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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION ON CULTURAL HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION STRATEGIES IN CHITRAL, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The study looks at historical places, important buildings, native cultures, and traditional ways of life. Pakistan has many important historical sites and buildings, like Mohenjo-Daro, Lahore Fort, and Shalimar Gardens, which show its rich history and culture. The traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups, such as the Sindhis, Punjabis, Baloch, Pashtuns, and others, are important to Pakistan's identity. But modern changes are making it harder to keep these cultural things safe. Fast city growth, new industries, and global influences are putting pressure on traditional practices and old sites. The government and non-government groups play a big part in dealing with these problems. The government has made different rules and started projects through places like the Department of Archaeology and Museums and the National Heritage and Culture Division. Groups like the Heritage Foundation of Pakistan and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture also help a lot by doing repairs, spreading awareness, and working with local communities. Even with these efforts, it's still hard to balance progress with the need to protect cultural heritage. This summary covers the main points about culture and preservation in Pakistan, including how modernization affects things, the roles of the government and non-profits, and the policies that are being used to protect the country's cultural history.

Keywords. *Degital Change, traditions, music, social habits, chitral*

INTRODUCTION

Culture is the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that are passed down from one generation to the next, and it helps define a group's identity and guides how its members act (Khalid, 2021). Culture is also the way people live, which shows both the similarities and differences among people in different regions (Khan, 2022). Every region or society has its own unique culture that reflects its special qualities, making it different from other groups in society. As Ellwood (1918) said, "Culture is the distinguishing mark of human social groups. All human groups have it, though in different ways and to different extents." In today's modern age, advances in technology and communication have turned the world into a global village, where people can easily connect and share their values and beliefs. This has led to a mixing of cultures, known as cultural hybridity (Aziz, 2024). Globalization has had a major impact on everyone, leading to both the blending and the fragmentation of cultures (Martell, 2007). However, the effect varies depending on the individual or region. For example, developed countries are more influenced by globalization because they have the means to

access modern technologies, and they are more open to cultural changes (Black, 2000). On the other hand, developing countries often have strong traditional cultures that resist change. A good example of this is China's control over the internet, which limits people's exposure to global perspectives (Roudmetof, 1994). It has also been noticed that globalization has changed the world's heritage, including the indigenous languages, food, fashion, and values (Lowenthal, 2013). Based on secondary sources and available resources, this study aims to examine the impact of globalization on the cultural heritage of Chitral, and specifically how globalization influences the homogenization of the region's culture. The study also outlines its specific objectives as mentioned by Fatima (2023).

Around the world, preserving digital content is a well-known area of work. Programs like the EU's Europeana website bring together millions of items from thousands of places into one easy-to-use online space. UNESCO supports global rules through documents like the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which now also covers digital ways of keeping things safe. Projects like Google Arts & Culture work with institutions all over the world, setting a high standard for sharing cultural content with the public. In Pakistan, a country that has a long history from the Indus Valley, Gandhara, and Mughal times, the work on digital preservation is just starting but shows a lot of promise. The situation here has some early projects, but there are also big challenges in the system(Silverman et al, 2007).

Digitalization has irrevocably transformed the preservation of cultural heritage. It has shifted the field from merely safeguarding physical objects in fixed locations to managing dynamic data that can be accessed, studied, and experienced worldwide. It serves as a powerful tool for democratization, education, and innovative research. However, this power comes with the responsibility to tackle its challenges: ensuring the long-term preservation of digital data, navigating ethical concerns, and bridging the digital divide to allow all nations to share their own histories. The ultimate aim is not to replace the physical experience but to complement and protect it. Digitalization offers a strong safeguard against the fragility of human memory and material existence. By combining these new tools with thoughtful, inclusive, and sustainable strategies can be integrated with digital tools to ensure that the treasures of our past remain accessible and meaningful for future generations. Rather than being mere relics behind glass, they become living, evolving narratives accessible to all of humanity (Rizzo et al, 2006).

Objectives of the study:

This study wants to look closely at how digitalization is connected to cultural heritage in Chitral. The main goal is to understand how people in Chitral feel about the effect of digital technology on their cultural traditions. It explores whether they see digitalization as something that harms their culture, helps protect it, or does both. The research also looks at which parts of their culture are most impacted by digital changes, like the Khowar language, music, traditional crafts, religious beliefs, or social habits. Beyond just understanding these effects, the study also wants to collect ideas from the people of Chitral on how to protect their culture in the modern digital world. The aim is to make sure any future plans are respectful of their culture, owned by the community, and use digital tools in a smart and helpful way.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design situated within an interpretive paradigm. This approach was deemed most appropriate as it facilitates an in-depth exploration of the complex, subjective perceptions and lived experiences of individuals regarding a specific phenomenon. Specifically, the study utilized a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the essence of a shared experience from the perspectives of those who have lived it. In this context, the aim was to understand and describe the essence of Chitral residents' experiences regarding the impact of digitalization on their cultural heritage. Four respondents were selected from the whole universe purposively. The study was conducted in district Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. However, the data was collected from private, government schools and universities in the locality. In this regard, six educational institutions have given equal opportunities, and are selected randomly.

Result and Discussion

Nowadays, globalization plays a significant role in shaping cultural diversity. The current study is

based on both literary and field research, examining the impact of globalization on cultural heritage. To explore the relationship between globalization and culture, relevant literature was reviewed, and empirical data was collected from a sample size of 48 participants using random and convenience sampling techniques. Data was gathered through structured interview schedules and interview guides, then analyzed statistically and presented in tables and charts.

In the context of field research on the impact of globalization on Chitral cultural heritage, respondents provided a mix range of opinions that highlight both the transformative and detrimental effects of globalization on their traditional practices. A significant portion of the respondents acknowledged that globalization has notably altered various aspects of Chitral culture, particularly its traditional foods, clothing, and language. Many emphasized that the influx of global influences has led to a noticeable shift in dietary habits, with traditional foods being overshadowed by fast food and other international cuisines. This shift not only affects the tradition landscape of Chitral but also raises concerns about the potential loss of traditions that have been passed down through generations. For validation few of the extract from the interview are mentioned below:

"*Yes, off course globalization is effecting the culture heritage of our chitral by both positive and negative way, the positive is one in which globalization is helping is to promote out culture on international level. And the negative is one in which too much adoption from the dominant is overshadowing our own traditional culture*".

Furthermore, the respondents noted changes in traditional attire, as younger generations attract more toward Western-style clothing, which they perceive as more modern or fashionable. This transition reflects a broader trend where global fashion trends increasingly influence local dressing practices, leading to a decline in the wearing of traditional Chitral garments.

A respondent explicated that:

The new generation compared to the older one are not taking interest towards their own cultural life style. New generations are preferring pent shirt rather than Shlawar Qames, they prefer market product rather than homemade thing".

Additionally, respondents highlighted the impact of globalization on language use, noting a gradual shift towards the predominance of Urdu and English, particularly among the youth. The incorporation of foreign languages into everyday conversation has raised fears about the erosion of the Chitral language, which is integral to the community's cultural identity.

A respondent said that:

"*Children now a days use English language in their homes, parents don't want from their children to speak a pure Khowar, that even think that Khowar language will deteriorate their children to get excel in advance education*".

However, while many respondents agreed on the negative implications of globalization, some expressed a more optimistic view, suggesting that exposure to global cultures could foster a richer, more diverse cultural landscape. They argued that globalization does not inherently threaten traditional practices; rather, it provides an opportunity for cultural exchange and adaptation. Ultimately, the varied responses reflect a broader dialogue within the Chitral community about the need for balance between embracing global influences and preserving the integrity of their cultural heritage. As globalization continues to shape social norms and practices, the challenge lies in finding ways to honor and sustain the essence of Chitral culture while engaging with the broader world.

A respondent said that:

Globalization is not a threat for our culture, but it is providing us a opportunity to make progress and to achieve a comfortable life by holding our own culture. Globalization promoting our culture by economic production so that we would be able to preserve our culture."

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study aimed to understand how people in Chitral see the effect of digital technology on their cultural traditions. The results show a mixed feeling, both worry and hopeful thinking. People don't just see digital change as a new tool, but as something that strongly affects their culture, both harming and helping it. The research found certain parts of their heritage that are at risk, such as the Khowar language, traditional music like shishtoo and sous, and detailed crafts. These things are in danger of being lost or turned into mass-produced items. However, the digital world also helps in keeping these things safe by recording, storing, and sharing them with people around the world, which makes young people feel

proud again. The community isn't just watching these changes. they are actively trying to deal with the loss of culture while making the best use of the new possibilities that technology brings.

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