

CULTURAL EFFECTS OF CABLE TV ON CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF PROVINCE OF SINDH, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The present study, attempts to measure the influence and subsequently growing tendencies of adaptation of some components of foreign cultural practices related to basic needs like food, dress and shelter on the base of cable television among the children of Sindh province. The researcher adopted quantitative methodology, while survey procedure was used to gauge the opinion of the children of the concern area. Data was collected from 624 respondents of 5th and 8th grade students through questionnaire comprises 76 questions. The area was divided into three broad clusters ie Sukkur, Nawabshah (Now Benazirabad) and Hyderabad, while Statistical package for Social Scientists (SPSS Version15) was used for data analysis of the study.

The study proved strongly the hypothesis that majority of children were found attracted by cable television cultural practices like food, dresses, costumes and house décor especially among the juniors of both genders and Sindhi speaking children in Cable Towns. The results of the study show that on grade basis, the degree of liking was found more among junior graders while on gender basis, the girls showed more liking of strange foods than boys. The liking for foods of other cultures was equally constant among children of both ethnic groups. For the dresses of other cultures shown on television, a mix trend came across. The same ratio was in the dress liking, customs and culture practices among the Sindhi children.

Keywords: Cable television, culture, food, dress, customs, effects, ethnicity, Sindh province

Introduction

Communication experts now believe that media have a great power to influence public. The great potential of television on societal changes leads pros and cons. The pro views television as a means of education and socialization of positive values among society. On the other hand, the con views television as a dangerous threat, which decreases moral and makes other destructive things. In general, those controversies can be classified into three categories; first, television programs can damage the existed moral values, second, television strengthens the existed moral values, third, television creates new values in society including children.

Rana (2004), in his study on Cultural Communication and Protection of Value System Through Television in Pakistan found that there was a common perception among broadcasters and policy makers that television can

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generate or promote desirable or undesirable social and cultural trends and it has an influence in negotiating ideas of modernity in the country. He pointed out two facts: one, state television has lost its credibility due to excessive control, and non-professional attitude. And the other, that satellite channels have greatly affected Pakistani society both socially and culturally. He found that state television was a major contributor in creating political frustrations among and have generated negative reactions towards religious and ethical values through its programs, while on other hand; satellite television has introduced a wave of new ideas, openness and promiscuity in the society.

It has come up with a wave of information on national and international events providing people opportunity to verify and check the truth spontaneously. He further suggests that in Pakistani society, abrupt changes introduced by satellite television are not easy to digest. The changing role of woman, children and youth is not culturally embedded- it is perceived as a direct off shoot of foreign alien influence thrown by satellite TV channels. He concludes that satellite broadcast have developed new set of relations with Pakistani society, has created a hybrid of ultra-new and traditional culture and indigenous meshing with global. It has emerged as complex set new traits which are not grounded in the social fabric of the society, while state TV has not risen to satellite challenges.

Pervaiz (2003) in his study on “Implications of Communication Technology for Pakistan” examined the relationship between cable TV network use and familiarity with Hindi culture. He found that higher exposure of Hindi movies familiarizes the Hindi culture to the viewers.

Literature Review

Summing up the studies, Bryant & Thompson (2002) concluded that ‘findings have indicated that the impact of media may be cognitive; focusing on mind or affective on behavior and attitudes may they be direct or indirect short term, long term, intermittent (e.g., sleeper effects) or gradually build up. Consumers react to messages according to their back ground and predispositions.’

According to the Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology (2002) the influence of culture on media and vice versa has grown increasingly difficult as for message the barriers of space have fallen; adding one more dimension to problem is that source of ideas and style is urban life of the few cities of advanced countries such as London, New York or Bombay but movies are released for worldwide consumption subjecting audience of entirely different codes to values such as individualism, commercialism and romanticism and that creates mental chaos.

Waisbord (1998) concludes that “These were dangers that put Latin America in 1970s, at the forefront of discussion regarding the consequences of flow of communication for national culture. But things are different and nations are less worried about the danger to national identity created by media onslaught”. Media is not seen as much menace and perhaps the reason is its potentiality for projection of culture as Brazilian scholar Jose Marques de Melo (1995) observed that Bramilians would not have that much confidence of themselves stemming from projection of their culture at global level that they feel capable of forging ahead.

In the same way, two of major studies were conducted in Latin America by Jesus Martin-Barbero and Nestor Garcia-Canclini. Jesus Martin-Barbero (1993) said that in exertion of influence by media on shaping norms and perception of life has not escaped notice of scholars. Many have even concluded that life in urban and rural cities is life created by media and Nestor also supported the observations.

Telenovelas in Brazil have expended intellectual and cultural horizons of people; women know that they have alternative role to perform and LaPastina (2004) observed difference in paradigm of social interaction and sharpened self-image. Kottak (1990) found through data from segregated corners in Brazil that perception on gender had a liberal tilt regarding domestic role and responsibilities in work place.

Jamias (1993) summarized a review on new communication technologies and cultural identity that technology does not contain any inherent evilness or goodness; its effects depend on its manipulation but people should also be informed regarding their needs so that they can be discerning in use of information they obtain from media. It further stated that popular aspirations find their way into mass media programs as quest for space resulted in 'Star Trek' which responded to American dream of diversity within their expansive culture.

Varma (2000) in his cross-cultural studies found that Indian exposed to western movies were more liberal and closer to western values than their own.

In a study, Dr Barbra Mitra (2005) concluded that the 23 dress patterning changes in favor of western styles and consumers of TV gave up their traditional style and adopted exotic one.

Meyerowitz J. (1985) said that face impression, dressing and the way feelings are conveyed are improved due to media as focus of media is on visual than rational thoughts.

Montgomery (1989) adds that television has serious implication for traditional values; program are often bordering on indecency and indiscriminate viewing can undermine character that are especially in formative phase. Topic those were taboos are now discussed and then commented upon by people. Nonviolent groups see TV as injecting violence into society and thus see it as threat.

Richins believe that media is promoting hedonism in society by creating dissatisfaction with standard of living. (Cited in Television Viewing, Satisfaction and Happiness)

In a study on the impact of Cable on perception of female in Pakistan, Zia (2007) has concluded that household activities have changed in terms of style and are adopting dress code foreign to their culture, their priorities have been changed as well women have included watching cable in their daily routine at the expense of other activities; further he discovered that social interaction with family and with society has suffered as people are with their surrogate partner at home and dislike to be interrupted.

In another research by Chang R. (2007), a sample of rural and urban Girls Colleges of Hyderabad district was selected to observe the impact of TV commercials on girls of rural and urban colleges; it was discovered that that

television influenced the living patterns and buying decisions. Girls followed the information gained through TV advertisements.

Similarly, Dahri S. (2005) of Department of Mass Communication, University of Sindh carried out another study on “The Impact of Star Plus Drama ‘Kiyoon ke Saas bhi kabhi bahoo thee’ on the housewives of Tando Wali Muhammad, Hyderabad”. The study found that the drama was affecting the housewives, motivating them for adopting new fashion and luxurious was living leading to destabilizing their normal spending behavior.

Naveed Warsi, (2005) conducted a study on the “Tendency of Pakistani Viewers towards Foreign TV Transmission and their effects on Society.” He found that Pakistanis are anxious viewers of foreign TV channels, especially entertaining programs, but they are well aware of the ill effects of above mentioned programs, and are against the telecast. He found that majority of viewers believe that viewing foreign channels are bringing them away from their attachment with religion. The viewers also believe that foreign channels are also negatively affecting their customs, traditions and ethical values.

Sheikh (2007) attempted to ascertain the influence of satellite television on rural folks. In his thesis, ‘ The Role of Satellite Communications In Traditional Societies: A Case Study of Rural Sindh’, he found that core values were unaffected but outer shell was not immune to cultural onslaught such as traditions and values regarding customs and festivals were same but perception to education, music, decoration of home and cooking became different.

In another study, Zia, A. (2005) concluded that even most of the young people are inclined to watch Cable Television, but significant majority of them do not like the entertainment programs on foreign channels on the grounds of presentation of un matching moral values.

Afshan H., (2000) of Department of Mass Communication, University of Sindh, carried out a research on “The Effects of Cable Television on Young Mothers”. Sample was taken from Usmanabad, Hyderabad. The study found that Cable TV does not affect their routine work, attitude and behavior. Majority of mothers do not find cable TV programs suitable for their children. Interestingly, it was found that they were attracted with the fashion presented on cable channels.

Chaudhry A. W. (2001) reflects in his research the anxiety of parents regarding encroaching influence of cable TV in Pakistan that has enchanted children with its Indian made programs and children are in danger of losing their identity as well as urge to study.

Objectives of the study

- To find out the cultural effects of cable televisions on the children of Sindh province.
- To measure the cultural adoption of children viewers of Sindh province.
- To search the difference between cable and non-cable viewer other culture and fashion adoption of children.
- To determine the factors of adopting of other cultures among the children.
- To find out difference of cultural effects of cable television on the basis of town wise, gender wise, ethnicity

wise and zone wise among the Sindhi children.

Hypothesis

Cable television viewer children experience greater degree of effect on their cultural practices more than the children who watch terrestrial television (PTV).

Methodology

To find out the cultural effects of the cable television on children of Sindh province, the researcher adopted quantitative methodology. To measure the effects of the cable television survey technique was used and data was collected through a devolved questionnaire consists of 76 questions. Through random sampling method, the data was collected from 624 respondents of three locations i.e. Sukkur, Nawabshah (Now Benazirabad) and Hyderabad. As a study focuses on children, the researcher collected data from 5th and 8th class students, while the area was divided into broad section of cable town children and non-cable town children. For the descriptive and inferential statistics, the researcher used Statistical package for Social Scientists (SPSS Version15).

Data analysis and interpretation

Liberet R. and Sparfkin (1988) labeled television as “The Early Window” for children. Advent of cable television has multiplied the impact of this window manifold so much so a mushroom of windows for exposure is now available to the viewer. The viewer is at ease to choose the channel of his choice with his favorite genre and program. This variety has provided an enhanced horizon for researchers to study this process of globalization in different aspects of life. Culture is also a set of values incorporated in the people of a particular area like a string of pearls. The cable television has provided an opportunity to the viewers to peep into the life styles of the people across the globe. Not only to learn, but to alter their own lives with adaptations from other cultures. The question of this adoption of foreign cultures remained focused in the discussions among various sections of society, and still needed to be probed scientifically. As the children are vulnerable to adopt new ideas in programs on television, provide enough ground to investigate the effects of cultural practices of different regions depicted on mini screen. In present study, attempt has been made to study the influence and subsequently growing tendencies of adaption of some components of foreign cultural practices related to basic needs like food, dress and shelter. The findings are as follows:

a) Food:

Table 1: Town & Zone wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign foods

	Sukkur				Nawabshah				Hyderabad			
	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)

Cable Towns	71	12	18	03	69	11	21	03	72	7	19	06
Non Cable Towns	75	5	22	02	62	11	31	00	71	11	17	05

Table 1 shows that in all three zones of Cable and Non Cable Towns, a vast majority of children wishes the cooking of dishes shown in television programs be cooked in their homes. Only a small number of children did not show their liking for foods of different cultures.

Figure 1: Grade wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign foods

(a) Cable Towns

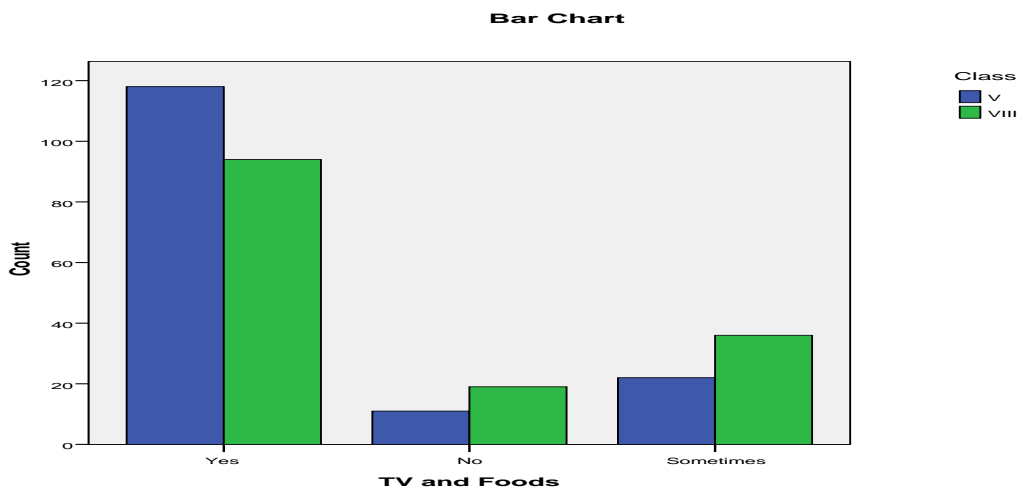


Figure 1 shows that on grade basis, in Cable majority of junior class children are in favor of the cooking of dishes shown in television programs be cooked in their homes. While only a small number of children of both classes do not favor this.

Figure 2: Grade wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign foods

(b) Non Cable Towns

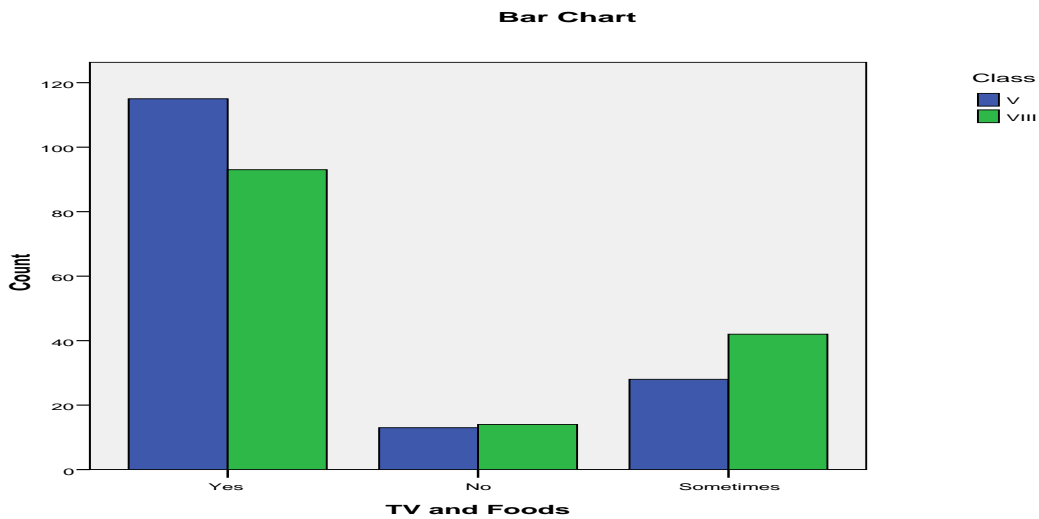


Figure 2 shows that on grade basis, in Non-Cable Towns, majority of junior class children are in favor of the cooking of dishes shown in television programs be cooked in their homes. Whereas, only a small number of children of both classes do not favor this.

Figure 3: Gender wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign foods

(a) Cable Towns

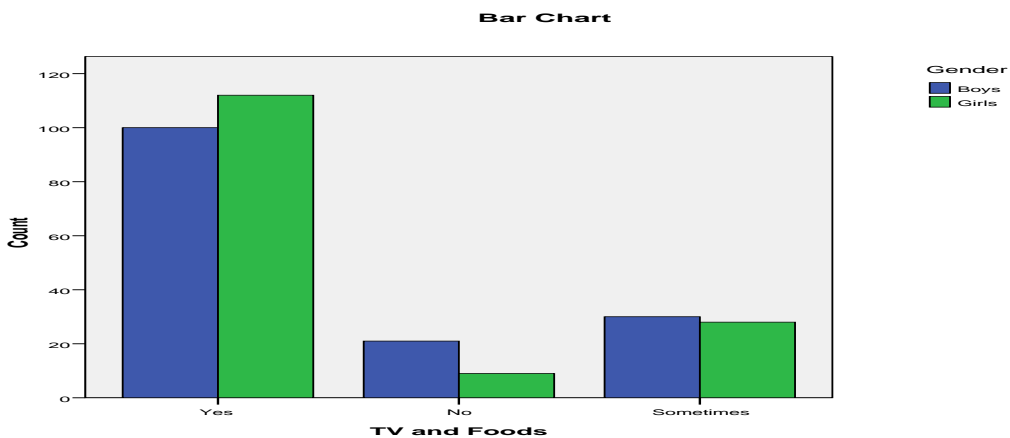


Figure 3 shows that on gender basis, majority of both gender of children in Cable, were showing their liking of the cooking of dishes depicted on television to be cooked in their homes. Even level of liking is found slightly

more among girls. Whereas, only a small number of children of both genders were not in favor of dishes shown on TV. The results show that moderate number of children in both genders were agree for cooking of television food sometimes in their homes.

Figure 4: Gender wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign foods

(b) Non Cable Towns

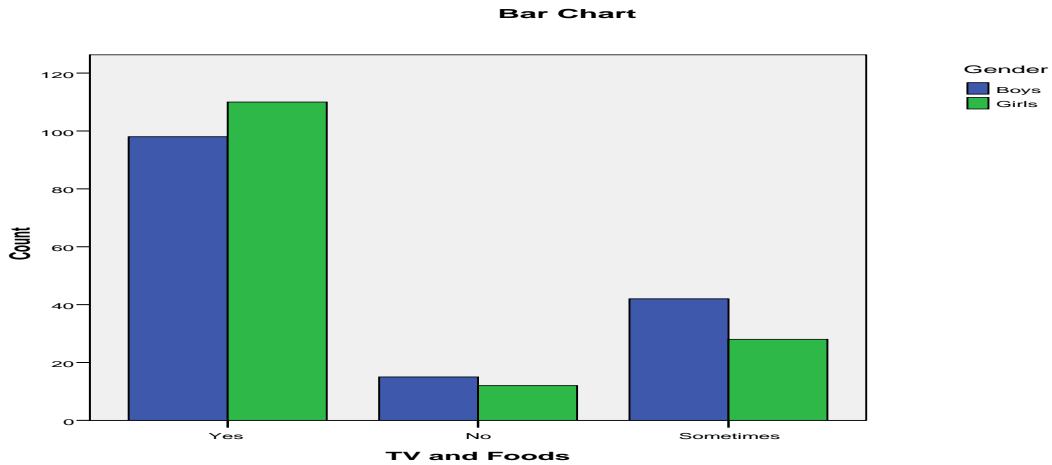
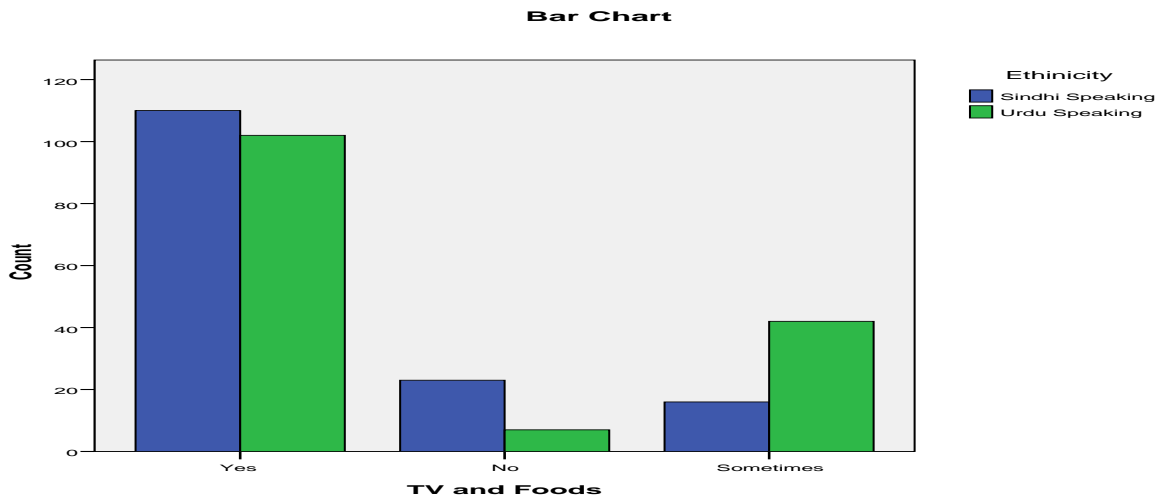


Figure 4 shows that on gender basis, majority of both gender children in non-Cable town, were in showed their likening of the cooking of dishes depicted on television to be cooked in their homes. Even level of likening is found slightly more among girls. Whereas, only a small number of children of both genders were not in favor of dishes shown on TV. The results show that moderate number of children in both genders were agreed for cooking of television food sometimes in their homes.

Figure 5 & 6: Ethnicity wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign foods

(a) Cable Towns



(b) Non Cable Towns

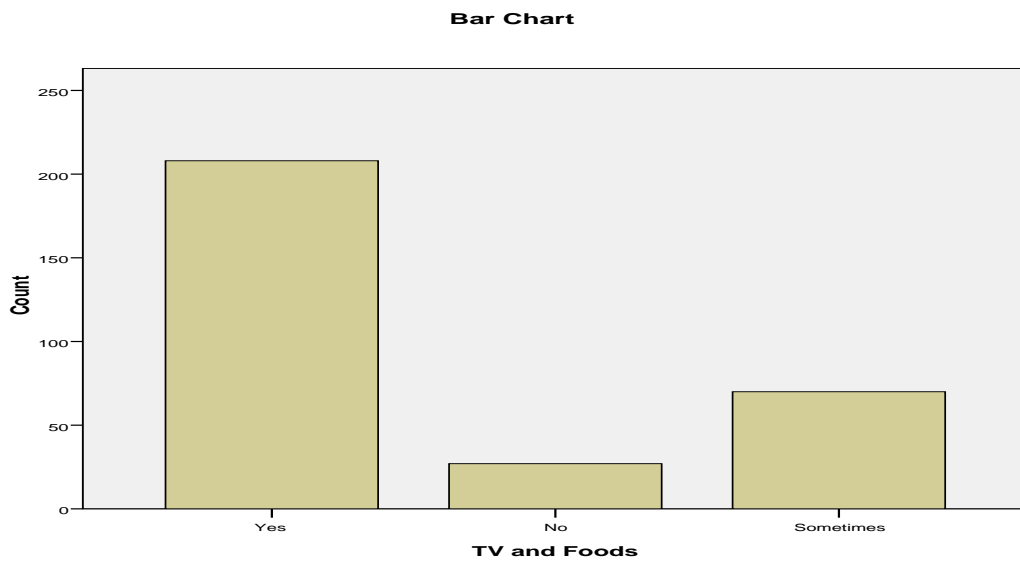


Figure 5 shows that on ethnic basis, in Cable and Non Cable Towns, trends of likening of cooking of dishes shown on television are not much different than those in other variables. The trend show children of two ethnic groups in both Cable and Non Cable Towns like the dishes seen on television to be cooked in their homes.

b) Dressing:

Table 2: Town & Zone wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign dressing

	Sukkur				Nawabshah				Hyderabad			
	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)
Cable Towns	49	36	13	06	35	50	10	09	44	35	21	04
Non Cable Towns	58	11	31	04	50	18	35	01	58	32	12	02

Table 2 shows that in Hyderabad and Sukkur zones of Cable Towns, equal number of children wished to wear the dresses by them as shown in cable television programs except Nawabshah zone, where significant number of children do not prefer to wear foreign dresses.

In non-Cable Towns, interestingly more children have shown their liking for the dresses seen in television programs., while some children have shown their wish to wear the costumes shown on television sometimes.

Figure 7: Grade wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign dressing

(a) Cable Towns

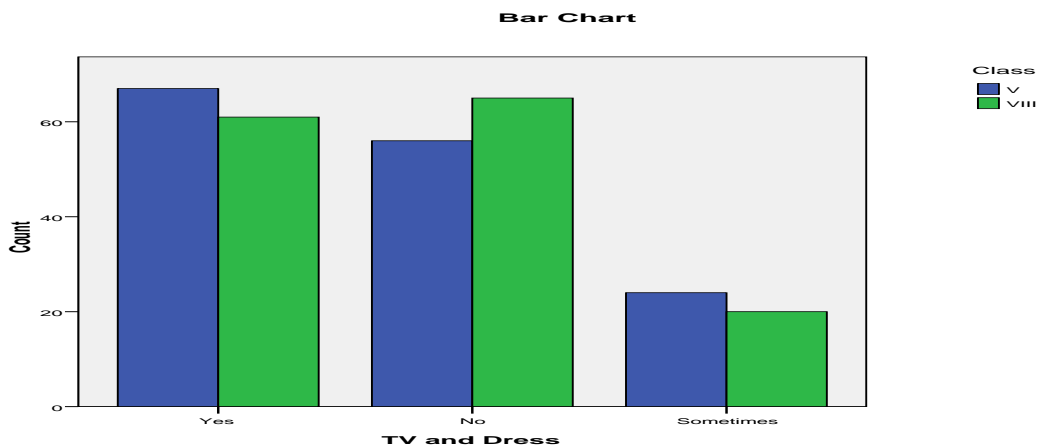
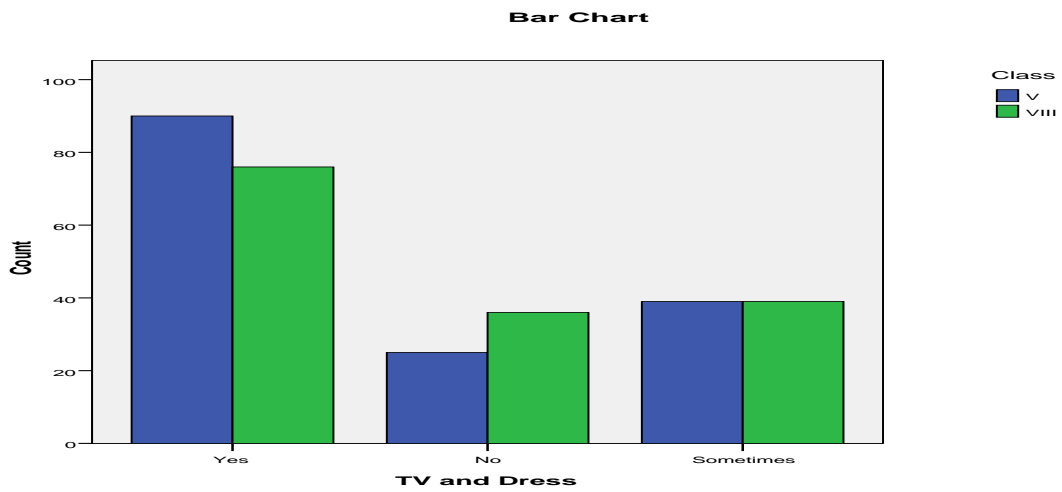


Figure 7 shows that on grade basis, in Cable Towns, equal number of students of junior and senior grade children has shown their liking and disliking to wear the dresses they have seen in television programs than their

seniors. A small number of children have also shown their interest to wear these dresses some times. However, the junior graders are looking slightly more inclined to wear the dresses of other cultures.

Figure 8: Grade wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign dressing

(b) Non Cable Towns



In Non-Cable Towns, on grade basis, the junior graders liked the dresses of other cultures slightly more than senior graders.

Figure 9: Gender wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign dressing

(a) Cable Towns

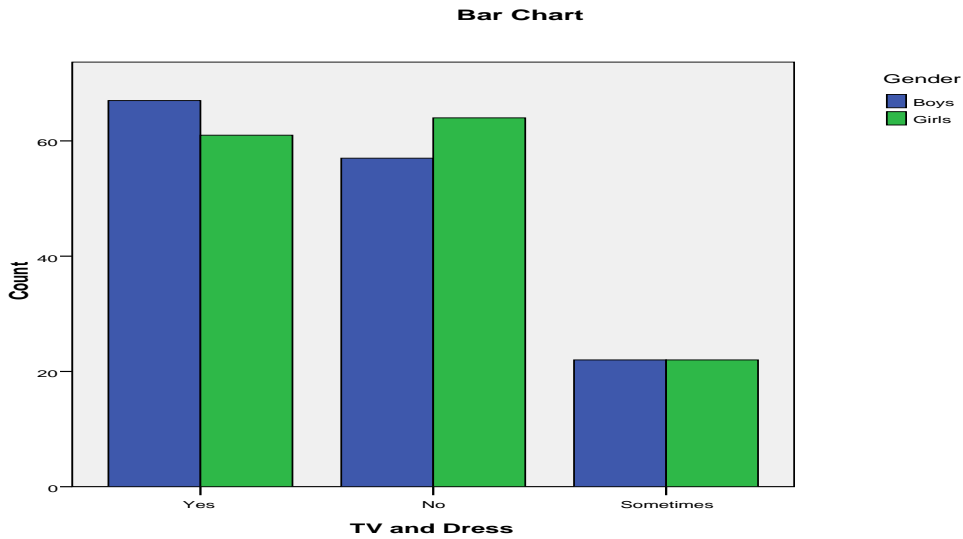


Figure 9 shows that on gender basis, in Cable Towns, mixed trend is seen among both boys and girls about their liking toward wearing dresses shown in cable television programs.

Same trend is seen with small fraction in Non-Cable Towns' children.

Figure 10: Gender wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign dressing

(b) Non Cable Towns

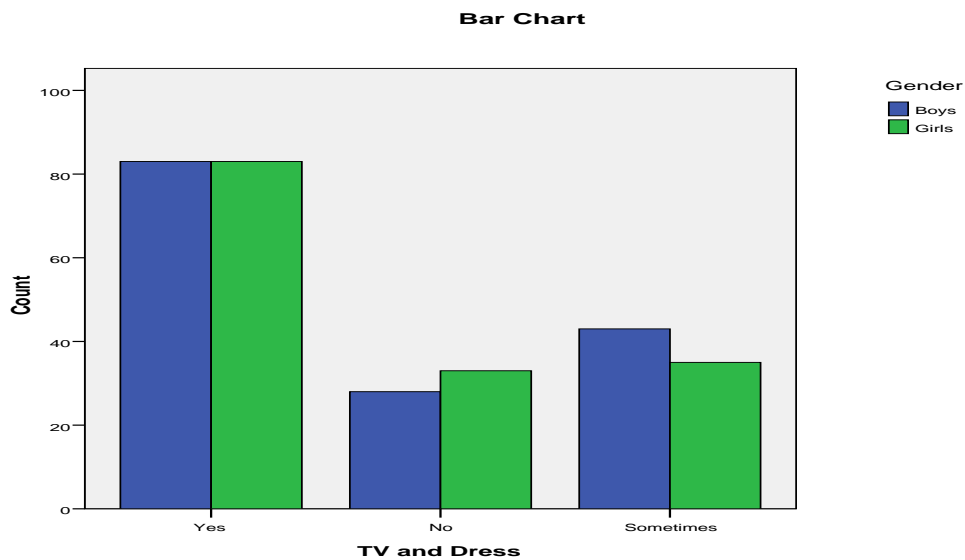


Figure 10 shows that on gender basis, in Non-Cable Towns, mixed trend is seen among both boys and girls about their liking toward wearing dresses shown in cable television programs.

Figure 11 & 12: Ethnicity wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign dressing

(a) Cable Towns

(b) Non Cable Towns

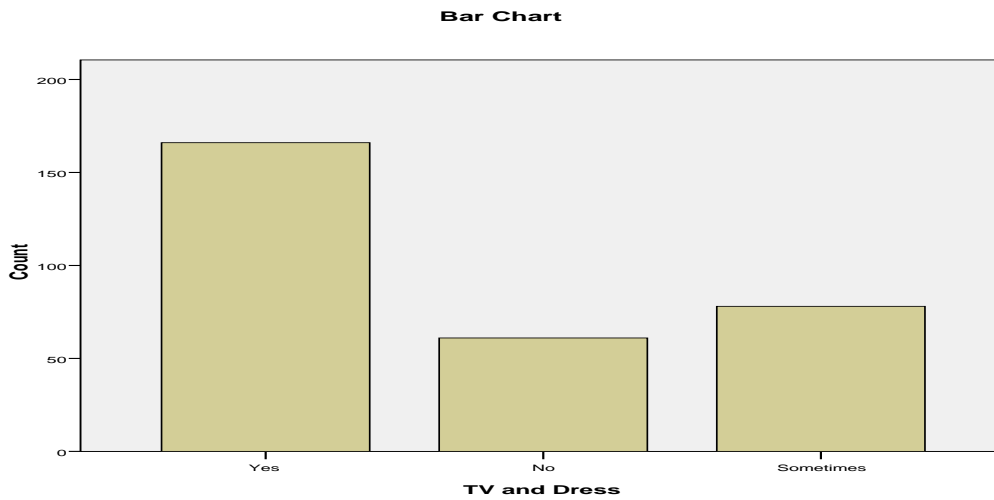


Figure 11 shows on ethnic basis, in Cable Towns, mix trend is seen. Not any significant difference is found among Sindhi and Urdu Speaking children.

While 12 shows that Non Cable Towns responses. The results demonstrate that majority of children liked to wear dresses of different cultures.

c) House décor:

Table 3: Town & Zone wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign house décor

	Sukkur				Nawabshah				Hyderabad			
	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)
Cable Towns	79	12	6	07	60	30	10	04	81	7	12	04

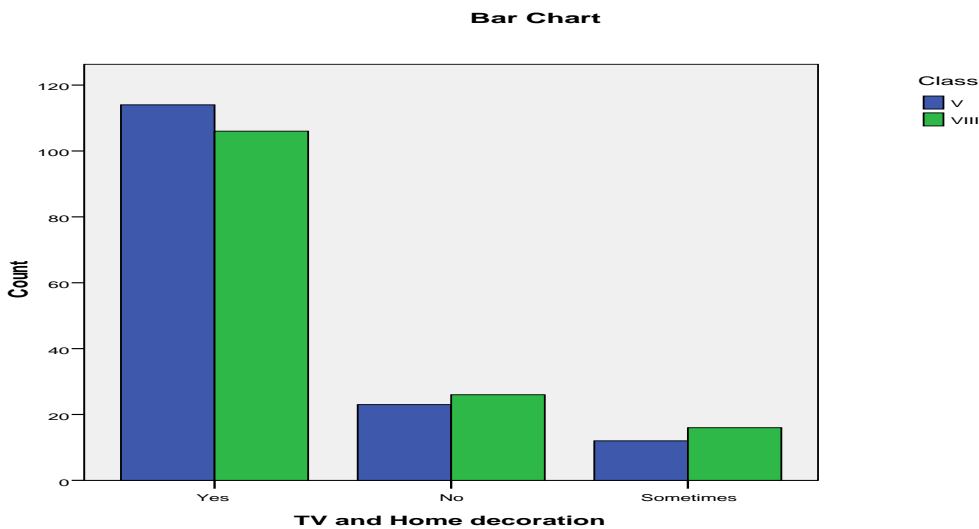
Non Cable Towns	87	1	13	03	87	4	13	00	81	14	8	01
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Table 3 shows that vast majority of children in all three zones like to decor their homes like they have seen in Cable television programs. In Hyderabad zone, positive trend is seen slightly more than other zones, while negative trend is slightly more in Sukkur Zone.

In Non-Cable Towns, same trend was seen among all children in all zones of the region.

Figure 13: Grade wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign house décor

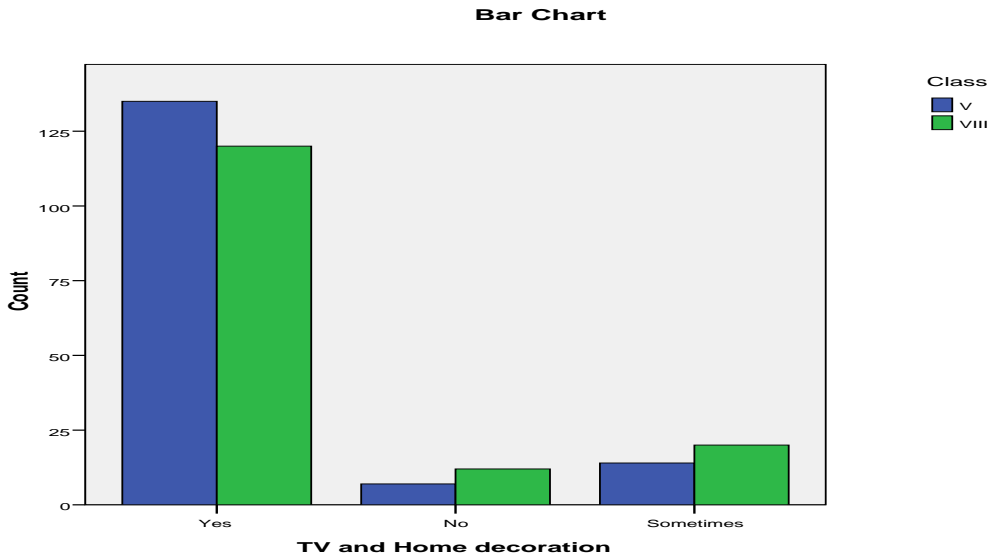
(a) Cable Towns



In Figure 13 on grade basis, results show affirmative response about the home decoration like seen in both graders in Cable, with a slight more liking was found in junior class children in Cable Towns.

Figure 14: Grade wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign house décor

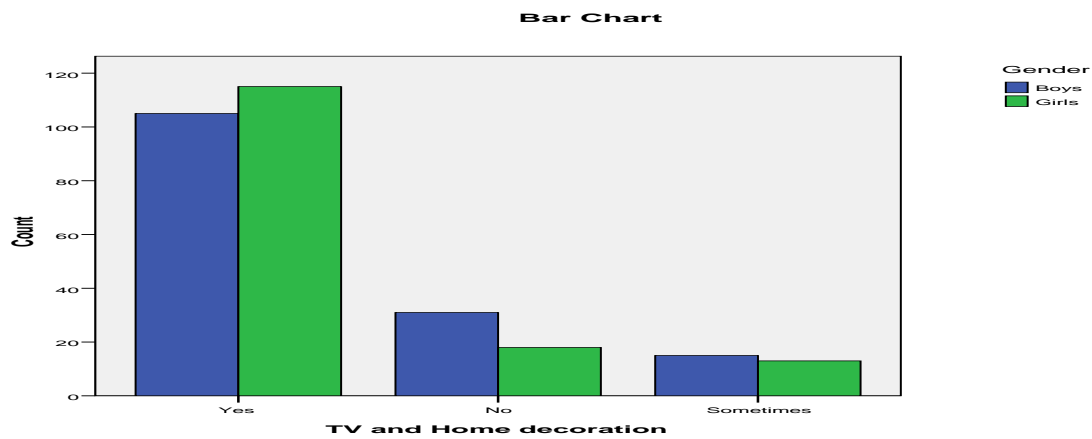
(b) Non Cable Towns



In Figure 14 on grade basis, results show affirmative response about the home decoration like seen in both graders in Non-Cable Towns, with a slightly more liking was found in junior class children in Cable Towns.

Figure 15: Gender wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign house décor

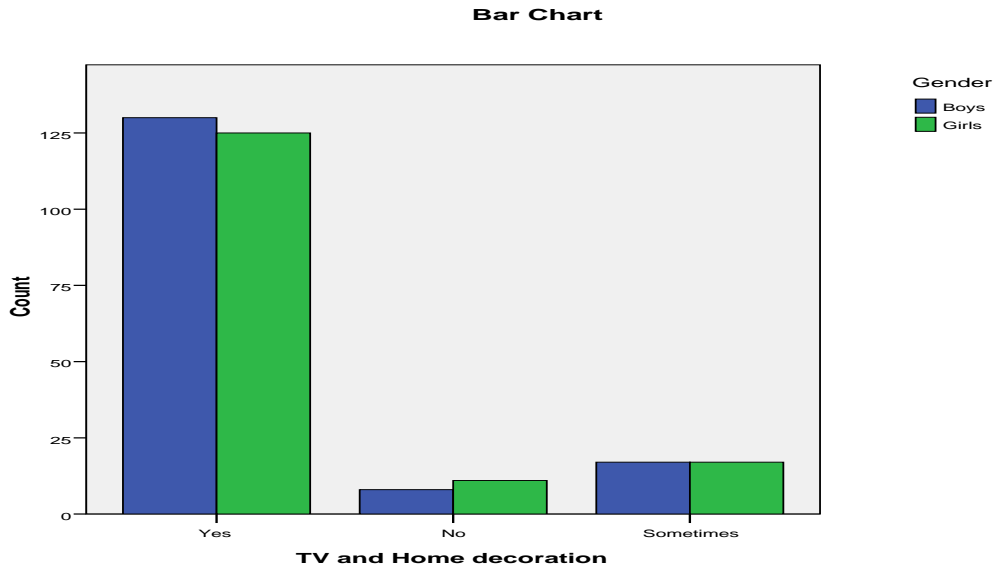
(a) Cable Towns



In Figure 15 on gender basis, results show affirmative response about the home decoration like seen in cable television is slightly more in girls than boys.

Figure 16: Gender wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign house décor

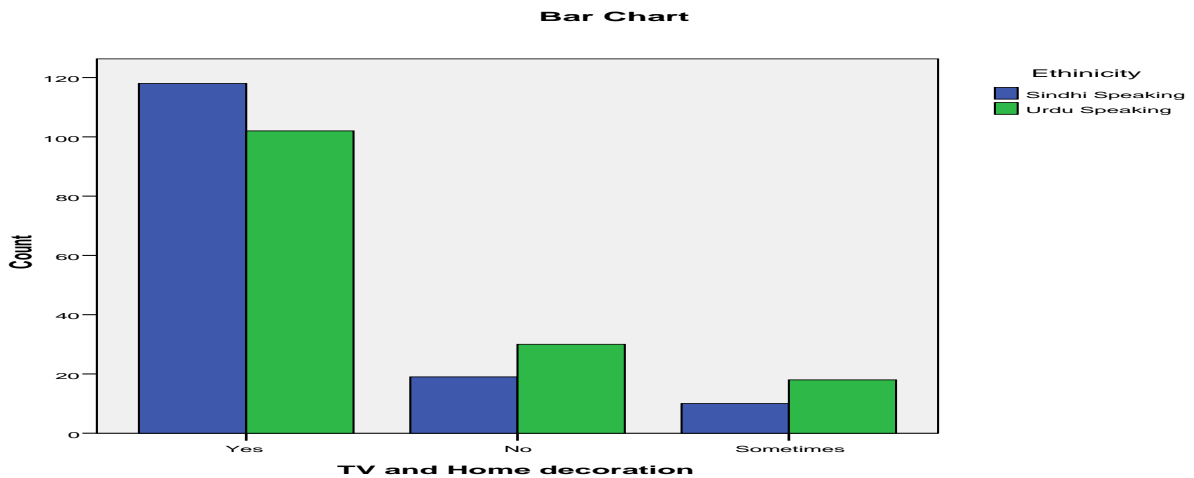
(b) Non Cable Towns



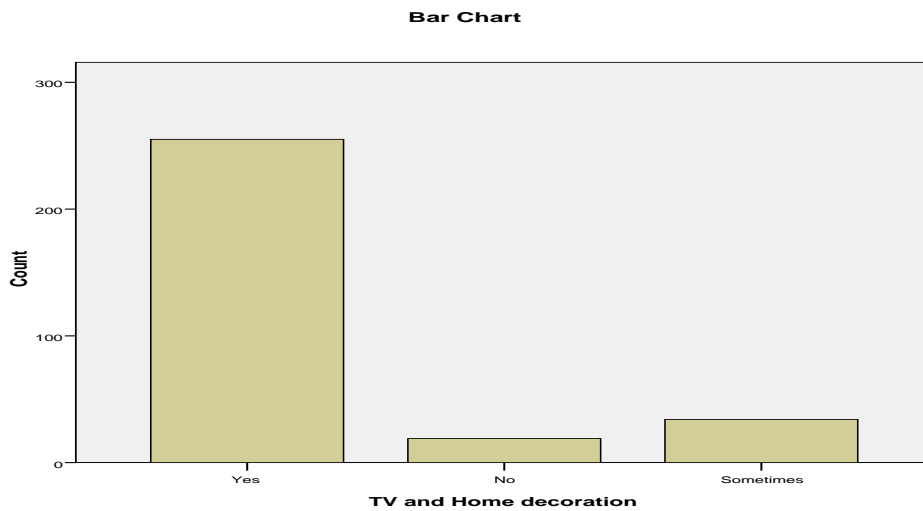
In Figure 16 on gender basis, results show affirmative response about the home decoration like seen in cable television is slightly more in boys than girls.

Figure 17 & 18: Ethnicity wise distribution of responding according to Stimulation for foreign house décor

(a) Cable Towns



(b) Non Cable Towns



In Figure 17 on ethnic basis, results show affirmative response about the home decoration like seen in cable television is slightly more in junior class children. A small number of children in both classes are also in favor of décor their homes as seen on Cable television.

Whereas, the figure 18 exemplify that in non-Cable Towns the same scenario is seen with no significant differences. The same trend was seen in gender and ethic based results.

Discussion

Television has also played a significant role in promotion and alteration of culture. Pakistan is basically a multi-cultural country. PTV (i.e. terrestrial television) depicts a variety of programs in respect of cultural practices like food, dressing and house decoration and other aspects of the life of folks of various provinces. This provides enough exposure to children viewing television to become aware of tastes of eating, wearing and living of the people of the various parts of country.

On the other hand, the children with cable television confront an additional influence of exposure of variety of cultural practices of the people around the world. They have an access to a number of channels with different genres from news to fashion, from history to sports, from movies to geography. How the children of Sindh region look at these different cultural practices, is a question of interest in this study. It attempts to study the cultural effects in children.

Cited by Baran & Devis (2007), Gerbner and his colleagues (1978), terming television as ‘Central Cultural Arm’. Stated that television was the main creator of crafted cultural trends for the different masses, including large groups of people, without having any common public message systems.

In Pakistan, Zia, A. (2007) in a study, conducted the effects of Cable Television on Pakistani women, found that women in Pakistan are accepting the influence of Cable Television on their traditional and cultural values. The study found the effects on food, eating habits, costumes, language and other traditions and religious concepts. She showed her concern and stressed the need of further research on the positive and negative effects of Cable Television on Pakistani culture.

Shaikh M.A (2007) in his study on “Role of Satellite Communications in Traditional Societies” concluded that majority of respondents agreed that there was a change in their traditional approach to education, music, house décor, architecture, food cooking habits and other cultural practices.

The findings in present study show that a vast majority of children in all three zones showed their liking of the food items shown on television be cooked in their homes. On grade basis, the degree of liking was found more among junior grade children. On gender basis, the girls showed more liking of strange foods than boys. The liking for foods of other cultures is equally constant among children of both ethnic groups. For the dresses of other cultures shown on television, a mix trend came across. The children also liked to wear the dresses with exception in Nawabshah zone. The reason behind this trend seems slow due to relatively slower pace of industrialization in that zone. In Non Cable Towns of Nawabshah zone, more children expressed their liking for the dresses of other cultures in the country.

On grade basis, the results show equal ratio of liking and disliking in Cable Towns, where in Non-Cable Towns, junior graders showed more liking for dresses of other cultures.

On gender basis, mix trend of liking and disliking was seen among both genders, with a slight fraction in Non-Cable Towns. On ethnicity basis in Cable Towns, mix trend for dresses of alien culture was found, while in Non-Cable Towns, Sindhi Speaking children showed great interest in wearing dresses of other cultures.

For house decoration images viewed on television, it seems that television images have significantly affected the vast majority of children of whole the Sindh region.

On grade and ethnic basis, the same trend was seen with slight more interest of children in Cable Towns to decor their homes as they viewed in TV programs. The results in three areas concerning culture support the persuasive role of TV programs on children.

The transmission of cultural practices of foreign societies is one of the major issues of debate for today's researchers of various fields. The ‘globalization’ and ‘Cultural Invasion’ terms are widely being used in this debate. The role of media in this process has been recognized to bring the people of different cultures closer to each other. In Pakistan, the issue remained under debate for a long time, especially with the reference of introduction of Indian movies and then a number of Indian TV channels through Cable Television. The scholars, researchers, intellectuals and political, social and religious leaders got involved in the debate. A sizeable number of people belonged to various sections of society express almost regularly their resentment over a possible threat to their beliefs and culture by Indian visual media. Keeping the regression of Pakistani film industry, their fears regarding other sectors were partly justified. But, in fact, these challenges posed by Indian media were enough to open the eyes of stake holders in the society.

Conclusion

Culture holds a central position for the people living in a particular society. Nations are generally identified with their cultural practices concerning food, dress, language and life style. Generally, the interpretation of culture depends upon individual or group circumstances, class position and social placement. Pakistani society is a complex of concordant and conflicting social economic and ethnic subgroups. During last few decades a few changes have been observed in our cultural practices mostly in Cable Towns. These new cultural trends generally belong to food, dressing, house decoration, marriage rituals and language components, most of them believed to be under some Indian influence. At various times in Pakistan, the issue of cultural invasion has been largely debated and Indian TV channels are generally blamed for emergence of negative trends. The roots of this issue are said to be in the fall of Pakistani film industry. In mid 70s the introduction of VCPs and VCRs in local markets, cultural proximity and production of sub quality Pakistani films paved the way for Indian movies and subsequent fall of film making. The public attitude shaped in favour of Indian movies remained stable after introduction of Cable television. For quite long, Star Plus maintained the favorite most TV channel of women of this land. The effects of this channel can be noticed noticeably in Pakistani cultural life.

Present study attempted to assess the effects of foreign TV channels on young minds. The hypothesis received strong support from the results. Majority of children were found attracted by these cultural practices like food, costumes and house décor especially among the juniors of both genders and Sindhi speaking children in Cable Towns. The trend of this cultural transmission reflects the influence of Cable television and indicates the emergence of new patterns of life which may lead to the process of globalization. But the ground realities like presence of religious, cultural ethnic groups do not allow society to undergo rapid cultural transformation, resulting into a strong resistance. In this scenario, abrupt changes introduced by Cable television are not easy to digest. The situation poses the question of survival of local cultures, and invites attention of policy makers, social scientists, local media and media researchers to address the issue in full depth.

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