



DIGITAL ECHOES & TRIBAL TRADITIONS: TRACING ICT-DRIVEN CULTURAL TRANSITIONS AMONG PASHTUNS IN ZHOB, BALOCHISTAN

Abdul Salam Mandokhail¹, Dr. Saeed Akbar² & Muhammad Aslam³

¹ M.Sc. Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

² Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan (**Corresponding Author**)

³ BS Student, Department of Sociology, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Abstract

Globalization, driven by rapid advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs), has had a profound influence on cultural dynamics across the globe. Among these technologies, mobile phones have emerged as powerful agents of social and cultural transformation. This study examines the impact of mobile phone usage on the cultural norms, values, and social behaviors of the Pashtun community in Zhob District, Balochistan, with a particular focus on university students. Using a sociological lens, the research investigates how mobile phones are reshaping traditional modes of communication, interpersonal relationships, and the transmission of cultural values. Findings indicate that mobile phones have become an integral part of daily life, facilitating not only communication and information access but also altering the fabric of social interactions. While these devices offer positive outcomes such as increased connectivity, exposure to global knowledge, and educational support, they also challenge conventional Pashtun cultural practices related to modesty, respect, and social cohesion. The study reveals a dual influence: mobile phones serve both as tools of empowerment and as agents of cultural disruption. This research contributes to the broader discourse on ICT and cultural change, offering insights into how traditional communities navigate modern technologies in the context of cultural preservation and adaptation.

1. Introduction

We have entered a new age of information and communication technology, which affects our culture. When humans learn to write, communication improves and makes it easier to share ideas. Life is becoming very difficult, especially in education, communication, and discoveries are happening faster than ever. Information Communication Technology facilitates the rapid exchange of information across borders, spreading lifestyle, ideas, and values. (Castells, 2009). This chapter explores the impact of modern technology on Pashtoon culture in Balochistan. Which focuses on whether these changes lead to modernization or westernization. Culture plays a vital role in shaping society and technological advancements; this cultural shift is negatively affecting Pashtoon society's national identity. With the advancement of technology, people are becoming very close, but they try to find their cultural history and protect it. We will try to know about Pashtoon and their culture briefly; A person's culture encompasses not only their material possessions but also their way of thinking and acting. Our culture is made up of what we think, do, and own. Culture is both a link to the past and a roadmap for the future. (Macionis). Technology means the use of science to solve competitive problems and make work easier. It helps us to save



time, improve perfection, and reduce effort. It allows people to exchange ideas, capital, services, values, and culture (James, 1997). The mobile users in Pakistan are growing rapidly. According to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), mobile phone users increased from 137.095 million in December 2016 to 137.095 million by January 2017, adding about 0.606 million users in a month (APP, 2017). According to PTA, the total number of subscribers to Jazz reached 51.534 million by the end of January 2017. (PTA, 2017). Teens explore technology on their phones while keeping their parents in the dark. This behavior is surely linked with their desire for individuality. The increasing demand for technology among them highlights that smartphones are essential communication weapons (Buckingham, 2008). Pakistani Culture has undergone significant transformations, with globalization being a key drive of change; the early 1990s marked a major shift, influenced by the end of the cold war and the emergence of an open global economy. Economic policies encouraged privatization and market liberalization, allowing private Banks to compete with the nationalized ones. Technological advancements, particularly in communication and information technology, expanded access to foreign media via satellite television. These developments reshaped social life and affected Pakistanis' identity (Lieve, 1991). The culture of Pashtoon in Balochistan is very rich and unique, but unfortunately, in the current era, the Pashtoon Culture is badly affected by modern technologies and the phase of modernization. Social interactions have declined. Previously, guests were warmly welcomed, elders were respected, and festivals were celebrated with joy and togetherness. Now, people focus more on personal and financial matters, limiting social bonds, traditional celebrations are losing importance, with modern trends replacing cultural values. While progress has brought convenience, it has also reduced warmth and unity in the society (Kraut, 1998). Effect of the mobile phone remained undetermined in the social research and discussion all around the world. A lot of articles and papers have been written on the uses of the mobile phone and its socio-economic impacts on local culture. This study focuses on how mobile phones affect the social lives of people in district Zhob, Balochistan, especially the youth. While modern technology has been widely discussed, the negative impact of mobile phones on local culture has received little attention in social sciences. This gap in research motivated the author to explore the influence of mobile phones on Pashtoon Culture in Zhob, considering both positive and negative effects.

2. Literature Review

This section serves as the object to present a sort of a review of scholarly work that is relevant to the research problem and previous work done. The existing literature is useful to being able to determine where to start and to strengthen the argument they make. Segmentary lineage system is very important in Pashtun society because social organization of Pashtuns is based on the kinship and tribal affiliations. Leadership, membership, and assuming responsibility guarantee internal loyalty and collective responsibility, largely a nine or ten generational interfamilial and even larger kin network. Under the segmentary lineage model, conflict resolution, leadership, and some social cohesions are sustained in kinship based on hierarchy, not centralized state institutions. Up to that time, tribal loyalty and the loyalty to extended families had been more powerful forces to decide upon political choices, economic transactions and settling of disputes than the identity of the nation. Also in the Pashtun society there is also conflict mediation by the elders and tribal leaders (Maliks or Khans) in the absence of institutionalized leadership on situational and in consultative



bases. As the primary decision-making body, Jirga system is meant to ensure use of Pashtunwali (Pashtun code of conduct) to solve disputes. However, the practice of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) is gradually eroding the traditional social structures as the developing countries are confronted with an imbalance of suitable means such as communication, leadership, and decision-making. Younger generations are digitally media perceptive, social network literate, online activists, who do not rely as much on their tribal elders for governance and conflict resolution. This change is slowly changing the social status structure of Pashtun society and making them new to a sense of community and leadership beyond kinship (Joseph, 3 August 2011). In Balochistan, old and young of the Pashtoons continue to be separated by social change, education and technological developments. In the last years, with a new modern education based and digital media, the new generation is adopting new practices, which come with the new cultural practices. Normally, these practices stand against the tradition Pashtoon norms. Alternately, this shift in language, use, family structures, and normality in these contacts bring on generational differences due to how we speak, how we address our grandparents and parents and how society does this. The older generation is the one who is less tech savvy and they reject these changes and rather they will hold on to values and customs of Pashtunwali. Consequently, ICT does not merely reshape generational relationships in the Pashtoon society but rather nurtures a cultural identity (Mr. Muhammad Rahim, June 2022). The Pashtuns (an ethnic group that mostly live in parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan) have a rich culture, which is played an important role in the language of its Pashtunwali, i.e. a traditional language. Although this unwritten code is still ethical, with values of honor (Nang), of vengeance (Badal), hospitality (Melmastia) and asylum (Nanawati), it is explicitly stated with the wounds and scars; and has a limit. However, the time has passed, and Pashtoon society has remained traditional to great extent. With strong tribal structures and deeply ingrained social norms. However, Pashtoon life has undergone significant transformations in recent decades due to the rise of ICT (information and communication technology). Social norms, traditions, language, education, and political awareness among Pashtoons have gradually been influenced by the widespread availability of the internet, social media, and digital communication tools, particularly in District Zhob. How ICT is reshaping Pashtoon culture, values, and identity is called into question by these transformations (Devasher, 2022). Pashtoon culture has become increasingly homogenized because of globalization's significant influence. New lifestyles that combine Pashtoon traditions with contemporary global trends have emerged because of increased exposure to social media, digital communication, and global entertainment. As a result, traditional social practices, language, and dress are changing to accommodate external influences, especially among younger generations. The dominance of English as a global language and the widespread use of social networking platforms have further accelerated this cultural shift. Globalization has made it harder to preserve Pashtunwali and indigenous cultural identities, but it has also made it easier to connect more people and get more information. This phenomenon is closely linked to ICT's role in reshaping cultural norms, as digital platforms provide both opportunities for cultural exchange and threats to traditional values (Amina Habibullah, 2024). One of the oldest and best-preserved traditions in the region is Pashtun culture, which is mostly practiced by the Pashtun ethnic group in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their way of life, social customs, and history are deeply ingrained in their tribal system. The Pashtunwali is the foundation of Pashtun culture. It is an



unwritten code of ethics, social behavior, and values. Melmastia (hospitality), which emphasizes generosity toward guests, even strangers, is a key principle in this traditional set of customs that govern Pashtun social life. While Badal (revenge) ensures justice through retaliation, which frequently results in blood feuds that last a lifetime, Nang (honor) plays a crucial role in maintaining one's personal and family reputation. Nanawati (asylum) exemplifies the Pashtun custom of protecting those seeking refuge, regardless of previous conflicts, and Tureh (bravery) is a highly prized quality that exemplifies the Pashtuns' pride in their bravery and valor in both personal and communal matters. Pashtuns' behavior and interactions with the outside world are shaped by these values, which are the foundation of their identity. The tribal system of Pashtun society is based on communities being divided into clans and sub-clans. The structure is patriarchal, and collective decision-making occurs through the Jirga (tribal council), an essential institution in charge of governance and resolving conflicts. Elders of the tribe have significant authority and make crucial decisions regarding social and conflictual issues. Even though this structure fosters unity and a sense of belonging, rivalries between tribes contribute to internal conflicts. Pashtun society adheres to strict norms regarding gender roles. Men are expected to be warriors, decision-makers, and protectors of family honor, while women are traditionally responsible for household affairs and maintaining cultural values. Women are kept within the confines of the community by the Purdah system, which entails isolation. Women's behavior is strongly influenced by the concept of nang, or honor, which frequently restricts their mobility and educational opportunities. However, Pashtun women are benefiting from increased educational and professional opportunities because of modernization, which is gradually challenging these norms. The Pashto language, with its extensive oral and written literary tradition, is central to the Pashtun cultural identity. Poets like Khushal Khan Khattak and Rahman Baba have helped to preserve Pashto poetry, which has historically had a significant impact on the formation of Pashtun identity. The oral transmission of folk tales and proverbs to younger generations remains an important means of transferring knowledge, values, and history. Additionally, Pashtun culture is renowned for its distinctive customs, which include a variety of social traditions and festivals. Celebrations of religion and culture like Eid and Nowruz are very important. Walwar (the bride's price) and Baraat (the wedding procession) are two elaborate customs that are often followed during marriage ceremonies. Men wear shalwar kameezs with turbans in traditional Pashtun attire, while women wear long embroidered dresses. Pashtun pride in their cultural heritage is reflected in the Attan dance, which is an essential part of their celebrations. Pashtun culture is undergoing gradual changes because of modernization, migration, and urbanization. New ideas are reshaping the perspectives of the younger generation on gender roles, family systems, and lifestyle choices, particularly in urban areas. Western clothing, mixed-gender workplaces, and new social norms brought about by globalization have sparked acceptance and resistance within Pashtun communities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is one of the most significant influences on Pashtun culture. It has significantly altered social dynamics. Pashtuns' interactions and ways of expressing their identity have changed because of social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Language use is being influenced by increased exposure to English and Urdu, and online platforms have provided a space for political activism and awareness, particularly through movements like the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM). In addition, ICT has



broken down social and gender barriers to education and employment. However, many elders of the Pashtun tradition are concerned that ICT is undermining Pashtun values and displacing younger generations from tribal traditions. Politically, Pashtuns have had a significant impact on the history and conflicts of the region. Debates about Pashtun nationalism and identity are fueled by the Durand Line, which divides Pashtun land between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Because of these divisions, movements promoting greater autonomy or a separate Pashtun state have historically emerged. From British colonial rule to the Soviet-Afghan war and the U.S.-led War on Terror, Pashtuns have also been at the center of major geopolitical conflicts (Khattak, October-2010).

The way people work and learn has been significantly altered by information and communication technology (ICT). Online education and remote employment have become increasingly common, enabling individuals to work from home and providing students with access to virtual classrooms. Collaboration, attending meetings, and completing coursework without physically being present are made simpler by digital platforms. These changes have made work and education more adaptable. It is now easier for people to maintain a personal life and work schedule. Face-to-face interactions, on the other hand, have decreased because of this shift, which were once necessary for establishing professional and academic relationships. Cultural norms regarding education and career advancement are being reshaped by ICT. In the past, being successful meant going to school or working in an office. This notion has been challenged by online learning and remote work. Convenience is one benefit of technology, but there are downsides as well, such as less personal interaction and an increased reliance on digital tools. ICT will continue to have an impact on social norms and cultural norms as it expands (Selwyn, 2016). The traditional joint family structure in Pakistan has been weakened by information technology, particularly social media. Western individualism is increasingly influencing younger generations, which goes against Pakistani cultural values of collectivism and family unity. Zia (2013) asserts that excessive exposure to digital media has diminished face-to-face interactions, weakened family ties, and diminished traditional respect for elders (Zia, 2013). A mobile phone is a device that can make and receive phone calls over a radio link while travelling through a large geographic region. It is also referred to as a cellular phone, cell phone or hand phone. It accomplishes this by making a connection to a cellular network that a mobile phone provider has set up, giving it access to the public phone network. The first functional phone was installed at a base station in New York by Dr. Martin Cooper in 1973, Mr. Cooper and Motorola brought the Motorola Dyna-Tac phone technology to New York for public demonstration. Timeline from 1977 to 1979, testing of the public mobile phones started, initially in Chicago, and then in other US cities, Japan enrolled in the testing program (Dr Muhammad Kamran Khan, 1 June 2024). Numerous teens and preteens use cell phones every day. Cell phones are utilized to micromanage daily activities with parents or among friends and acquaintances. Having a cell phone in case the child needs to call a parent in an emergency phone also provides a sense of security. 84% of respondents to a 2012 Time; Mobility Poll said they "couldn't go a single day without their mobile devices. Approximately 206 survey studies that have been published indicate that 27% of parents and 50% of teenagers believe they are addicted to their phones. (Dr Muhammad Kamran Khan, 1 June 2024). The development and production of mobile phones have often been influenced by national government policies, such as regulatory difficulties, throughout their global history. The distribution of third-generation (3G)

licenses in nations like the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United States demonstrates this. Globalization has largely been the driving force behind significant societal shifts in mobile phone production and usage over time. Along with major social shifts, such as increased mobility and the rise of automobile culture during the early development of mobile technology, political factors have also shaped this evolution (Lacohee H, 2003). Mobile phone addiction has emerged as one of the most common non-drug addictions, according to some psychiatrists, and it is not distinct from any other type of addiction. Even though they are aware of it, some users are overly dependent on their phones, according to several academics. The terms "mobile phone addiction" and "smartphone addiction" are the ones that are most frequently used to describe this kind of addiction (R, 2016). Pakistan's culture is being influenced by Western media distributed digitally. Traditional practices like folk music and regional attire are being reduced because of the increasing number of young Pakistanis who are adopting Western clothing, language, and lifestyles. As an increasing number of people communicate digitally in English and Roman Urdu, local languages and dialects are disappearing (Muhammad, 2018). Mobile phones has a significant impact on Pashtun's cultural values, social interactions, and generational dynamics. Modern ICT tools are increasingly reshaping attitudes, communication styles, and even gender norms, despite the fact that Pashtunwali and traditional tribal structures have long provided a stable cultural identity. Digital platforms are exposing young people to ideas and cultures from around the world, especially in District Zhob, Balochistan, where there is a clear generational divide between the younger generation and the older generation. Although many studies have been done but still there is lack of research on small districts and rural areas by investigating how ICT and mobile phones are actively transforming cultural norms and social behaviors in District Zhob and providing new insights into generational change within the Pashtun context, this study aims to contribute to this understudied field.

3. Research Methodology

This study used a quantitative research design, discovering the influence of modern technology on the Pashtoon culture of district Zhob (Balochistan).

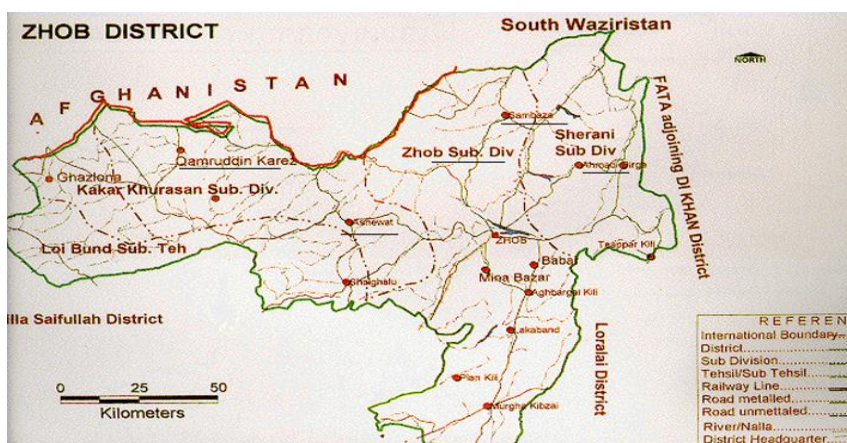


Figure 1: Administrative Map of District Zhob, Balochistan



Figure 2: Map Showing District Zhob and all other Districts of Balochistan (<https://pakistanalmanac.com/balochistan-zhob/>)



The study was conducted in Islamabad's three large universities:

1. International Islamic University
2. National University of Modern Languages
3. Quaid-e-Azam University

While this study took samples from 75 Pashtoon students in the mentioned universities.

The data was analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)

4. Result and Discussion

Table 1: Respondents' Age, Family Type and Educational Level

Age		
18-22	36	48.00
23-27	38	50.7
Above 27	1	1.3
Total	75	100
Family Type		
Nuclear	19	25.3
Joint	51	68.0
Extended	5	6.7
Total	75	100
Educational Level		
Primary-Intermediate	13	17.3
Undergraduate-Graduation	42	56.0
Above Graduation	20	26.7
Total	75	100

The table 1 shows that the majority of respondents are young, with 98.7% between the ages of 18 and 27. This indicates that the study primarily reflects the perspectives of young people. Since only 1.3% of respondents are older than 27 years old, older people are underrepresented. The table 1 further explains the family type that 68% of respondents have joint families, while 6.7% belong to extended families, 25.3% live in nuclear families; the data shows that joint families' percentage is higher. The table 1 also indicates that a majority of the respondents, 56%, are currently studying at the undergraduate or graduation level, while 26.7% have education above graduation and 17.3% fall within the primary to intermediate level. This shows that most participants are well-educated youth, which is important in understanding how education influences their adoption and use of technology in daily life.

The Pie Chart 1 parental education, only 29.4 percent of respondents' parents have a degree or higher, 26.6% are illiterate, shows 44% have a primary to intermediate education. The Chart 2 is regarding increased regular contacts reveals that a majority of respondents 46.7% agrees and 40% strongly agree believe that mobile phones have improved their ability to stay in touch with others. The Chart 3 shows decreased regular contacts presents a contrasting view, where 26% agree and 20% strongly agree that personal interactions have lessened. This indicates that while mobile phones promote virtual contact, they may also reduce the frequency of traditional, face-to-face socialization, reflecting a shift in how people interact in the digital age.

Chart 1: Parental Educational Level

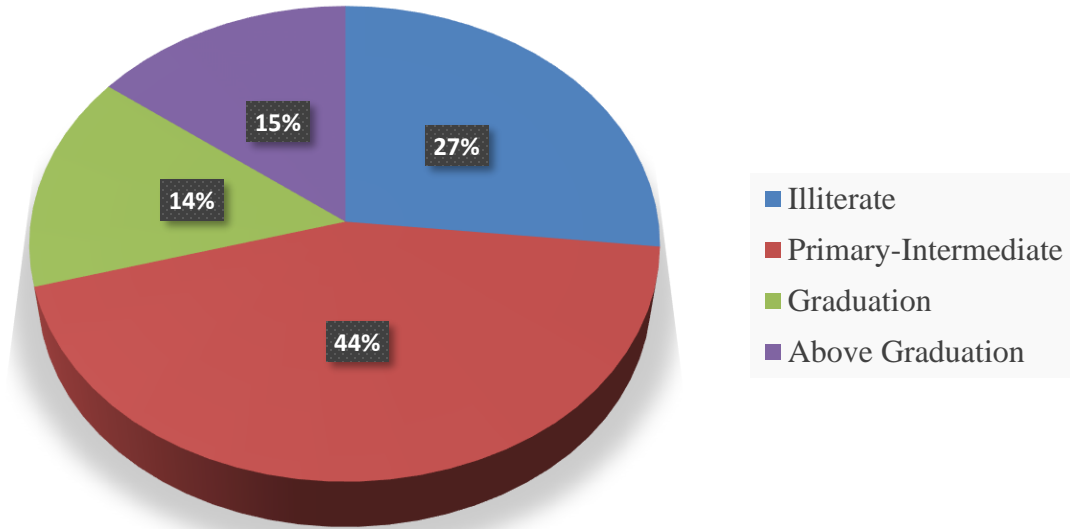


Chart 2: Increased Regular Contact

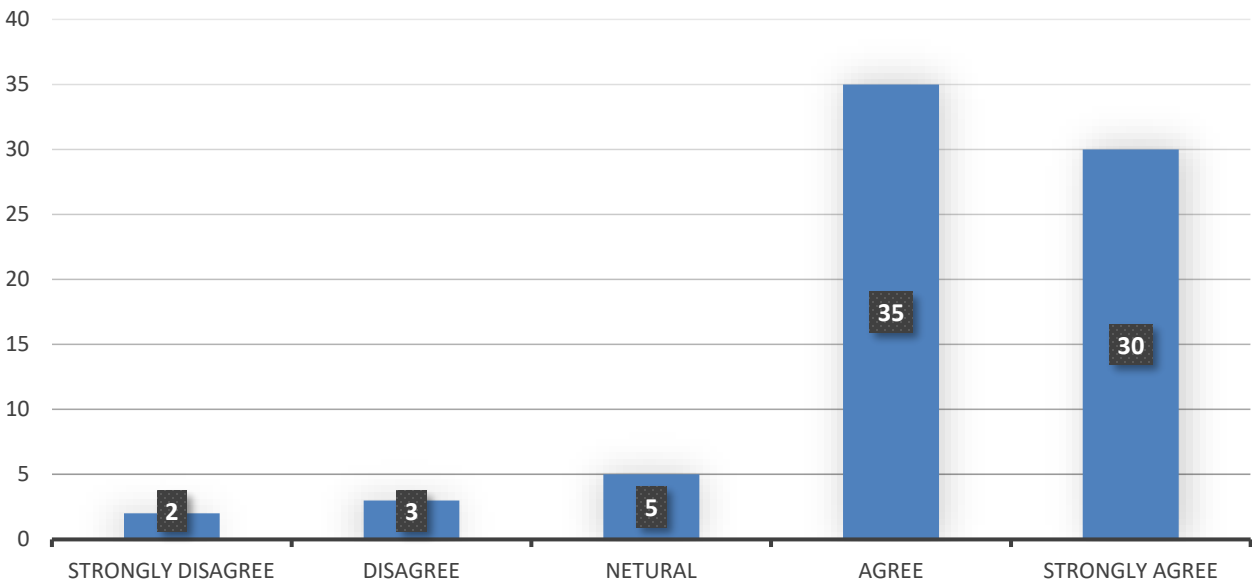


Chart 3: Decreased Regular Contacts

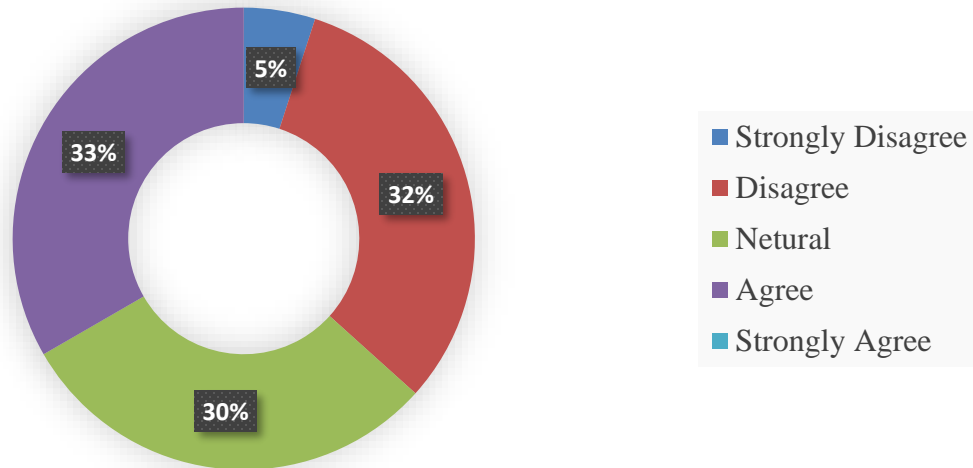
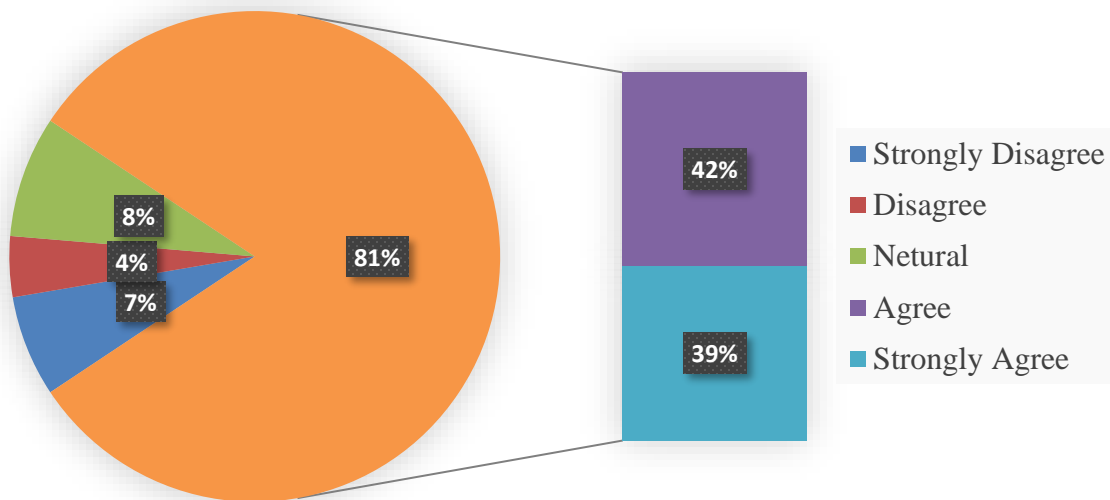


Table 2: Decrease in Outdoor Activities

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	5	6.7
Disagree	10	13.3
Neutral	14	18.7
Agree	27	36
Strongly Agree	18	24
Total	75	100

Participation in Social Activities		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	7	9.3
Disagree	13	17.3
Neutral	19	25.3
Agree	22	29.3
Strongly Agree	14	18.7
Total	75	100

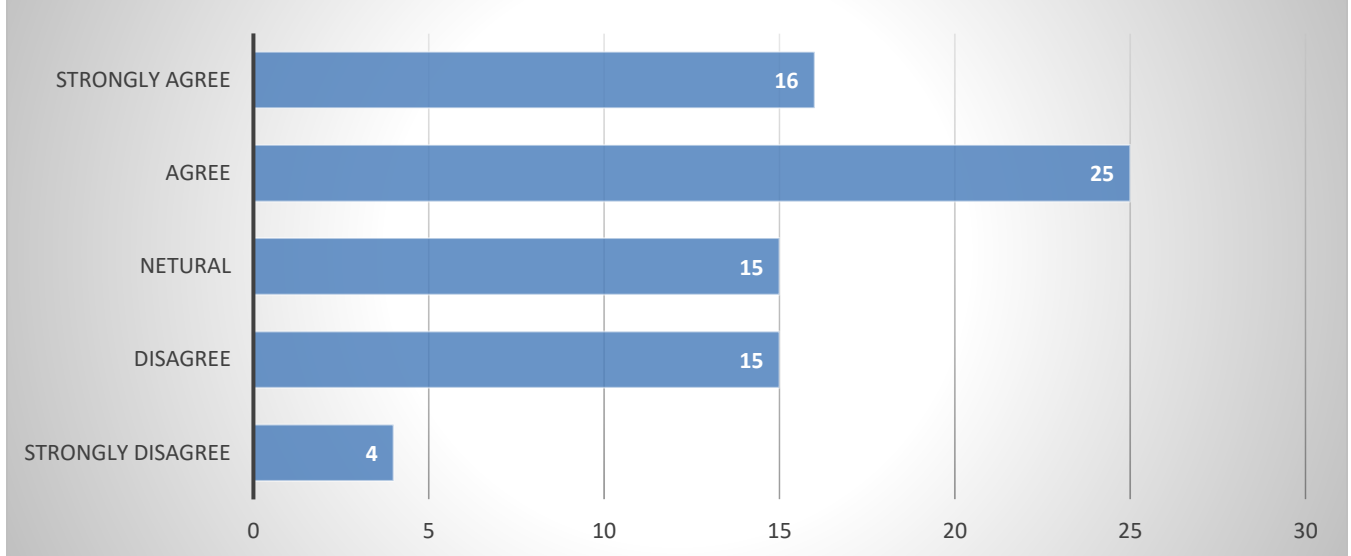
Chart 4: Awareness of Global Issues



The data in Table 2 regarding outdoor activities indicates that 36% of respondents agreed and 24% strongly agreed that mobile phone usage has led to a decrease in outdoor activities, indicating a shift from physical to digital engagement in free time. Only a small percentage disagreed, the respondents feel their outdoor routines have been affected by technology. In terms of participation in social activities, the responses are more mixed 29.3% agreed and 18.7% strongly agreed that they still participate, while 26.6% (combined strongly disagree and disagree) feel otherwise. On the other hand, the table about awareness of global issues exhibits a strongly positive trend, with 42.7% agreeing and strongly agreeing that mobile phones have increased awareness.

Table 3: Newspaper and Magazines Reading

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	3	4.0
Disagree	8	10.7
Neutral	22	29.3
Agree	24	32.0
Strongly Agree	18	24.0
Total	75	100

Chart 5: Distribution of Respondent Regarding Negative Effects on Studies

The influence of mobile technology on adopting other cultures is highlighted in Chart 6, with 36% and 44% indicating that they are influenced by other cultures. This majority response clearly demonstrates a cultural shift among youth, in which exposure to global content is altering patterns of language, dress, lifestyle, and thinking. The Chart 5 shows that 33.3% of respondents agreed and 21.3% strongly agreed that mobile phone use has had a negative effect on their studies; while 20%, each remained neutral or disagreed. The Table 3 presents the respondents' habits regarding reading newspapers and magazines. A combined 56% (agree and strongly agree) indicated that they still engage in this activity, while 29.3% remained neutral. The Chart 7 shows that 34.7% agree and 13.3% strongly agree that they actively engage in online chatting, while 28% disagreed. This reflects the growing role of digital communication in daily social life, replacing traditional forms of in-person interaction among the younger generation. The Table 7 explores respondents' trust in online relationships. A significant number of 26.7% strongly disagree and 17.3% disagree, express low trust in such relations, while only 28% show agreement or strong agreement.

According to Table 5, only 25.3% of respondents believe that Pashtoon-Wali and Ghairat are still actively followed, with many respondents responding with the answer "No." This indicates a significant decline in the practice and influence of traditional Pashtoon values among the younger generation, possibly due to modernization and exposure to alternative lifestyles. The Table 9 presents that 36% of respondents still have an interest in classical Pashtoon music, whereas 64% do not. This clearly demonstrates a shift in cultural preferences and suggests that modern or global forms of entertainment are taking the place of traditional cultural expressions like music. According to Table 10, 56% of respondents shows that the "traditional Pashtoon marriage system" is still in use, while 44% disagree. According to Table 11, 45.3% of respondents and 54.7% do not agree that society is becoming abnormal. This split shows a divided perception where some view rapid social and cultural changes as problematic, while others see them as part of normal societal evolution.

Chart 6: Adopting Other Culture

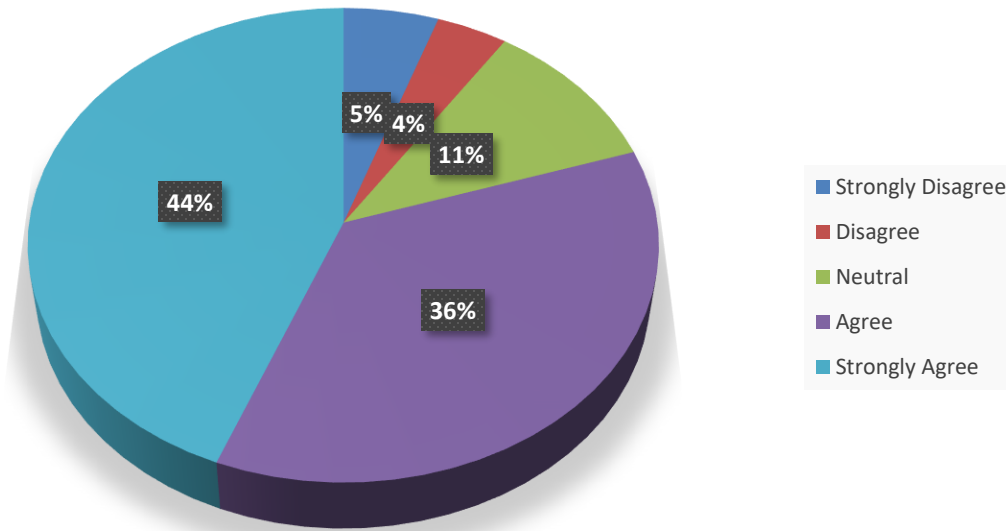


Chart 7: Online Chatting

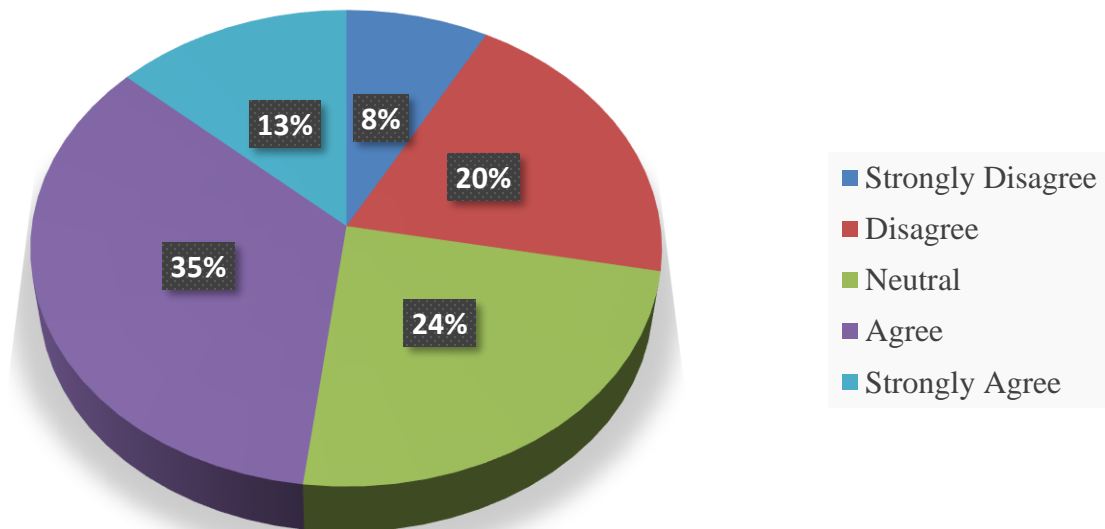




Table 5: Trust on Online Relations

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	20	26.7
Disagree	13	17.3
Neutral	21	28.0
Agree	14	18.7
Strongly Agree	7	9.3
Total	75	100

Table 6: Pashtoon-Wali and Ghairat

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	25.3
No	56	74.7
Total	75	100
Pshtoon Classical Music		
Yes	27	36
No	48	64
Total	75	100
Traditional Pashtoon Marriage System		
Yes	42	56
No	33	44
Total	75	100
Societal Abnormality		
Yes	34	45.3
No	41	54.7
Total	75	100

5. Recommendations

- Government, cultural, and arts agencies should design and implement targeted awareness programs highlighting the negative impacts of excessive smartphone use.
- Members of the community should utilize technology to meet essential needs while avoiding excessive use that may contribute to cultural and social decline.
- Priority should be given to promoting localized research that examines the impact of Information and Communication Technology on Pashtun culture, ensuring culturally relevant insights and solutions.



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