

The Role of Media in Shaping Public Perception of Cultural Diversity: An Empirical Study of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of media representation in shaping public perceptions of provincial cultural diversity in Pakistan. Grounded in Social Constructionist theory, the research explores how media narratives construct meanings around provincial identities and influence societal attitudes toward cultural inclusion and national integration. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 213 respondents across Pakistan's four provinces. Descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and Bayesian analyses were employed to examine the relationship between perceptions of social media influence and perceptions of cultural representation. Findings indicate that respondents generally perceive social media as a significant source of cultural information and acknowledge inequalities in provincial visibility. A strong positive correlation ($r = .616, p < .01$) was found between perceptions of social media influence and awareness of cultural representation issues. Regression analysis revealed that perceptions of social media explain 38% of the variance in perceptions of cultural representation, demonstrating a substantial predictive effect. The results confirm that media platforms function as powerful sites of cultural meaning-making, capable of promoting awareness and inclusion while also reinforcing symbolic hierarchies. The study highlights the need for ethical media practices, inclusive representation, and critical media literacy to support social cohesion and pluralistic nation-building in Pakistan.

Keywords: Media representation; Cultural diversity; Provincial identity; Social constructionism; Social media influence; National integration; Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Diverse countries comprising multiple ethnic, linguistic, religious, and provincial identities that have historically shaped their social and political fabric (Levesque, 2015). This diversity, while constituting a significant cultural asset, has also posed persistent challenges to social cohesion and national integration, particularly in the context of competing provincial and cultural identities (Khan et al., 2021). In such a plural society, mass media function as a central institution through which cultural meanings are constructed, circulated, and normalized, influencing how different groups are perceived within the national imagination (Elareshi et al., 2025).

Media representation plays a critical role in shaping public perceptions of cultural diversity by selectively highlighting certain identities while marginalizing others (Batool, 2018). Print and electronic media in Pakistan do not merely report cultural realities; they actively frame narratives that influence societal attitudes toward ethnic, religious, and provincial groups (Brand, 2018). Studies focusing on Pakistani media have shown that representation patterns significantly affect how audiences understand “difference,” often reinforcing dominant cultural narratives while rendering minority or peripheral identities less visible (Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2017). As a result, media representations contribute to the formation of public perceptions that can either promote cultural harmony or deepen social divisions (Ahmad et al., 2023).

The background of cultural diversity in Pakistan is closely tied to its provincial structure, where each province possesses distinct languages, traditions, and historical experiences (Dikshit & Dikshit, 2025). These provincial identities are deeply embedded in everyday cultural practices, yet their portrayal in national media often lacks balance and contextual sensitivity (Knight, 2021). Research indicates that dominant provincial cultures receive greater visibility and more favorable representation, while smaller or marginalized groups are frequently stereotyped or underrepresented, leading to skewed public perceptions of cultural diversity (Mehfooz, 2021). Such patterns raise concerns about the role of media in sustaining unequal cultural hierarchies within the country (Levesque, 2015).

Despite constitutional assurances of cultural recognition and equality, public perceptions of provincial and cultural diversity remain contested and fragmented (Ashraf, 2023). Media narratives have been shown to influence identity politics by framing cultural difference as either a threat to national unity or a resource for pluralism, depending on editorial priorities and political contexts (Elareshi et al., 2025). Existing studies on Pakistani media largely focus on religious or ethnic representation, particularly of minority groups, but provide limited insight into how provincial cultural identities are portrayed and perceived by the public (Batool et al., 2021). This gap is significant because provincial identities continue to play a crucial role in shaping political attitudes, social belonging, and perceptions of inclusion within the state (Khan et al., 2021). The research problem addressed in this study arises from the limited scholarly attention given to the impact of media representation on public perception of cultural diversity at the provincial level in Pakistan. While previous research has examined media portrayals of religious minorities and ethnic groups, there remains insufficient empirical analysis of how media narratives influence public understanding of provincial cultures and their place within the national framework (Elareshi et al., 2025). This lack of focused inquiry restricts a comprehensive understanding of the media’s role in either reinforcing cultural fragmentation or fostering inclusive perceptions of diversity (Ahmad et al., 2023). Accordingly, the objective of this study is to examine the impact of media representation on public perception of cultural diversity within provincial groups in Pakistan. The study aims to analyze how provincial cultures are portrayed in Pakistani media, assess the nature of these portrayals, and explore how such representations shape public attitudes toward cultural plurality and national cohesion (Reus-Smit, 2021). By situating media representation within broader debates on cultural pluralism and identity, this research seeks to

contribute to scholarly discussions on media, diversity, and social integration in Pakistan (Rosadi et al., 2024).

This paper proceeds by first reviewing existing literature on media representation and cultural diversity in Pakistan, followed by an explanation of the research methodology. The subsequent section presents and analyzes the findings, while the final section discusses the implications of media representation for public perception, cultural harmony, and inclusive nation-building within

Pakistan's diverse provincial context (Levesque, 2015).

Problem Statement

Pakistan is a culturally plural society composed of multiple provincial, ethnic, and linguistic identities that shape its social and political structure (Khan et al., 2025). While this diversity constitutes a significant cultural asset, it also presents challenges for social cohesion and inclusive nation-building, particularly when certain identities are privileged over others in public discourse (Syed, 2006). In contemporary society, media—especially social media—serve as central arenas where cultural meanings are constructed, circulated, and normalized (Hall, 1997). Through processes of selection, framing, and repetition, media representations influence how provincial identities are perceived within the broader national imagination (Talib & Gardezi, 2011).

Existing scholarship suggests that Pakistani media discourse often promotes a dominant national narrative centered on Islam and Urdu, thereby marginalizing alternative provincial and linguistic identities (Syed, 2006). Studies further indicate that media portrayals frequently rely on stereotypes or selective visibility, which may reinforce symbolic hierarchies among provincial groups (Jameel, 2024; Sarfraz, 2024). According to social constructionist theory, such representations are not neutral reflections of reality but active processes that shape public understanding of identity and difference (Hall, 1997).

Despite these insights, there remains limited empirical research examining how media representations of provincial cultures influence public perceptions of cultural diversity in Pakistan (Shahzad, 2024). Specifically, insufficient attention has been given to the relationship between perceptions of media influence and perceptions of cultural representation at the provincial level (Khan et al., 2025). This gap restricts a comprehensive understanding of whether media discourses foster inclusive pluralism or contribute to symbolic marginalization and intergroup misunderstanding (Elareshi et al., 2023). Therefore, this study addresses the lack of empirical evidence on how media representation shapes societal perceptions of provincial cultural diversity and national cohesion in Pakistan.

Objectives of The Study

The study aims to:

- To point out representational inequalities or stereotypes in the media depiction of provincial groups that might foster social ill-understanding or symbolic marginalization.
- To offer insights that can guide media practitioners in promoting more balanced, culturally sensitive and inclusive provincial representations.
- To facilitate positively social cohesion initiatives through defining the role the media can play in enhancing respect of cultural diversity play in enhancing respect of cultural diversity play in enhancing respect of cultural diversity.

- To educate the policymakers and communication regulators on the societal consequences of media representation to national integration and cultural Harmony.
- To promote critical media literacy among viewers allowing them to have a more insightful grasp of the ways in which cultural meanings are made and challenge stereotypical.
- To play a role in nation-building that is inclusive and helps to make provincial cultures feel as valuable members of national identity as well as that of Pakistan.

Theoretical Foundation

In this work, the concept of Social Constructionism is applied, which assumes that the social realities, identities and meanings are not given or predetermined but are created in the process of social interaction and communication and common systems of meaning. Under this school of thought, power is created via discourse as knowledge about the world is generated and normalized by being repeatedly represented and accepted by the social process. Media as a focal point of communication involves the role to define, interpret, and comprehend social group, cultural identities, and diversity in societies. The situation with Pakistan, the nation with a plurality of cultures in terms of ethnicity, language, and province is not merely the demographic reality, but a social construction formed by historical discourse, political discourse, and media imagery. The provincial identities like Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch and many others derive their meaning not only by practicing cultural life but also by symbolically representing them in the media texts. According to Social Constructionism, such identities are constantly created and recreated by the means of language, images and narratives generated and shared in the society. Thus, in media, the cultural diversity meanings are created and stabilized as an initial location. Constructionists argue that media are not neutral representations of provincial cultures, but they are involved in the process of determining what is visible, prized or marginalized in a culture. By means of choice, focus, and repetition, media discourses create the hegemonic interpretations of provincial identities. Some of the cultural characteristics can be identified as representative, whereas others are overlooked and, as a result, socially accepted images of specific groups are constructed. These created images define what people know about cultural diversity and how viewers perceive difference, belonging and national identity

The social constructionism also focuses on how discourse creates cultural inequalities. Being more represented or on the positive side, certain provincial cultures become normalized as the center of national identity. Conversely, their presence in the limited or stereotypical representations may place other groups in a peripheral position or other. These symbolic processes are a part of the social structure of inclusions and exclusions, which influence the perception of cultural diversity in the national context. The conceptual framework that will be used in analyzing media representation in this study is Social Constructionism,

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan is a very diverse nation - dozens of ethnic groups, languages, and traditions, but the hottest issue is the national identity. The scholars of social construction observe that media discourse is critical in creating and propagating ideologies that establish the identity of a group of people. In Pakistan, print and broadcast media rarely offer a neutral mirror of society; rather, they actively reproduce particular visions of what it means to be Pakistani. the media actively contribute in the construction of perceptions of identification (Khan et al., 2025).

This literature review, grounded in constructionist theory, examines how Pakistani media discourse shapes understandings of cultural diversity and provincial identities. It is organized thematically into four areas: (a) the nature of Pakistan's cultural diversity and national identity, (b) how provincial groups (Punjabi,

Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch) are portrayed in the media, (c) the media's role in constructing identity and public perception, and (d) processes of cultural hegemony and marginalization. We conclude by identifying a research gap: the surprising lack of empirical work on media's role in constructing provincial cultural identities in Pakistan.

Cultural Diversity and National Identity in Pakistan

Pakistan's population is ethnolinguistically fragmented. The four provinces are dominated by Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns (Pathans), and Balochs, plus numerous subgroups (e.g. Saraikis, Brahuis, Muhajirs). For example, Punjab accounts for ~56% of the population (98% Punjabi-speaking), while Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP), and Balochistan comprise the rest. Each province has its own language and culture e.g. Saraiki communities in southern Punjab, Hindko and Hazara-speaking groups in KPK, and sizeable Pashtun communities in Sindh and Balochistan. In ordinary discourse, however, national unity in Pakistan has traditionally been defined by religion (Islam) and Urdu as unifiers. This brings about pressures: non-Punjabi communities are unwilling to be referred to as minorities and they demand to be considered as countries or nationalities on their own. In fact, the historical grievances, the 1971 Bengali movement of independence and the present-day Pashtun and Baloch nationalist movements are indicators of conflicts over cultural recognition, control of resources, and autonomy. The diversity of Pakistan is a strength (in nutritional value, attire, folklore, etc.) but a potential danger of societal unity and national identity when handled poorly. There is debate among scholars that Pakistani identity is more of a primordial (natural and fixed) or a constructed concept. The former view sees identity as rooted in ancestry and cultural heritage, while constructivists argue it is *constructed* through historical processes and narratives. In the constructivist lens, national identity in Pakistan emerges from shared symbols, language and collective memory that are produced through discourse. Collective memory, the shared understanding of the past through stories, history and symbols is especially important. Khan *et al.* observe that national identity "is very significantly dependent upon a shared national collective memory," which is continually reshaped via media and public discourse. In practical terms, this means that the ideas of "Punjabi-ness," "Sindhi-ness," etc., are not fixed attributes but are framed and given meaning by political and cultural narratives. Because Pakistan's constitution itself is largely silent on ethnicity, the work of defining provincial identity falls to social actors especially the media to include or exclude various groups from the national story (Khan et al., 2025). The interaction between diversity and unity in Pakistan therefore depends on the way in which the various identities are perceived. Due to the absence of inclusive narratives, a scenario of culture chaos is a possibility in Pakistan (Khan et al. 2025). They demand cultural pluralism - mutual tolerance and acknowledgement of plural identities as a pragmatic way of sustaining social solidarity.

In a word, cultural diversity in Pakistan cannot be denied and what it entails is related to mass construction. As social constructionist theory predicts, the media's framing of these identities will strongly influence whether diversity is seen as a harmonious asset or a source of conflict (Khan et al., 2025).

Media Representation of Provincial Groups

Pakistani media portrayal of provincial cultures tends to be stereotypical and uneven. Qualitative studies of television dramas and news coverage find that characters from Punjab, Sindh, KPK, and

Baluchistan are often shown in narrow, negative roles. For example, surveyed university students across all four provinces and found that TV dramas repeatedly depict (Pathans) as domestic servants in Punjabi homes, sandhi's as illiterate, male chauvinists who oppress women, and Baloch's as simple-minded and easily dominated due to supposed illiteracy (Jamel, 2024).

In other words:

Punjabis/Punjab: In urban Pakistani TV and print, Punjabi culture is often reduced to comic paindu caricatures or rude rural stereotypes. The *television often reduces Punjabi identity to comedy or caricature, portraying it as loud or rustic*. Popular Punjabi phrases (e.g. “paindu” or “moi” used jokingly) reinforce the idea that speaking Punjabi or being rural is backward. As one columnist notes, Punjabi is perceived as “unsophisticated,” leading educated Punjabis to abandon it in favor of Urdu or English. It implies that serious media does not feature much of Punjabi language and culture, which are displayed as punchlines or slapstick jokes (Randhawa 2025).

Pashtuns (Pakhtuns): Pashtun men are commonly portrayed in the media and dramas as uneducated house helpers or bodyguards. Students perceive Pathans almost solely as housemaids and workers in the Punjabi families. The news and entertainment content of the Pakistani news and entertainment often presents the issues of Pashtun/KPK as a matter of security or tribalism (such as news about the war in Afghanistan), rather than ordinary cultural life. This description in one dimension makes A number of Pakistani audiences subconsciously categorize Pashtuns as another, as a contrast to the mainstream urban elites (Jamel, 2024).

Sindhi’s: The Sindhi in the media are also meager. In the work of Jameel, the Sindhi characters in dramas are portrayed as feudal lords or chauvinistic in order to oppress women. Sindhi political leaders are frequently invited to talk shows or commentary on news in political talk shows considered corrupt or separatist, yet, there is not much focus on positive cultural things (Sindhi poetry, Sufi heritage). The fact that Urdu is popular, and that the emphasis is on Punjab implies that Sindhi language and folk culture seldom appear in the media of the country.

Baloch: Baloch people and culture are either not visible or represented as primitive. Baloch men were depicted as stupid, rude and easily gullible. The Baluchistan heritages are mostly covered in news media in terms of insurgency or resource conflicts, rather than its history. According to the activists, mainstream media falsely reports on Baluchistan and widely ignores the issue of human rights in the country According to one observer, the Pakistani media is controlled in such a manner that it produces no strong representation of Baloch. Other province citizens usually know very little about what is happening in Baluchistan since the press rarely provides any coverage on the same. Such trends show that provincial cultures are defined in a few tropes by media discourse. Notably, these representations are not equal: Punjabi and Urdu-speaking elites control the media of the country, thus, they have the opportunity to stereotype other groups ironically. Other scholars also point out that even the Punjabis are culturally marginalized even though they are the majority: the media and the elites tend to promote Urdu and English over Punjabi and push the Punjabis culture to a joke. Overall, the portrayals of media are inclined to distort provincial identities into stereotypical characters and strengthen social hierarchies and biases (Jamel, 2024).

Media’s Role in Constructing Identity and Public Perception

Through the agenda-setting and framing processes, the Pakistani media creates social reality. Media narratives in the social constructionist perspective are not neutral accounts but they form part of our common meanings (Hall,1997).

As a recent review observes, media discourse “plays a vital role in constructing and circulating ideologies that define national identity”. In practice, this means that the themes and images the media highlights will strongly influence how people perceive cultural groups. Discourse analysis of media can reveal “factors at work in the fragmentation, unity or reciprocity of cultural dynamics” in Pakistan (Khan et al. 2025).

Several studies document how media framing privileges certain identities over others. For example, leading Urdu newspapers treat Pakistan's Islamic identity as a "broad melting pot," within which all other ethnic and religious identities become nearly invisible. In these media texts, any identity other than Islam or Pakistan is often cast as threatening. Syed reports that the Urdu press frequently portrays non-Islamic identities as "injurious to Pakistan", with negative connotations attached to ethnic sub-identities. In other words, media discourses in Pakistan emphasize a single unifying narrative (Islamization and Urdu nationalism) and systematically downplay or stigmatize diversity. This aligns with other findings that print media coverage rarely acknowledges the challenges or perspectives of smaller provinces (Syed, 2006).

Broadcast media similarly shapes public perception. Cable television as a "battleground where an identity for Pakistan is being forged". In this contest, established elites political, military, religious and social command the loudest voice. Talib and Gardezi show that despite the proliferation of channels, discourse remains dominated by powerful groups: the privileged few "control both the means of production and access to media," magnifying the voice of elites and the voicelessness of the 'other'. In effect, the range of viewpoints available to the public is narrow. Major news networks engage in agenda-setting: they choose which regional events to highlight and which to ignore, often giving prominence only to stories that fit the dominant narrative. Such agenda-setting means that protests or cultural celebrations in, say, Baluchistan or Sindh might be barely covered, whereas similar events in Punjab or Islamabad become national news (Talib and Gardezi, 2011).

Through repetition of certain frames, the media helps to naturalize a hegemonic national identity. For example, during crises (like the Kashmir conflict), Pakistani media have tended to amplify nationalist imagery and treatment of conflicts through an "us vs. them" lens. Conversely, internal cultural differences are framed as divisive or irrelevant. The result is that many Pakistanis come to understand "Pakistani-ness" almost exclusively in terms of religion and centralized state symbols, not in terms of plural local cultures. In short, media outlets construct public perceptions by consistently framing the nation in particular ways magnifying some voices while silencing others.

Cultural Hegemony and Marginalization

Cultural hegemony (Gramsci) provides a very useful approach to the patterns of media coverage in Pakistan. The concept of hegemony can also be defined as the way the values and the worldview of the ruling group is made common sense through institutions such as the media and hence, marginalizing other cultures. In the situation of Pakistan, Islam and Urdu have taken the status of the hegemonic cultural references, and the regional identities are driven to the periphery.

As reported in the discussion above, in her study, Syed found out that provincial or sectarian identities were perceived as dangers of the nation by the media discourse. This is a good way of keeping a hegemonic narrative: a single, version of Pakistani identity (Islamized and Punjabi Urdu centric) is defined as normal and anything other than that is perceived with suspicion. There is other signs of hegemony in the news of power relations. The news rarely covers a situation of class or power imbalance and the media focus is usually on the interests of the potent elites (military generals, feudal lords, tribal chiefs, clerics). This biases the perception of the people towards the status quo. As an example, in cases where the provincial autonomy concerns, the media can paint the same as a fringe or destabilizing demands instead of a genuine grievance. In the meantime, mainstream media seldom questions centralized sources of power, which serves as a tool of strengthening the dominance of a single culture and a single version of history. The hegemony even appropriates the cultural identity of the Punjabi majority. According to some scholars, the official culture of the state, which is Urdu/English, has overshadowed the Punjabi language and heritage (Syed, 2006). It is ironic that although it has its own rich literary heritage, the Punjabi culture in Pakistan is readily pushed into mockery and jest a minor form of marginalization. The Punjabi dialect or rural traditions is often

mocked in popular media (TV, ads, cinema), and it is something people should not be proud of. This indicates a wider trend whereby the state advances Urdu (and English) as elite languages, and advances Islamic identity as the general one, and hence foists a homogenous cultural system. Conversely, non-dominant provincial groups are discriminated by the media more overtly (Sarfraz, 2024). Baloch commentators point out that Pakistani media develops prejudiced information on Baluchistan and never exposes the suffering of people. The protests of women in Quetta, in particular, were scarcely covered by the outside sources. According to one of the activists, there exists no strong representation of Baloch in the mainstream media. This systematic disregard and at times misrepresentation of Baloch voices are a bright case of marginalization of culture. On the same note, the presentation of the Pashtun regions always revolves around terrorism or refugee crisis and Pashtun culture remains hidden. Collectively, these tendencies show that media hegemony in Pakistan marginalizes the provincial minority: the text of national culture is still successfully in the possession of the Urdu-speaking and urban elites, and the other cultural identities are considered marginal.

Research Gap

Overall, the literature on Pakistani media and identity is surprisingly sparse on the question of provincial cultures. Many studies have examined Pakistani nationalism, Islamic identity, or religious minority portrayal, but few focus empirically on Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, or Baloch identities in media. As Shahzad (2024) points out in reviewing the field, “the literature reviewed revealed no study undertaken to detect the representation of minorities of Pakistan in the newspaper media.” This gap is even more pronounced for provincial subgroups; virtually no research has applied critical constructionist analysis specifically to how Pakistani media construct Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, or Baloch identities. Instead, most existing work is broad or theoretical, or focuses on television stereotypes or specific events (Jameel 2024). In short, while it is clear from our review that media discourse in Pakistan has the power to include or exclude whole cultural communities, systematic empirical studies on provincial cultural identities are lacking. Future research could fill this gap by, for example, analyzing news and entertainment content through Social Constructionist and Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks to uncover how media narratives shape the self-perception of each province. Identifying these discursive processes would help explain whether media serve to bridge or deepen cultural divides in Pakistan.

METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

The research design used in the study is a quantitative one to investigate the effects of the media representation on the perceptions of the population of cultural diversity among the provincial groups in Pakistan. An empirical data was collected using a survey method to collect the respondents in all provinces so as to be able to measure the attitudes and perceptions connected to media representations and cultural diversity.

Population and Sample

This research will include the population of this study which includes adult media audiences who live in the four provinces of Pakistan e.g. Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, and who are regularly exposed to either print, electronic or the digital media. As the research is all about the perception of people, the individuals who could read the information provided through the media and give informed views were deemed eligible participants. The sample size was calculated on the basis of the rule of thumb that is widely used in survey research where the number of items in the questionnaire is multiplied by 10 to guarantee sufficient statistical power of analysis. Since the instrument had 20 items, the sample size was estimated as 20 items x10 respondents per item = 200 respondents, that is, a stratified sampling in this

instance was used to select 200 respondents to represent all provinces (Hair et al., 2010). This assisted in capturing regional variance in perception on media coverage of provincial cultures.

Instrument the structured questionnaire was used to collect data in accordance with the objectives of the study and the Social Constructionist school of thought. The scale captured perceptions of media representation, provincial culture visibility, stereotypes, inclusivity, and media contribution towards the cultural comprehension.

Five-point Likert scale was adopted and the ranges were:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

The Likert scales are very popular in carrying out research on social sciences in measuring attitudes and perceptions because they have reliability and can be easily quantified (Likert, 1932).

Data Collection

Online survey was used to collect data but the use was done to reach a broader area in the provinces. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents who were required to participate in the study voluntarily. The considerations of ethics, such as anonymity and

confidentiality were upheld during the data collection process.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected were coded and then were inputted into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Sciences) where they were analyzed.

- **Descriptive Analysis** frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation summarize respondent traits and general trends in perceptions of cultural diversity
- **Correlation Analysis** to highlight the predictive role of the variables of media representation on the perceptions that people were having on the issue of cultural diversity.
- **Regression Analysis** to determine the predictive influence of media representation on public perception of cultural diversity.

These methods allowed analyzing the patterns and relationships between variables in a systematic which empirically validated the objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Data obtained was analyzed in the SPSS. The statistical outcome that was obtained is as follows:

Frequencies:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	180	84.5	84.5	84.5
	Female	33	15.5	15.5	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	
Table 1. Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	192	90.1	90.1	90.1
	25-30	10	4.7	4.7	94.8
	30-40	5	2.3	2.3	97.2
	40-50	6	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	
Table 2. Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	152	71.4	71.4	71.4
	Professional	61	28.6	28.6	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	
Table 3. Profession					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Punjab	75	35.2	35.2	35.2
	KPK	35	16.4	16.4	51.6
	Balochistan	86	40.4	40.4	92.0
	Sindh	17	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	
Table 4. Province					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	20	9.4	9.4	9.4
	Disagree	15	7.0	7.0	16.4
	Neutral	25	11.7	11.7	28.2
	Agree	84	39.4	39.4	67.6
	Strongly Agree	69	32.4	32.4	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. I actively use Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, X, Youtube, TikTok) on a daily basis.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Disagree	17	8.0	8.0	12.2
	Neutral	36	16.9	16.9	29.1
	Agree	114	53.5	53.5	82.6
	Strongly Agree	37	17.4	17.4	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Social media is one of my primary sources for learning about cultural practices of other provinces.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	6.6	6.6	6.6
	Disagree	31	14.6	14.6	21.1
	Neutral	38	17.8	17.8	39.0
	Agree	110	51.6	51.6	90.6
	Strongly Agree	20	9.4	9.4	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. I follow pages/accounts that represent regional or provincial cultures of Pakistan.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	17	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Disagree	30	14.1	14.1	22.1
	Neutral	46	21.6	21.6	43.7
	Agree	86	40.4	40.4	84.0
	Strongly Agree	34	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 8. Social media fairly represents the cultural diversity of all provinces of Pakistan.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	12	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Disagree	20	9.4	9.4	15.0
	Neutral	39	18.3	18.3	33.3
	Agree	97	45.5	45.5	78.9
	Strongly Agree	45	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 9. Some provincial cultures receive more visibility on social media than others.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	12	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Disagree	34	16.0	16.0	21.6
	Neutral	45	21.1	21.1	42.7

	Agree	96	45.1	45.1	87.8
	Strongly Agree	26	12.2	12.2	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 10. Cultural traditions of smaller or less dominant provinces are underrepresented on social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	6.6	6.6	6.6
	Disagree	12	5.6	5.6	12.2
	Neutral	37	17.4	17.4	29.6
	Agree	107	50.2	50.2	79.8
	Strongly Agree	43	20.2	20.2	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 11. Misrepresentation of provincial cultures on social media can contribute to prejudice or discrimination.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	19	8.9	8.9	13.6
	Neutral	35	16.4	16.4	30.0
	Agree	114	53.5	53.5	83.6
	Strongly Agree	35	16.4	16.4	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 12. Users rarely verify cultural information before sharing it on social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Disagree	14	6.6	6.6	9.9
	Neutral	38	17.8	17.9	27.8
	Agree	112	52.6	52.8	80.7
	Strongly Agree	41	19.2	19.3	100.0
	Total	212	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		213	100.0		

Table 13. Ethical media practices can help counter cultural bias on social media platforms.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	11	5.2	5.2	5.2
	Disagree	6	2.8	2.8	8.0
	Neutral	50	23.5	23.5	31.5
	Agree	111	52.1	52.1	83.6
	Strongly Agree	35	16.4	16.4	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 14. Academic training in media studies helps in critically analyzing cultural representations on social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Disagree	7	3.3	3.3	6.1
	Neutral	37	17.4	17.4	23.5
	Agree	117	54.9	54.9	78.4
	Strongly Agree	46	21.6	21.6	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 15. Future media professionals can use social media to promote cultural inclusivity in Pakistan.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	14	6.6	6.6	10.3
	Neutral	27	12.7	12.7	23.0
	Agree	113	53.1	53.1	76.1
	Strongly Agree	51	23.9	23.9	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 16. Overall, social media plays a significant role in shaping public perception of Pakistan's cultural diversity.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Disagree	18	8.5	8.5	12.7
	Neutral	29	13.6	13.6	26.3
	Agree	110	51.6	51.6	77.9
	Strongly Agree	47	22.1	22.1	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 17. Positive representation of provincial cultures on social media can strengthen national integration.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	6.6	6.6	6.6
	Disagree	11	5.2	5.2	11.7
	Neutral	28	13.1	13.1	24.9
	Agree	113	53.1	53.1	77.9
	Strongly Agree	47	22.1	22.1	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 18. Responsible social media practices can reduce cultural misunderstandings among provincial groups.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	Strongly Disagree	18	8.5	8.5	8.5
	Disagree	16	7.5	7.5	16.0
	Neutral	21	9.9	9.9	25.8
	Agree	110	51.6	51.6	77.5
	Strongly Agree	48	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 19. Visual content (reels, vlogs, short videos) plays a major role in shaping cultural representation online.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	12	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Disagree	13	6.1	6.1	11.7
	Neutral	36	16.9	16.9	28.6
	Agree	116	54.5	54.5	83.1
	Strongly Agree	36	16.9	16.9	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 20. Social media has increased my awareness of cultural diversity across Pakistan's provinces.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Disagree	21	9.9	9.9	13.1
	Neutral	51	23.9	23.9	37.1
	Agree	104	48.8	48.8	85.9
	Strongly Agree	30	14.1	14.1	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 21. Exposure to provincial cultural content on social media has positively shaped my perception of other provinces.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Disagree	14	6.6	6.6	14.1
	Neutral	37	17.4	17.4	31.5
	Agree	87	40.8	40.8	72.3
	Strongly Agree	59	27.7	27.7	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 22. Negative or biased representation on social media can create misunderstandings between provincial groups.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	19	8.9	8.9	13.6
	Neutral	38	17.8	17.8	31.5

	Agree	113	53.1	53.1	84.5
	Strongly Agree	33	15.5	15.5	100.0
	Total	213	100.0	100.0	

Table 23. Social media influences how people perceive cultural “differences” within Pakistan.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	6.1	6.1	6.1
	Disagree	22	10.3	10.4	16.5
	Neutral	48	22.5	22.6	39.2
	Agree	97	45.5	45.8	84.9
	Strongly Agree	32	15.0	15.1	100.0
	Total	212	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		213	100.0		

Table 24. Humor, memes, and satire on social media sometimes promote cultural insensitivity.

The frequency tables with values ranging between 1 and 24 demonstrate the distribution of the respondents with each option of response. The frequency shows the number of people choosing a specific category, whereas Percent represents the percentage of the overall sample (N=213). Valid Percent is the percentage by omitting any response that has been left out and thus the percent is the most valid to take into consideration. Cumulative Percent cumulative percent indicates the cumulative total of valid percentages, indicating the building up of responses across categories. On the whole, the findings suggest that the majority of the respondents use social media actively and they mostly agree that social media has a significant impact on perceptions toward cultural diversity, that some cultures in the country have more visibility than others, and that bias on the social media may result in prejudice, which reflects the perceived impact of social media on cultural awareness in Pakistan.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perception on Social Media	213	1.00	5.00	3.5340	.62772
Perception on cultural representation	213	1.00	5.00	3.7157	.62824
Valid N (listwise)	213				

Table 25. Descriptive Statistics

Table 24 presents the descriptive statistics of the two main study variables. The value N = 213 shows that all respondents’ data were included (Valid N listwise = 213). The minimum (1.00) and maximum (5.00) indicate that responses covered the full Likert scale range, meaning participants used all response options. The mean score for “Perception on Social Media” is 3.53, and for “Perception on Cultural Representation” is 3.71. Since both means are above the midpoint value of 3, this shows respondents generally have a positive to moderate agreement that social media influences perceptions and that cultural representation issues are noticeable. The standard deviations (.62 and .63) are relatively low, meaning responses are not widely scattered; most participants’ views are clustered around the average. Overall, the results suggest a

consistent perception among respondents that social media significantly shapes understanding of cultural diversity and representation in Pakistan.

Correlations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Perception on Social Media	3.5340	.62772	213
Perception on cultural representation	3.7157	.62824	213

Table 26. Correlation Descriptive Statistics

		Perception on Social Media	Perception on cultural representation
Perception_on_Social_Media	Pearson Correlation	1	.616**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	213	213
Perception_on_cultural_representation	Pearson Correlation	.616**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	213	213

Tables 26 and 27 show both the descriptive statistics and the relationship between the study’s two main variables. In Table 26, the mean score for Perception on Social Media (M = 3.53, SD = .63) and Perception on Cultural Representation (M = 3.71, SD = .63) indicates that respondents generally lean toward agreement on both scales, as the averages are above the midpoint of 3. The relatively low standard deviations show that responses are closely grouped around the mean, reflecting consistency in participants’ views. The sample size for both variables is N = 213, meaning all respondents were included.

Table 27 presents the Pearson correlation analysis. The correlation coefficient $r = .616$ shows a strong positive relationship between perceptions of social media influence and perceptions of cultural representation. This means that respondents who believe social media strongly shapes opinions are also more likely to recognize issues of cultural visibility, misrepresentation, and diversity representation. The significance value ($p = .000$), which is less than 0.01, indicates that this relationship is statistically significant and not due to chance. Therefore, the findings confirm that social media perception and cultural representation perception are closely connected, supporting the study’s argument that social media plays an important role in shaping public understanding of provincial cultural diversity in Pakistan.

Regression Analysis

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Perception_on_Social_Media ^b	.	Enter
a. Dependent Variable: Perception on cultural representation			
b. All requested variables entered.			

Table 28. Variables Entered/Removed^a

Table 28 shows that “Perception on Social Media” was entered as the independent (predictor) variable, while “Perception on Cultural Representation” is the dependent (outcome) variable. The Method = Enter

means SPSS included the predictor in the model in a single step (not stepwise or hierarchical), so the analysis tests the direct effect of social media perception on cultural representation perception. The column “Variables Removed” is empty, indicating that no variable was excluded from the model. In short, this table confirms that the regression analysis was conducted to examine whether perceptions about social media significantly predict perceptions of cultural representation among respondents.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.616 ^a	.380	.377	.49591	.380	129.237	1	211	.000	1.769

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perception on Social Media

b. Dependent Variable: Perception on cultural representation

Table 29. Model Summary^b

Table 29 explains how well your regression model works in predicting cultural representation from social media perception. The value R = .616 shows a strong positive relationship between the predictor (Perception on Social Media) and the dependent variable (Perception on Cultural Representation). The R Square = .380 means that 38% of the variation in perceptions of cultural representation is explained by perceptions of social media. In social science research, this is a moderately strong explanatory power, showing social media is an important factor, though other influences also exist. Adjusted R Square (.377) is very near to the R Square thus the model is not inflated.

The Std. Error of the Estimate (.49591) shows the average prediction error; the lower value suggests reasonable accuracy of the model. Under Change Statistics, the F Change = 129.237 with Sig. = .000 means the model is statistically significant and the predictor improves the model substantially. The df1 = 1 (one predictor) and df2 = 211 (sample minus parameters) confirm the test structure.

Finally, the Durbin–Watson value = 1.769 is close to 2, indicating no serious autocorrelation problem, which means the regression assumptions are met.

Overall, this table shows that perceptions of social media significantly and strongly predict perceptions of cultural representation, supporting your study’s hypothesis that social media plays a key role in shaping cultural understanding in Pakistan.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.783	1	31.783	129.237	.000 ^b
	Residual	51.891	211	.246		
	Total	83.674	212			

a. Dependent Variable: Perception on cultural representation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perception on Social Media

Table 30. ANOVA^a

Table 30 presents the ANOVA results of the regression model, which test whether the model as a whole is statistically significant.

The Regression Sum of Squares (31.783) represents the variation in Perception on Cultural Representation that is explained by the predictor (Perception on Social Media). The Residual Sum of Squares (51.891) shows the variation not explained by the model (other factors). The Total Sum of Squares (83.674) is the overall variation in the dependent variable. Since the regression sum is a substantial portion of the total, the model explains a meaningful amount of variance.

The F-value (129.237) is large, and the significance value (Sig. = .000) is less than .05, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant. This means the predictor variable significantly improves our ability to predict perceptions of cultural representation compared to having no predictor at all. The degrees of freedom (df = 1, 211) correspond to one independent variable and the remaining sample size.

In simple terms, this table confirms that Perception on Social Media has a significant effect on Perception on Cultural Representation, and the regression model is valid for explaining the relationship between these variables.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.536	.195		7.886	.000
	Perception on Social Media	.617	.054	.616	11.368	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Perception on cultural representation

Table 31. Coefficients^a

This table shows how strongly social media perception predicts cultural representation perception.

The Constant (1.536) is the baseline value of cultural representation perception when social media perception is zero. The coefficient (B =.617) is not standardized, indicating that the difference in the perception of the social media influence by 1 unit raises the difference in the perception of cultural representation by 0.617 units. This gives a direct positive impact. The strength of impact of the regularization is expressed by the standardized coefficient (Beta =.616). To determine a strong effect, a value of more than .60 indicates that the effect is strong. The Tuvalu (11.368) is high and Sig. =.000 is used to show that the predictor is not insignificant. Conclusion: The social media perception has a strong and influential predictive effect on the cultural representation perceptions

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2.1526	4.6200	3.7157	.38720	213
Residual	-1.65815	1.49208	.00000	.49474	213
Std. Predicted Value	-4.037	2.335	.000	1.000	213
Std. Residual	-3.344	3.009	.000	.998	213

a. Dependent Variable: Perception on cultural representation

Table 32. Residuals Statistics^a

This table checks whether the regression model fits the data well.

- The Predicted Mean (3.71) matches the actual mean of the dependent variable, showing good prediction accuracy.
- The Residual Mean = 0.000 means prediction errors balance out, which is ideal.
- The Std. Residual values range roughly between -3 and +3, which is acceptable and indicates no serious outliers.
- The Standard deviation of residuals (.49) is low, meaning the model’s prediction errors are small.

Conclusion: The regression model is statistically sound, with no major violations or extreme errors.

Bayesian Analysis of Variables

N		Posterior			95% Credible Interval	
		Mode	Mean	Variance	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Perception on Social Media	213	3.5340	3.5340	.002	3.4488	3.6192
Perception on cultural representation	213	3.7157	3.7157	.002	3.6304	3.8010

Prior on Variance: Diffuse. Prior on Mean: Diffuse.

Table 33. Posterior Distribution Characterization for One-Sample Mean

This provides a Bayesian confirmation of the average responses.

- The posterior mean for Social Media Perception = 3.53 and for Cultural Representation =
- 3.71, matching earlier results.
- The 95% credible intervals (3.44–3.62 and 3.63–3.80) are narrow, showing high precision in estimating the true population means.
- “Diffuse prior” means no strong prior assumption was imposed; results are mainly data driven.
- Conclusion: Bayesian analysis supports the earlier findings that respondents generally agree social media influences cultural perception and representation.

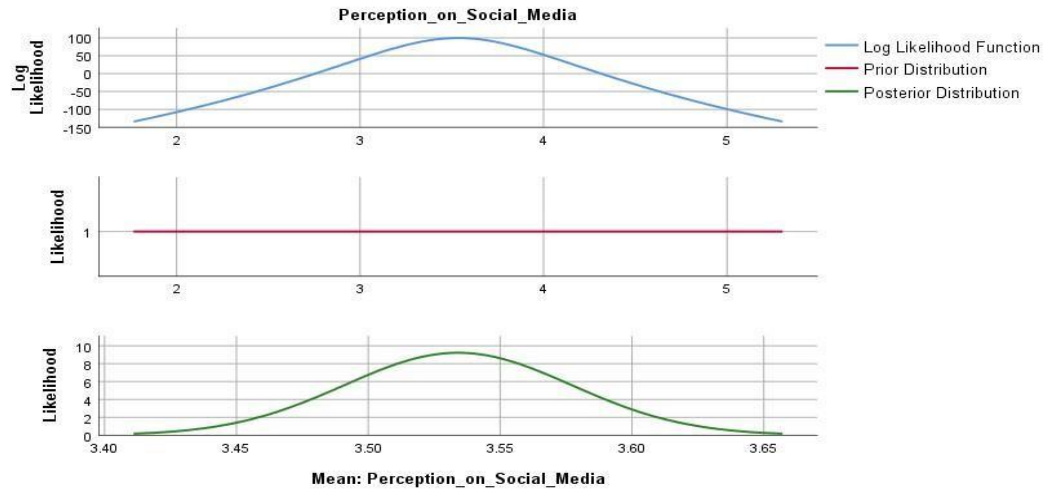


Figure 1. Perception on Social Media

This Figure 1 shows how beliefs about people’s perception of social media are updated using data. At first, the prior assumes all average perception values are equally likely (no strong assumptions). The data then points most strongly to an average perception around 3.5, shown by the peak in the likelihood. When these are combined, the posterior distribution becomes a focused curve centered near 3.5, meaning that after seeing the data, we are more confident that people’s average perception of social media is moderately positive and close to that value.

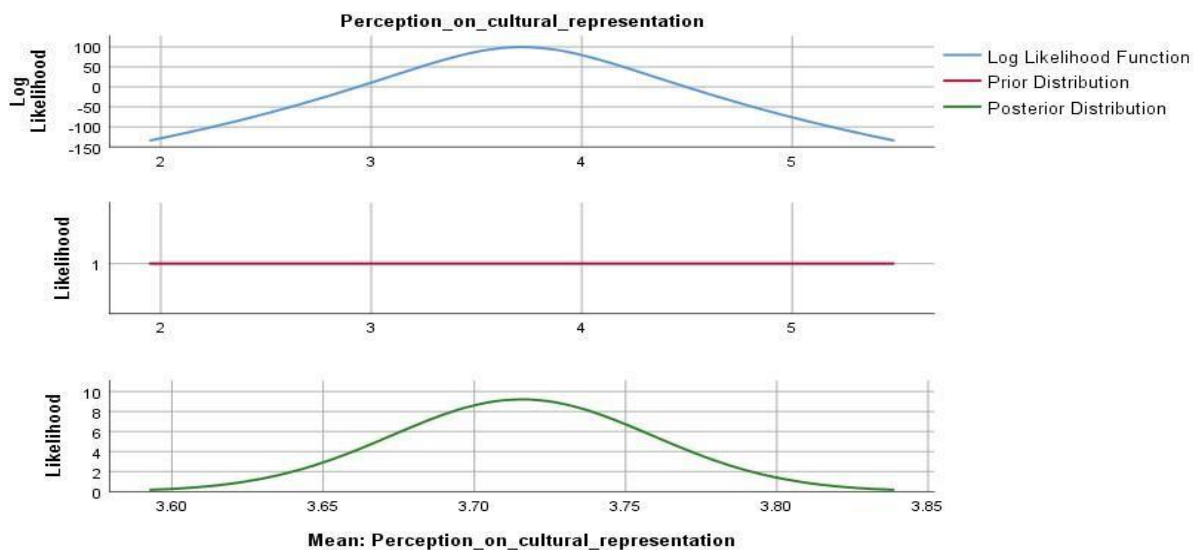


Figure 2. Perception on Cultural Representation.

This figure shows how the estimated average perception of cultural representation is updated using data. The top plot shows the likelihood, which peaks around 3.7, meaning the data supports this value most strongly. The middle plot depicts a flat prior meaning that there are no any strong assumptions on the average perception prior to seeing the data. The lower plot depicts the posterior distribution that is concentrated around 3.7 and is tighter to the point that we are rather assured of the result that upon integrating the data with the prior we have a fairly certain view that the perception people have of the cultural representation is moderately positive and near to the same.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The results of the current investigation obsess the idea that social media can be extremely influential in the formation of the society opinion about cultural diversity and provincialism in Pakistan. Most of the respondents indicated that they are an active user of social media platforms on a daily basis, which shows that they are exposed to a lot of online cultural content. The descriptive statistics indicate that the respondents had a general agreement on the fact that social media is a significant source of information about the cultural practices of various provinces. The average scores of Perception on Social Media ($M = 3.53$) and Perception on Cultural Representation ($M = 3.71$) indicate the moderate to positive perception of the power of the social media and the power of the cultural representation, respectively.

Denotes that the problems of cultural visibility, representation, and misrepresentation are distinctly identified by viewers. The frequency analysis also reveals that the issue of the unequal cultural visibility is widespread. A significant number of the respondents confirmed that there are more provincial cultures being represented on social media than others, and that the smaller or less dominant provinces are not adequately represented. A lot of the participants also felt that the distortion of the provincial cultures might also foster prejudice, discrimination and misunderstandings amongst the groups. These results confirm the argument that media discourses are not only the products of cultural diversity but they influence the way in which the cultural diversity is perceived and judged by the audience. The correlation analysis showed that there is a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between perceptions of the influence of social media and perceptions of cultural representation ($r = .616, p < .01$). It means that those people, who consider social media a potent source of opinions, tend to identify those problems concerning cultural representation, visibility, and bias as well. This relationship was further established by the regression analysis of the relationship in which perceptions of social media are shown to account 38 percent of variation in perceptions of cultural representation. The coefficient of the regression revealed that the more people believe in the power of social media, the more they are more aware of the problems of cultural representation, and social media became one of the most important explanatory factors. These findings became stronger with the support of the Bayesian analysis. These findings are in close agreement with the descriptive findings, and the discrepancy of the 95% credible intervals is quite narrow, which means that there is great confidence in estimating the perceptions of the population. The combination of the statistical data constantly point in the same direction of conclusion that the influence of social media is a potent one in influencing cultural diversity and provincial identities perception in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

This research paper concludes that media coverage especially by the social media can significantly influence social attitudes towards cultural diversity in Pakistan and provincial identities. Based on a Social Constructionist approach, the results indicate that the perceptions of cultural representation do not occur but are highly mediated by the presence of mediating narratives spread online. The social media platforms are important arenas through which cultural meanings are created, strengthened, and at times deformed to influence the interpretation of the provincial cultures as perceived nationally.

The findings reveal that social media influence both the acceptability and increased awareness of cultural diversity as well as the distribution of representative imbalances. Such provincial cultures are likely to be more visible, and smaller or marginalized provinces receive underrepresentation/stereotyping. These tendencies promote the imbalanced cultural presence and might support the pre-existing social distinctions. Meanwhile, the respondents were highly agreeing that the positive and responsible media coverage should encourage the integration of the nationalities, lessened misperceptions, and developed respect to diversity. On the whole, the paper has emphasized the two dimensions of social media as both a source of cultural awareness and a place of misrepresentation. The close correlation between the perceived social media and cultural representation promotes the importance of ethical media practices, critical media literacy, and inclusive media content. Through encouraging equal and culturally aware representation, the media professional, policymakers, and future communication workers would help in achieving higher levels of social integration and inclusion in the nation building in the diverse provincial interior of Pakistan.

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