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The Social Impact of Globalization on Traditional Textile Communities in Pakistan

Syeda Farhat Kazmi¹, Jahanzaib Afridi², Hisamuddin³

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¹**Syeda Farhat Kazmi**

Lecturer, Department of Art and Design, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir
Muzaffarabad, Pakistan
farhatkazmi620@gmail.com

²**Jahanzaib Afridi**

Lecturer, Department of Art and Design, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir
Muzaffarabad, Pakistan
jahanzaib.afridi@ajku.edu.pk

³**Hisamuddin**

Lecturer, Institute of Art and Design, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan
hisamuddin@usindh.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This research examines how globalization affects traditional Pakistani textile communities by analyzing Multan and Bahawalpur in addition to Swat and Sindh which retain a strong heritage of textile arts. Through qualitative research the investigation conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 participants including artisans as well as community elders and NGO representatives to achieve broad knowledge. Main outcomes revealed the decline of cultural identity combined with shifts in gender roles together with economic instability and survival strategies adopted by affected communities. The production of mass-manufactured textiles along with synthetic fabrics resulted in reduced handmade craft sales which damaged artisan cultural pride while putting traditional capabilities at risk. Women working in the textile industry obtained financial freedom by growing independent yet must now handle both home duties and career obligations. Changing economic conditions resulting from industrial competition together with limited market opportunities have caused numerous artisans to stop working. Artisans demonstrate their resistance to these obstacles with digital marketing strategies and cooperative models alongside branding methods thus maintaining their cultural heritage.

Introduction

Through increased connections between global economies and societies Globalization affects the basic operations of local communities. Local textile handlers face severe changes because their traditions depend strongly on knowledge shared within families and their community. Through globalization these communities gain access to international buyers and better cultural markets but face major social challenges in present times (Judijanto & Aslan, 2024). Industrial fashion production and fast consumer trends damage both traditional textiles making methods and unique industry character (Syahrudin & Haris, 2025).

Historically workers engaged in traditional textile production were more than economic producers. Traditional textile making backed cultural growth, social structure and neighborhood unity particularly across Asia, Africa, Latin America and parts of Europe (Grötsch, 2025). The members of these communities depend on handloom weaving as well as traditional arts for textile production. The international textile industry and multinational companies now dominate global markets to the point that they eliminate local markets and outdated ways of making textiles which breaks down community ties (Tanghetti et al., 2025).

The loss of community traditions affects both gender responsibilities and knowledge systems which creates behavior clashes between generations. These changes also force people to move and split from neighborhood groups that support them. The majority of artisans who are women in these craft roles suffer both financial and social power loss compared to men once automated equipment replaces traditional methods. The business use of cultural items causes problems related to proper usage procedures and inappropriate cultural borrowing methods (Grötsch, 2025).

Research Objectives

1. To explore the cultural and social transformations of traditional textile communities under globalization.
2. To examine the gendered impacts of globalization within these communities.
3. To analyze disruptions in traditional labor, identity, and generational roles.
4. To investigate community-level strategies for adaptation and resilience

Literature Review

The review section examines academic works which explore social consequences when globalization affects traditional textile communities. The analysis integrates previous research findings to investigate how globalization affects the cultural identity along with gender roles and economic state and adaptive measures in these artisan communities. Academic papers lay the groundwork for examining the wider scope of challenges that textile artisans face in Pakistan because of transformational changes.

1. Cultural Transformation and Identity Loss

Changes taking place in traditional textile communities today stem from globalization because companies sell their cultural items widely without personal touches. Traditional garments hold advanced meanings because they show the history of families and areas (English, 2013). Global buyers often remove textile heritage meaning during their international marketing efforts. Indigenous artisans have lost their authority in their cultural traditions through cultural appropriation. Modern brands face allegations because they borrow traditional designs from ikat, adire, and Otomi embroidery without approving how their origin communities make money from these fabric styles. Mass production of textiles makes them less valuable to their culture and threatens the feelings of identity among their creators (Roy, 1999). Modern society has changed the way communities understand their own traditional ways of living. Young people in rural regions cease traditional crafts because they see them as obsolete for profit while choosing educational or service industry careers instead. People lose their interest in local crafts when modernization occurs which weakens their cultural roots. Globalization helps people around the world better understand where textile heritage is from. By using branding and ethical trade methods artisans have rebuilt cultural worth and made their products known to new audiences. These advantages from globalization always benefit specific groups who either have strong connections or external partnerships (Rahaman et al., 2024).

2. Gender Dynamics and Social Displacement

Women take part in many textile production roles throughout traditional textile workshops which divide work between

genders. Globalization has changed how people do and assign manual textile work. Some women succeed by connecting to international business models and cooperatives but many others lose their jobs because textile mechanization and worldwide purchasing drive them out. South Asian research reveals that textile factories choose male workers since they perform better under industrial settings whereas women artisans become marginalized from employment opportunities (Bose, 2024). This development has made women rely more heavily on money while making them weaker in society. Weavers in Varanasi lost their work because modern polyester saris can be produced and sold at lower prices (Cruz et al., 2024).

Certain women have taken on pivotal roles to make positive changes today. NGOs help women develop skills through training programs and support medical and marketing needs at work. Women cooperatives in Peru and Guatemala offer ways to keep traditional culture alive and make sure women thrive under challenging conditions. Although efforts are underway the difference between male and female roles remains obvious. Women have limited participation in global trade partnerships and they earn lower salaries than males despite their work contributions. Despite global market expansion these communities suffer from increased gender unfairness in their textile sector operations (Kanupriya, 2024).

3. Disruption of Social Structures and Intergenerational Knowledge

Modern global trade strongly affects how people transmit knowledge through their societies. Families and clans once shared textile abilities with each other which helped people stay connected to their culture (Tang & Chan, 2024). The current global trends change social systems when young people move away to cities or study modern subjects instead of learning traditional skills. People from different generations now have less traditional learning opportunities between them. Investigations demonstrate that several skilled textile masters do not discover successors resulting in the disappearance of their custom techniques and designs (Kaharudin et al., 2024). The isolated textile communities lose their practical knowledge while they also suffer breakdown of shared history and customs.

Market liberalization has reduced the effectiveness of group-based partner organizations such as guild and caste-based cooperatives. The global marketplace drives people to focus on their own success and breaks down labor practices that rely on group efforts. The weakening of traditional community organizations makes it harder for artisans to set favorable costs during production and ensures quality standards or stand united. Several different methods today exist to share industry information. Communities teach traditional crafts in schools or maintain digital methods to store information about making techniques. Traditional communities can take global methods and modify them to benefit their ways of life as long as funding continues (Dutto, 2025).

4. Resilience, Adaptation, and Global Opportunities

The tradition textile makers keep proving their endurance by switching to new ways of living such as creating networks for technology and business improvements. New non-profit organizations and ethical fashion groups help artists reach global buyers with better market conditions. Joint business practices help communities survive difficult times. Artisan cooperatives from various countries join their skills and resources to handle workforce protection better while obtaining design help and buyer connections. These setups benefit both society and the community because they hold profits within their neighborhood (Fetzer, 2025).

Digital technology provides new methods for businesses to reach additional customers globally. Weaving and dyeing businesses find direct international customers through the online marketplaces Etsy Instagram and artisan dedicated e-commerce sites. despite digital skills and network setup problems modern websites create opportunities to avoid unfair middlemen. People discover new ways to develop their historic crafts by turning them into premium cultural items. Organizations that support artisans are successfully placing handcrafted textiles into special market segments where they sell at premium prices. Professionals state that these adaptation approaches must only introduce commercial elements carefully to preserve cultural traditions (Ghosh et al., 2025).

Research shows that strong policies must defend creative ideas plus offer money assistance and teach cultural traditions. The success of artistic innovators depends heavily on getting proper support in today's worldwide marketplace.

Methodology

The research employed qualitative methods to explore the social effects that occur when globalization impacts traditional textile communities in Pakistan. The study focused on Multan, Bahawalpur, and Swat, as these regions have historically

demonstrated exceptional textile craftsmanship, including Ajrak printing, handloom weaving, and traditional embroidery. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants, comprising male and female artisans, master weavers, and community elders. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences. Interviews were conducted in the participants' native languages and later transcribed into English by the researcher. In addition to interviews, direct observations were made within artisan workshops, household-based weaving units, and local markets to document non-verbal interactions, working conditions, and social dynamics influencing these communities. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step model. All participants were informed of the study's purpose and gave their consent prior to participation. Ethical standards were rigorously maintained, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality at all stages of the research.

Results and Discussion

The research produces four substantial themes which showcase how social dynamics change due to globalization among these communities. The research identifies distinct patterns through which globalization impacts traditional cultural practices alongside gender roles and economic situations as well as revealed coping methods.

Theme 1: Erosion of Cultural Identity

Traditional textile communities are losing their cultural heritage as this pattern continues over time. Textile factories around the world produce synthetic materials cheaply so customers no longer need to buy handcrafted products. Both changes to artisans' income levels and their connection to their cultural roots happened because of this trend. People in our study pointed out that tonight's generation considers conventional textile production outdated.

A Respondent narrated:

"Since the start of my life I've practiced this art and received the design heritage from my ancestors. Both of my children avoid staying near me when I am doing my work. For generations they taught their children this tradition but their grandchildren do not understand its worth. Our traditions are fading at a rapid pace because it damages me to witness it happen."

The shared meaning of artistic elements from particular regions gets weakened when companies make identical patterns for mass distribution. Maintaining cattle fabric crafts depends on keeping cultural features connected between people.

Theme 2: Transformation of Gender Roles

The global economy transformed usual male and female relationships in textile-producing homes. Before globalization women usually worked with their families to make textiles in the home space but mostly finished and embroidered products. The rising economic strain and industry changes have prompted women to seek independent professional tasks in public. Certain women began working for online sellers and export businesses which gave them more control over their money.

Respondent stated:

"Before my work limited to creating outfits for my children and beautifying household sheets at home. Now customers from boutiques and city clients place their orders with me. The new work makes me better at handling delivery services and financial tasks. It makes me proud but life gets tougher since I need to handle food preparation washing and childrearing tasks."

Although women gained new powers through this change they now face more work due to having to manage both their households and businesses simultaneously. Many families now rely on women as primary earners since male workers have left their homes to seek employment.

Theme 3: Economic Insecurity and Decline in Livelihood Sustainability

Handloom workers from every research area experienced regular financial instability. Industrial textile production has forced handloom workers out of their jobs because they cannot match price or production levels of factories. Small factories struggle to survive as they face restricted market participation and material expense increases force them away from their traditional textile work.

Respondent Shared:

"My loom sits idle for days. When I sell my products at the market customers buy less expensive machine-made textiles. Individuals who display interest in their work demonstrate a strong desire to buy at very low prices. During many weeks I do not make any money from my activities. Several rickshaw drivers entered the profession because they need income

to survive.”

The unstable order flow combined with relying on middlemen adds to money problems because professional organizations never assist them. Several artisans told about their coworkers who left their crafts to become day workers or rickshaw drivers because their economic stability was vulnerable against global competition.

Theme 4: Adaptive Strategies and Community Resilience

After globalization hit their sector textile communities showed strong abilities to withstand difficulties. Many artisans now use online marketing tools to sell their products to new buyers across all corners of the world. Artisans now form shared business arrangements that let them save money and reach more customers by using common business assets. Through their association with an NGO women artisan in Sindh joined forces as a group enabling them to showcase their work at exhibitions and trade fairs.

One participant explained:

“An NGO supported us to create a group. I worked independently until then and had difficulty finding people to purchase from me. Our group now joins exhibitions and partners to share creative materials. Our combined strength helps us manage large orders and makes buyers see us as professional producers. Our groupwork allows us more confidence in our future.”

People now display their products as handmade and environmentally-friendly for consumers who want both authenticity and sustainability products. The new projects help artisans keep working and bring back their pride in their historical handicraft ability.

Discussion

Research outcomes show globalization changes Pakistani textile communities deeply and affects their social ways of life economically and culturally. The main outcome shows cultural identity slowly disappearing. Local market demand for handcrafted products reduced sharply when foreign-made textiles arrived in large quantities (Fetzer, 2025). The adoption of manufactured fabrics and set design patterns has made handloom weaving and Ajrak printing along with embroidery too expensive to operate. Artisans today feel depressed because young family members see their old culture work methods as useless for today's economy. Traditional cultural materials from specific regions are disappearing because of these losses to the local heritage. Young people avoid learning these crafts which makes it harder to save them from extinction.

People within these communities discovered new ways for men and women to perform their roles. Women typically took care of textile creation in their homes during past times. Women now take different paths to join the textile industry due to worldwide market integration. Women today work alone to produce products for internet and city customers. The new business opportunities have made women more independent but added extra workload on their shoulders. Women now share household duties with their work outside the home and this new balance affects the entire family. From certain places women now generate most household income since male workers migrated for work (Judijanto & Aslan, 2024). People now have altered gender roles at home and in society yet struggle with organizing their schedule properly and keeping work time separate from personal life.

The problem of uncertain money earned clear importance through the research. Industrial textile firms crowded out traditional handcraft producers because they cannot offer their products at such low prices and deliver such large quantities (Dutto, 2025). Economic problems for artisans grow because orders arrive unpredictably and they depend on middlemen while missing out on both domestic and overseas market opportunities (Kanupriya, 2024). Rising production expenses and lower purchase numbers force artisans to stop their craft and join day labor or begin driving rickshaws to support themselves (Ghosh et al., 2025). Global changes expose small artisan businesses to market pressures that make their operations no longer sustainable. When institutions fail to help people, they need it creates strong financial concern in their communities.

The findings show remarkable strength and flexibility at work within the affected communities. Digital platforms and social media platforms help skilled craftsmen sell their handcrafted items worldwide to consumers who want ethical natural or cultural product choices. Artists band together to create small businesses that let them lower expenses while getting better market entry. Female artisans combine their resources when they join group exhibitions and trade fairs so they can sell more products to buyers who offer better business terms. By adopting these methods artisans can both make a profit and regain their satisfaction in carrying on their traditional artistic work. The desire to change and the

development of fresh market options have helped certain artisans stay competitive despite worldwide pressure on the industry.

Conclusion

Globalization created complicated effects by both helping and harming Pakistani traditional textile makers. It has changed traditional ways of life and weakened skilled hands in textile due to modern factories which made female artisans lose their jobs. The changes have both affected how people maintain their cultural norms and how strongly they belong together. At the same time as globalization affects businesses it enables innovative responses and stronger survival abilities. Artisans now build success using online connection to global markets plus merging forces through cooperatives alongside applying traditional roots for selling to buyers whose choices respect culture. Many communities continue to preserve their cultural norms while finding ways to stay profitable thanks to their adjustments. Globalization continues to challenge local textile makers effectively. Support through ongoing laws and training plus development of textile production facilities improve artisan earning potential while protecting traditional arts of India.

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