrated positive support for cultural tradition but treated modern trends with scepticism. Because of how movies are made and performed, people prefer to watch movies in theatres. The characters in Hum Dono and Jeeva suffered inner conflict because they had to choose between honouring family duties and accepting contemporary freedoms in cultural life. Background music, sound effects, lights draw in people, and direction, and its people can relate to demonstrations about their lives. Pakistani movies under modern globalization and Westernization display characters uniting cultural ethics with modern influences in *London Nahi Jaunga (I will not go to London)* and *Daghabaz Dil (Deceitful Heart)*. Media representations help us view the cultural conflict between organizations, which defend ancestral cultural heritage, and those promoting change in society. It is true that there is a special and potent relationship between societal culture and human conduct in films. Music together with urban imagery

serves as visual metaphors, which lyricists use alongside costume design elements to represent the dual character of keeping traditional values and modern practices.

Religious and Ethnic Identities

Although this occasionally results in the creation of stereotypes, Islamic beliefs and regional customs are depicted in Pakistani films through a variety of imaginative techniques. The movie's plot projects several scenes, and the characters travel around, symbolizing the ethnoscape. Pakistani filmmakers are unable to pursue unusual movie subjects due to strict censorship regulations. Thus, by showing these three "escapes," the movie illustrates how globalization has affected Pakistani cinema. As they examine Islamic identity across societies connected by global relations, the filmmakers of *Khuda Kay Liye (In the Name of God)* employ guidance to help viewers understand religious fanaticism. The world has become a global village due to globalization, and as a result, the beliefs of one country, race, or society spread throughout the world, much like the aforementioned ideologies are portrayed in the movie and exist in both the east and the west.

Through the depiction of Mansoor and Mary and additional characters, the film demonstrates Muslimism to reveal religious boundaries along with promoting religious values for human social connections. Established film faces censorship limitations on political and national themes because the centralized board uses bureaucratic procedures to prevent critics against establishment policies and conduct. Using subtlety *Yakky Wali (Coach Woman)* conveyed ethnic diversity of Pakistan through her choices of language and costume design and filming spots across the country. The necessity for self-censorship among film professionals led them to minimize their work by producing melodramas that contain social commentary. These films provide mainly two options by representing ethnic differences through media or presenting a unified ethnic bond between communities. During recent years, the depiction of ethnic groups in films has improved but minority communities still face difficulties because filmmakers fail to show truthful representations of reality. The investors seek safety so the filmmakers maintain profitability through a proven model that combines family-friendly tragic social themes with songs and comedic situations.

Urbanization and Globalization

Film industry productions within Pakistan changed through substitution of traditional local content because of globalization patterns together with urbanization trends. Profitable entertainment concepts from filmmakers involve family-directed tragic social themes combined with songs and comedic moments to generate sales success that satisfies investors. Pakistani film production in its initial period depicted rural areas through traditional families who upheld values of honour and family connections and lived together as one collective unit. At the same time, the World Wide Web and other information technologies depicted in the movie have made technology a worldwide phenomenon. Throughout well-known images, poignant concepts about others and ourselves are conveyed through cinematic narrative. As urbanization advanced, new films emerged to tell urban stories that cantered on the experiences of young people being separated from their families and the problems that arise between them and their families. Like Masood and other Pakistani/Muslims in the movie, ethnicity is a current concern for the majority of people who are transnational or diasporic.

The film series containing two distinct characters depicts traditional Pakistani family values through their London living dilemmas in *Jeeva (An Individual Soul)* and *London Nahi Jaunga (I will not go to London)*. The film *Daghabaz Dil (Deceitful Heart)* reveals Western fashion trends together with international sites while integrating elements related to cross-cultural interaction throughout its demonstration of globalization. Notably, all of the previously examined material was chosen because it accurately captures the critical discourse grounded in the theoretical framework. According to the media representation theory, social transformation rates have an impact on how visual narrative components and movie content are portrayed. These days, the media revolution teaches us about the importance of the media industry while providing us with recognition and career chances. The production and distribution of media and its images on a worldwide scale is known as media escape. In essence, it is a portrayal of the world as the media see it.

Nationalism and Social Justice

Cinema builds support structures for traditional guidelines even as it provokes change against them. Cultural representation in cinema refers to the way different cultures, ethnicities, and identities are portrayed

in films. The movie selection offers communities a venue to preserve cultural customs while holding onto heritage building blocks despite rising worldwide globalization. This portrayal plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions and may influence how audiences perceive themselves and others. Contemporary Pakistani cinema uses social justice concepts together with nationalist elements to achieve dual functions of national unity and social evaluation in the entire nation. Film works as a tool to make society more aware about progressive values through their public display of important issues, which leads to progressive mindset changes. Films often tell stories that resonate with specific cultural experiences, providing an avenue for communities to express their identity.

The cinematic use of musical and patriotic elements in *Laary (False Promises)* and *Armaan (Desire)* allowed the creation of Pakistani nationalism to unify the state. Both *Bol (Speak)* and *Khuda Kay Liye (In the Name of God)* feature onscreen attacks towards gender bias and dual biases related to religion and economic inequality. These films demonstrate an active stance against contemporary philosophical stories to destabilize dominant beliefs so that society can evolve. The theory of media representation allows cinematic works to reinforce either already dominant political ideas or question prevailing thought systems and their related systems. Increased representation of marginalized groups in cinema helps to challenge stereotypes and broaden societal understanding. Media innovations bring the chance to work professionally along with authorization along with an understanding of the media sector's crucial nature.

Results and Discussion

Many individuals have found that films resonate profoundly, influencing their understanding of their cultural identity. Pakistani film industry displays cultural transformation through evolving gender imagery and growing tension between old customs and modern development and rising acceptance of multiple religious' beliefs and ethnicities. Films offered insights into their own heritage. The film medium stands as a tool that critiques political situations and broader social developments simultaneously with its role as entertainment. Engage in forums or community discussions to exchange views on films. People felt more connected to global cultures through storytelling (Rahim, 2024). Under unstable political circumstances or censorship constraints filmmakers employ allegorical and symbolic techniques to express significant matters without open challenges against governing authorities. Understand the context and backgrounds of the films and their creators. Cinematic portrayals created dialogues around topics of race, identity, and belonging.

At the beginning of the period, family respect and obedience appeared in film content while later productions demonstrated support free speech and social evolution. A comparison of movies made in Pakistan in 1947 compared to 2024 reflects the cultural differences, which existed between these time periods. Cinematic portrayals created dialogues around topics of race, identity, and belonging. Gender role transformations became the foremost social development during that period. Women in False Promises and Coach Woman restricted themselves to family work and displayed modesty while attending to familial responsibilities (Moazzam, 2023). Embracing this diversity in cinema not only enriches the art form itself but also contributes to a more interconnected world. The movie industry stepped up its political involvement in a direct way during the recent years. Crime and corruption serve as the main themes of *Laal Kabootar* (*Red Pigeon*) (2019) as well as other socially oriented films, which address urban violence and system failures in modern society.

An evolutionary transformation occurred in the Pakistani cinematic storyline through the analysis of *Bol (Speak)* and *Daghabaz Dil (Deceitful Heart)* before other subsequent productions. The future of cinema looks promising, with a growing emphasis on diverse voices and narratives. The films present female characters who confront patriarchal structures through resisting traditional female behaviours (Noreen, 2022). The ongoing evolution of cinematic narratives will continue to play a crucial role in how cultures are perceived and celebrated globally.

Cinema holds significant power in shaping cultural representation and influencing societal norms. By promoting diverse stories and authentic portrayals, film can foster understanding, empathy, and inclusivity. Current Pakistani films deliver *London Nahi Jaunga (I will not go to London)* as part of several productions that present Western cultural themes together with multicultural stories. As audiences demand more authentic stories, filmmakers are increasingly aware of their responsibility in cultural representation. Modern movie

productions showcase the social cultural transition of Pakistan as it develops relationships with the global community. Throughout history, religious and ethnic themes have developed different patterns of evolution within society. The initial movies portrayed religion through its authoritative role and guidance functions, which conveyed a single dominant religious lesson.

Khuda Kay Liye (In the Name of God) alongside *Bol (Speak)* achieved comprehension in eliminating homogeneous cinematic representations by focusing on both religious factions and post-9/11 religious extremism and identity crises. The cultural image of Pakistan received positive momentum because Pakistani film distributors stopped allowing Indian films to play in their market. The movies sparked national conversations in Pakistan about religious misuse and authoritarian control practices and their importance in acceptance of various faiths. The recent Pakistani film slate since the 1990s shows urban development and globalization through *Jeeva (An Individual Soul)* and *London Nahi Jaunga (I will not go to London)*.

The introduction of digital technology along with global streaming platforms has caused Pakistani cinema to reach its largest international audience in history. The widespread globalization process has enabled Pakistani filmmakers to fuse Western storytelling methods with their traditional local themes. The film industry showcases *Cake* (2018) and *Joyland* (2022) with a cosmopolitan approach during their examination of regional South Asian issues. Through cinematic portrayals, the films illustrate the rural-to-urban migration of people as they navigate their new social status against traditional cultural practices and international trending behaviour (Nizami, 2023). Local films face a challenge for popularity against Bollywood and Hollywood productions because these industries control what younger viewers find appealing. While this has led to improved production quality and innovative storytelling, it has also sparked debates about maintaining indigenous narratives in an era of cross-cultural influence. Increasing foreign locations and metropolitan cities alongside global fashion trends within Pakistani cinema reveal the strong influence of globalization during cultural representation.

Nationalism together with social justice issues consistently appeared in Pakistan's cinematic evolution. As we shall see, exploring melodrama, modernism, and action in the Pakistani setting through comparison and intersection with both close and distant relatives is made possible by stretching the cinematic object of study in these ways, both vertically and sideways. While the later films, such as *Khuda Kay Liye (In the Name of God)* and *Bol (Speak)*, presented more nuanced perspectives on national theology, the earlier Pakistani films told patriotic tales. The disproportionate amount of attention given to Shoaib Mansoor's *Khuda kay Liye/In God's Name* (2007), *Bol/Speak* (2011), and Bilal Lashari's *Waar/War* (2013) is a clear indication of this tendency in Pakistan, despite the relative lack of films that can be characterized and packaged as "big-budget" or "art cinema."

Regardless of their questionable merits, it is easy for a film critic to see how completely these films lack formal and thematic coherence, as well as how they differ from other more truly avant-garde recent independent productions like *Zinda Bhaag (Run Alive)* and Omar Khan's ground-breaking comedy-horror *Zibakhana/Hell's Ground* (2007). Through their narratives, the films serve as social commentary, raising awareness of and advocating for societal change in relation to issues like gender discrimination, religious intolerance, and classism (Khan, 2021). Not all of this makes the country unimportant. Examining the mimetic, parasitic, and syncretic dynamics of Urdu and Punjabi film offers a more complete picture of national specificities without lessening its "*Pakistaniness*". The film industry of Pakistan functions as both representation and creator because it displays national values to its audience although it moulds their perceptions simultaneously. Films achieve this shaping function towards public opinion through character development and dialogues as well as cinematic techniques and symbolic devices.

Conclusion

The research demonstrate that Pakistani cinema creates an expressive means to interpret cultural developments in society. Given that the nation state still defines many of the most crucial aspects of cinematic possibilities through laws, markets, and infrastructures—not to mention social contexts—these are still significant. The nationalist goal of creating culturally distinct populations is still (thankfully) unfinished; many Pakistanis still favour watching "Indian" films over those purportedly in their own language, despite the best efforts of each nation's media and educational systems. It took many years to establish these as legal and

political realities.

The chosen films show Pakistan's cultural transformation through their portrayal of traditional values alongside their confrontations against these norms together with their celebration of modernity as well as their support for patriarchy. The presented research outcomes create vital implications about media systems as well as societal landscapes. Through their creative work, filmmakers have the ability to both scrutinize and transform cultural standards of conduct while cinema viewers use movies for self-awareness along with societal assessment. Research expansion should include regional films alongside television dramas and an examination of audience reactions to complete this study.

Recommendations

This study relies on mainstream cinema exclusively therefore it might disregard alternative storytelling appearing in independent or regional film productions. The substance, forms, and boundaries of "Pakistani cinema" are even more cause for future studies to examine, investigate, and challenge rather than take for granted. Because different researchers may view cultural themes differently, researcher perspective is important while attempting to understand them. Future studies must examine films from a variety of linguistic and regional backgrounds in order to develop a thorough grasp of Pakistani cultural shifts through cinema.

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