

Influence of media on the public behavior sociology essay



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This research paper analyses the impact of Bollywood movies and generated ideas of romance and love marriage within middle and upper-middle class urban Pakistani marriages. It especially focuses on the influence of this on the acceptability of love marriages. It looks at selected samples of youngsters falling in the age group 17-29 and parents. Exceptions looked at are those falling outside the age group who had love marriages. The similarity of Indian and Pakistani mindset is scrutinized with respect to love marriages. It explores the issue of unacceptability of love marriages in Pakistan and the gradual changing trend. The vital role played by fantasy within Indian marriages is explored and the focal point is commercial Hindi films watched by the middle class of Karachi which fall within the genre of ‘melodrama.’ Love marriages in Bollywood are looked in depth. Finally the paper aims at exploring the factors responsible for the change in attitudes towards marriage and analysis of whether Bollywood movies influence is one of those factors which has considerably influenced the mindsets towards acceptance of love marriages in Pakistan.

Research Question

Have Bollywood movies influenced the increased acceptance of love marriages amongst the middle class of Karachi?

Research Hypothesis

Based on a review of literature as noted later in this proposal, there is one major hypothesis area that will guide the analysis of data i. e. Bollywood movies have influenced the increased acceptance of love marriages amongst the middle class of Karachi.

Secondary Research

Influence of Media on the public behavior

How Does the Media Influence the Way People Behave? The influence of media on public behavior is becoming more and more significant as time is passing. With the development and advancement of new technology, it is possible to distribute media content pervasively with minimal costs. Because of a high demand and supply of media content, producers engage in competitive behavior and come up with new ways to catch attention of consumers. The type of content free media shows is solely dependent on the demand for media content. However, numerous research studies on the topic have revealed that media content can shape our thoughts and alter our behavior in a number of ways. The following part of the literature review will focus on the effects of media on the behavior and perception of the general population. Furthermore, a critical analysis of the impact of media on the conception of love marriages will be discussed with reference to research studies.

Watching media content takes us into a different world or more specifically, a different level of consciousness. Media content not only arouses our cognitive neurons, but also changes our behavior if exposed frequently. The effect of media is not stopped even after exposure to media content is removed; instead it causes a lingering effect by initiating a gradual thought process that can lead to behavioral changes in many cases.

A good example of behavioral manipulation caused by media content is the impact of action films on children. Research on television shows, movies,

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music and video games which contain violent behavior shows unequivocal connection between media violence and violent behavior in both short and long term (Anderson, et al., 2003). Empirical evidence shows children emulate violent behavior portrayed by the heroes in the movies thinking that they would be able to achieve their desired outcome though violent behavior just like hero tends to be victorious in the end of the movie. Children tend to adopt some behavioral aspects from media content over a long period of time. Moreover, some behavioral changes might change throughout the whole population as children adopt those behaviors as adults, practice those behaviors over others and leave a mark on the future generations. This is the reason why media is able to change some social norms that existed previously and why some nations are afraid of cultural imperialism through media invasion.

Media consumers, whether they know it or not, are affected by what they watch and what they see over a long period of time will still shape what they perceive as normal, thanks to oft-repeated themes and images in the land of movie love (Hefner, 2011). And while movies are not intended or expected to be entirely realistic, scholars of communication theorize that exposure to media like romantic comedies, especially for young people, can shape expectations about both romance and marriage, shifting adolescent perceptions about what love is like, and how to show it (McLanahan, 2008).

Researchers followed 329 subjects over 15 years. They found that those who as children were exposed to violent TV shows were much more likely to later be convicted of crime. Researchers said that, “ Media violence can affect any child from any family,” regardless of social class or parenting (Dispenza, <https://assignbuster.com/influence-of-media-on-the-public-behavior-sociology-essay/>

2011). All our actions are based on what we learn and what we know, and we as human beings learn by seeing and imitating. Following this trend of thought we can infer that as we see from movies, we tend to act accordingly, by the means of learning and practicing.

Marriages

When Frank Sinatra sang about love and marriage going together like a horse and carriage, he did not consider that to a great extent the cart is put before the ox. Marriages are arranged by parents in China, India and Indonesia – three countries with 40% of the world's population – plus others that practice Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. Pakistan is one such country where arranged marriages are practiced and dating is not permissible. Couples might get a 15-minute meeting followed in a few months by a wedding.

But sparks are flying, and love marriages are breaking out in India, the world's largest democracy, with 1.1 billion people. CEO Raju Reddy of Sierra Atlantic in India, himself in an arranged marriage to childhood friend Neeraja, was surprised to learn at the Sierra Atlantic holiday party in December that about a dozen love marriages have germinated in recent years at the 13-year-old company. The Indian government does not differentiate in its marriage statistics. But young Indians interviewed say their observations suggest that 10% to 20% of their friends are having love marriages, and expert Poonam Barua, director of the Conference Board's India Operations, says that is probably true in most of India's cities. Bollywood movies such as Salaam Namaste are based on the old formula of boy meeting girl and eventually fall in love.

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It will be decades, if ever, before love marriages dominate worldwide. In India, the trend is specific to the middle class of 350 million, not to the 70% of the country that remains rural. But the trend is undeniable, says Barua, whose niece began a love marriage on Feb. 2 with an Indian working for Citibank.

Chambravalli and Mishra say if they have children, they also will be allowed to search for true love. In the meantime, Mom and Dad will be on the lookout.

“ Plan A and Plan B,” Mishra says.

It seems like the neighbouring country Pakistan has been much influenced with this breakout of love marriages too.

Similarity of Indian and Pakistani Mindset

This section of the literature review focuses on how the Pakistani society and its mindset is similar to that of India which has led us to use most of our secondary research with regard to the Indian population.

The fact that India and Pakistan have shared the same history coupled with the reality that both nations stand next to each other in the topographical location of the world map alone can point out how similar the thinking of these nations can be at one point in time and this section specifically focuses on the aspects through which the mindsets of the populations of these two nations can be hold similar.

Originally, Pakistan and India have been a part of the same Indus civilization which has led them to having similar experiences and influences across decades. Before separation, Pakistan and India shared the same goal of freedom against the colonial rule and they were united in their fight against the British. Because of the division, a multitude of issues occurred regarding the distribution of power and dominance over the new nations and these resulted in frustration which turned the countries bitter towards each other. (India and Pakistan – historic conflict and future outlooks, 2003).

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, all comprised the sub-continent at that time and the people residing in Hindustan lived together except the religious and cultural differences that had led to extremely brutal reactions and vast bloodshed at times, but this is only one side of the story the other side sticks to the fact that before the arrival of east India company in 1600 a mental asylum was created which reflects the sense of hospitability among the population there to take care of the mentally ill people as well as their society (S Sharma, 10/1984). This sense of love and affection is still present in both Pakistani and Indian community when residents of both countries visit the one another[i]. Furthermore, the established fact that the people of Pakistan came from the subcontinent makes it likely that the mind set of both the nations is parallel.

Politically, both the countries have more or less a similar government structure consisting of the head of the country as the President, followed by the head of the government known as the prime minister and elected ministers who are answerable to the prime ministers. Despite the coups and political violations in both the countries, they manage to hold democratic

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elections. Due to all the similarities in their political framework, working alongside each other would be a lot less of a hassle as there are no starkly alien political systems to contend with.

The economic structures of both the countries also hold a lot of similarities. The rates of unemployment and inflation are around 6% in both the countries. India's 63% of workforce is concentrated mainly in the production primary goods and is self sufficient in food grains and it also produces cotton, tea, sugarcane, tobacco for export. Similarly, Pakistan also has more than 50% of its population involved in agriculture and the rates of labor involved in secondary and tertiary activities in both the countries are also similar which indicate high success rates of free trade agreements if both the countries agree for it.[1]

As per the similarities among their cities, the two extreme ends of poverty and wealth in the city of Bombay bear a strange resemblance to that of the two extremes of living standards in Karachi. Bombay, like Karachi, is an industrial port city, plagued by over population, with colonial architecture dominating certain parts of town, and only the distance of 500 miles separating the two cities. The affinity between the two cities is not confined to the infrastructure and the living habitat, but even the afternoon breeze racing in from the sea at the verandah of the Bombay Gymkhana, is a de ja vu of the experience at the Karachi Gymkhana. Focusing on the differences between Bombay and Karachi, the most attention drawing aspect is the absence of statues in Karachi. We have monuments of fountains and swords and mountaintops in the middle of a landslide depicting Pakistan's first successful nuclear test in 1998 but unlike Bombay, we have no statues of

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people. And then there is the city of Madras, which is a city that belongs clearly to the same region as Karachi and that is where their similarities end. The realization of being present in Southern India when in Madras is inevitable at all times, as Pakistanis, our association is stronger with the Northern India. For the students (of Stella Maris College), when asked which South Asian country they most strongly associated with, responded unanimously as Pakistan in complete contradiction to anyone's expectations. When enquired as to why the students correlate with Pakistan, they replied that Pakistan had been a part of India. And when asked if they felt the same affinity towards Bangladesh, they declined profusely. (India and Pakistan – historic conflict and future outlooks, 2003)

To conclude, the mindset of both the nations can be attributed to be similar because of the sole reason that their forefathers have spent years together which has made their traditions, political systems, economic stances as being similar. It is the matter of self interest which has made the two countries apart like Kashmir issue is one where a conflict of interest between both the nations is seen. Apart from that religion has always been a major source of division and this is one subject where definitely no consensus can be reached as everybody has a right to religion.

Models of Marriage

Marriages can be put in four categories in Pakistan. There are:

Partially Arranged Marriages

Partially Love Marriages

Totally Arranged Marriages

Totally Love Marriages

Totally arranged marriages and totally love marriages are two extreme forms of marriages and between these two extremes are ‘Partially arranged and partially love marriages’ in which parents may take their selection and give their children the option to accept or reject their choice. Broadly these can fall under the two types of marriages (in India and Pakistan): Arranged and Love, as explained by Kavita Ramdya in her book *Bollywood Weddings*.

These models are diametrically opposed. Love marriage will often involve a whimsical and incidental meeting followed by months and often years of dating. The arranged marriage excludes dating altogether and rarely allows for more than one meeting before the wedding day. When the “boy” and “girl,” words used to describe prospective marriage candidates despite their age, profession, or education, meet for the first time, it is usually in a highly-regulated environment where both sets of parents sit in the same room accompanied by supportive extended family members. A wedding follows shortly thereafter, making it the second time the “couple” is allowed to see each other and after which the husband and wife embark on years of “dating” or getting to know one another without the nagging possibility of rejection.

In the middle class, often family members stay on a lookout finding a suitable match, or a number of suitable matches. Then, the families meet to see if things work out. Long before this happens, though, the young men and women are carefully vetted for likes and dislikes, traits in common,

complementary characteristics, and any other information that can be discovered and deemed relevant. Often, the process is much more informal, with the families in the community already knowing much about each other, and having already decided what could be potentially good pairings, and which may well be disastrous.

The two opposed models of marriage are negotiated by the present generation as observed by Kavita Ramdya. Her examination led her to discover a middle path, which she called “arranged meetings.”

“Arranged meetings” is an already negotiated and well-established third model for marrying. The second generation uses this method to filter out prospective marital candidates who do not have the “right” ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional traits desired by their parents. In this way, neither arranged nor love marriage are excluded and the needs and desires of both generations are respected. The first generation is still involved in finding a suitable partner for their child, whether through introductions by family and friends, or placing an ad on-line or in a newspaper. Additionally, candidates who do not come from the same religious sect, speak the desired dialect are cast away before a set of eligible prospects are considered.

(Ramdya)

Prevalence of Arranged Marriages

Family forms the building block of a society. Human beings in turn follow the standards and norms set by the society to lead a perfect life. But everything is prone to change and so are the values and standards set by a society. In the same way, the ways of getting married are changing at a noticeable but

slow pace. East is known for its traditions. Many countries in the East have been practicing arranged marriages since long.

It is a known fact that love marriages are more common in the west than in the eastern countries. In Pakistan, marriages are most of the time arranged by family members. The reason is that the Pakistani society preserves family continuity through arranged marriages. collectivist societies like Pakistan prefer group decision over an individual one so marriages are a family affair rather than an individual one, and children are brought up to expect arranged marriages. It is seen that children can have veto power in few families but normally it is expected that the parents and other family members should commence and settle on the matter. In this society, marriage is not merely based on love relationships but family economics and social needs play a great role.

Changing Trend of Marriages

A couple of decades ago arranged marriage was the only known way to get married. But today it is not so. We see many Pakistani girls and guys marrying by their own choice instead of that of their family. Love marriages are becoming more and more acceptable.

Most of the marriages are arranged in Pakistan but some of the marriages are also based on love. Love marriages have been taking place in Pakistan in the last few years with the influx of western cultures and invasion of electronic media. Due to family obligations the trends of compromising and striving to sustain relationships have become the hallmark of eastern culture. However, this fact could not be denied that these trends are eroding

day by day. People realize that the traditional system of 'totally arranged marriages' needs to be adjusted. Partially arranged and partially love marriages are supported by the state religion. Today the exposure to various stimuli through the media has increased awareness.

The improved education system could also be held responsible for this change. As compared to the previous years, the literacy rate among the Pakistani Women has increased by leaps and bounds over the past couple of decades. Education gives exposure and a sense of enlightenment. Women have become opinionated and smart. Many young women are given the right to exercise their choice in choosing a partner and the family members accept and support their decision.

Dating agencies are emerging and proclaiming that although compatible partners inclined to marriage can't be picked off a supermarket shelf, they can be found on a website. Most work on the false assertion that a good profile and an insignificant financial investment is the only obstacle standing between you and the love of your life. If they are to be believed, a couple of cheesy emails can determine your compatibility. In a typical electronic dating set-up, the average person role plays in a desperate bid to make an impression.

It seems that love marriages are trending but we cannot deny the fact that the practice of an arranged marriage still heavily prevails in our society. Many times, the young individuals prefer not to take the decision themselves and they rely upon the family to find the best match for them.

Gender Interaction

The gender interactions part focuses on the evolving nature of interactions between male and female students and the resultant effect of this change on their marriage choices.

Title: Student Attitude toward Mate selection in a Muslim Society: Pakistan

Author: Henry Korson

Journal: (Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Feb., 1969), pp. 153-165)

The study was conducted on 765 participants in two universities of Pakistan (University of Karachi and University of Punjab) and provides a treasure trove of vital insights into how marriage was viewed by students in urban Pakistan 40 years ago.

The study results showed that at least a quarter of respondents believed that the choice of life-partner should be left to them, while another quarter wanted their parents to consult them before making the final decision. This showed that over 50% of the respondents in that era wanted to have a say in the final decision of their life-partner.

Another question that was asked was if the respondents would make a completely independent choice when it comes to marriage to which only 3.8% respondents replied positively. 17.1% female respondents from Karachi and 16.7% female respondents from Lahore also believed that their parents would arrange their marriage without consulting them. This is in contrast to the 45% female respondents from Karachi and 52% female respondents from

Lahore who said their families will accept their opinions on the life-partner. Keeping in mind that these are graduate students from the 1960s when education for women was still at a nascent stage in Pakistan, they can only be classified as a minority. The women belonged to wealthy, forward-thinking families who were amongst the first to educate their daughters and thus had a progressive mindset. They were open to the idea of their daughters having a say in their own marriage decision but were not yet willing to accept their daughters to have complete control over the decision. This is reflected by the fact that only 9.8% of female students from Karachi and 6.3% of female students from Lahore believed that their families would accept their decision of marriage if it was their own personal initiative.

One of the most interesting statistic provided by this study revealed that upto 30% of the sample believed that meeting one's spouse before marriage was unnecessary. Females from Karachi (44%) and Lahore (47%) showed a great liking to this option – thus showing confidence in their parents' ability to choose the right spouse for them. This mindset is unthinkable amongst most contemporary university students of Karachi and Lahore who are more independent compared to their counterparts of yesteryears. The combination of higher education, globalization and media – local, Bollywood and western – has resulted in a mindset where the choice of life partner is no more the sole domain of the individual's parents. Moreover, the need to meet the prospective spouse whether alone, with mutual friends or with family has become paramount before the final decision is made. Students today believe that couples should have “ understanding” and this can only be gauged if there is some level of interaction before the marriage.

The above mentioned statistic was further reinforced when the students were asked about the optimum length of time for knowing one's future spouse before marriage. Although a quarter of the respondents did say that knowing one's future spouse for about 6 months is necessary, the majority of these respondents were male. 34. 5% of female respondents from Karachi and 27. 1% of female respondents from Lahore were of the view that there was no need to know one's spouse before marriage – again indicating confidence in their parents' ability to choose a spouse who was appropriate for them.

The conclusions that Korson derives are insightful and can be used to explain today's phenomena of how traditional arranged marriages are wearing away. Korson says that because most families live in extended households, the presence of senior members of the family prevent any young student from initiating any change which runs counter to the belief systems held by the senior members. Uncles, aunts, grand-parents ensure that the parents' conservative view is supported and reinforced within the family. This is primarily because of the belief that if one person is given leeway in deciding their marriage decision, others in the family will follow suit, thus creating disorder and depriving the senior members of their authority.

Korson further states that male respondents showed greater “ self-assurance” and liberality in their responses whereas majority of females favoured conservative options. This is probably because of both males and females already understanding their own personal situations. He believed their answers on what they believed will happen with them with respect to marriage were based on the experience of someone close (sibling, cousin, <https://assignbuster.com/influence-of-media-on-the-public-behavior-sociology-essay/>

friend) who had already been married and the respondents believe that their marriage will be conducted in the same manner because they belonged to the same caste, class or family.

The last and most notable finding that Korson reveals is that the Pakistani university system is based on Western education and that in the race to achieving higher education (and resultant higher social standing), people are bound to be in touch with Western values and principles and to be influenced by them. The mindset of “collectivism” that is the root of traditional arranged marriages where it is popularly said that families marry each other will gradually and eventually be trumped by the Western ideal of individualism – students will begin to make their marriage decisions based on their own personal liking instead of following age-old conservative customs entrenched in their baradaris. Today this mindset of individualism has taken hold in the mindset of urban educated youth who are striving to ensure that their decision be respected and upheld when it comes to marriage. The Western education system in combination with media (primarily progressive and romantic Bollywood films of the last decade and a half) have led the youth to question the conservative practices that were previously held with much respect.

Title: Attitudes of University Students from India Toward Marriage and Family Life

Authors: Vicki T. Davis and Raghu N. Singh

Journal: International Journal of Sociology of the Family 1989, Vol. 19 (Autum) : 43-57

In this research, 83 Indian students in Texas Universities were asked about their opinions on marriage and family life. The report says that many social institutions in India have faced constant and gradual change. In India, the family is a very sacred institution and ranks second in importance after religion (Rao & Rao, 1975). Many researches have been conducted to explore the impact of higher education on family patterns. When people go abroad to study, they experience greater freedom to make their own decisions and are no more bound by the controls of their families, “ and develop individuality, which may affect all family patterns of dwelling” (Ross, 1961).

In Rao & Rao’s study (1976), 65% college students preferred nuclear families as compared to 35% supporting joint families. A study by Sharma and Shriram (1979) surveyed 25 newly married Indian couples about their opinions on the selection of marriage partners. The importance of interaction with their future partners was stressed by 80% of the respondents. These couples believed it was necessary to meet, socialize with, and have the opportunity to truly get to know the potential marriage partner. The majority of the couples also thought that the main choice in the selection of the marital partner should be made by the individuals, with consent of the parents. When the same kind of questions were asked of graduate students

in Pakistan in 1969, 65% believed it was important to meet and know one's potential spouse before marriage. 30% of the respondents believed that there was no need to meet the future spouse, thus indicating their confidence in their parents' ability to find them a suitable match (Korson, 1969)

Author: Lord, Keelin (2007)

Title: “ Romantic Love vs. Marriage: A Psychoanalytic Approach,”

Journal: ESSAI: Vol. 5, Article 30.

The research by Keelin Lord questions and criticizes Western countries for promoting the concept of love marriage and explains the reasons behind the failure of love marriages and the rising number of divorces in America.

Although there are many reasons why Pakistanis oppose the concept of love marriage including difference in social status between families, loss of parental authority and conservative mindset, the fact that love marriages lose their charm soon after the wedding is also an important factor.

The writer says that the vehicle for promoting romance in American culture is its cinema industry. Romantic love has been portrayed in visual arts of western culture for centuries, such as operas, plays, dramas, paintings and films. Although these arts directly influence culture, most view art as an illusion as well as an escape from reality. Yet Americans still believe that romantic love is tangible and serves as a solid base for marriage. The writer further goes on to say that instead of taking romantic love as granted, it

should be questioned and its mistakes should be learned from otherwise it will continue to be the cause of failed marriages.

The writer conducted scientific tests on a number of participants to explain how the concept of love holds in an individual's mind. The tests revealed that romantic love is associated with higher levels of dopamine being released to the brain resulting in increased energy, higher motivation to acquire rewards and feelings of ecstasy – things that people relate to romantic love. However, with time the feelings of romance fade away because of increased levels of the hormone oxytocin. Keeping these findings in mind, when romance is a base for marriage and attachment, the romance fades shortly after vows and the craving for a new romantic relationship evolves. In realizing this, one would begin to question why peoples now look for romance to provide them with a happy marriage.

Primary Research

Methodology

Focus Group

Interview

Survey

The survey sample was 66, with the age group being 17-26 years. 31 males were part of the survey and 35 females. This is the data that was obtained for whether the sample people thought there has been an increased acceptance of love marriages in our society.

Do you think there has been an acceptance of love marriages in our society?

Frequency

Percent

Cumulative Percent

Yes

55

83.3

83.3

No

11

16.7

100.0

Total

66

100.0

83.3% of the people (55 people) felt that there has been an increased acceptance of love marriages in our society and 16.6% (11 people) did not feel so. Of the 55 people who felt there was an increased acceptance, 28

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were females and 27 males. And there was no correlation between gender and their opinion regarding acceptance of love marriages though, as analyzed by the Pearson correlation.

When asked about whether Bollywood has played a role in the increasing number of love marriages amongst youth in Pakistan, 71.2% of people felt that it has had a role to play (47 people). Of these 47 people, 22 were males and 25 were females.

Do you believe Bollywood movies have a role to play in the increasing number of love marriages amongst youth in Pakistan?

Frequency

Percent

Cumulative Percent

Valid

Yes

47

71.2

71.2

No

19

28. 8

28. 8

100. 0

Total

66

100. 0

One person said “ As far as I have seen, Bollywood movies have created this fantasy-like image of love marriages in the minds of youth and lead to our youth to aspi