

DIGITAL DEVICES: CHANGING HOUSEHOLD INTERACTIONS AND SOCIALIZATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of digital devices such as mobile phones and tablets has significantly reshaped patterns of household interaction and socialization in Pakistan. Traditionally, family structures in Pakistan have emphasized face-to-face communication, intergenerational bonding, and collective decision-making within joint or extended family systems. However, with the increasing accessibility of affordable smartphones and internet connectivity, family communication patterns are undergoing a profound transformation. This research explores how the widespread use of digital devices is altering social dynamics within households, influencing both intergenerational relationships and broader socialization processes. Drawing on sociological and social work perspectives, the study investigates the dual role of digital devices: as facilitators of connection and as potential disruptors of traditional social bonds. On one hand, mobile and tablet technologies enable family members to maintain contact across geographic distances, provide platforms for virtual learning, and support rapid information exchange. On the other hand, excessive reliance on digital communication often reduces direct interpersonal engagement, weakens intergenerational dialogue, and contributes to challenges such as digital dependency and social isolation within households. The research situates these transformations within the unique socio-cultural context of Pakistan, where values of collectivism, family cohesion, and respect for elders are deeply embedded in everyday life. By examining household-level case studies and survey data, the study highlights emerging patterns of negotiation between traditional cultural norms and modern digital practices. The findings underscore the need for balanced digital use, media literacy, and community-based interventions to strengthen healthy family interactions. Ultimately, this research contributes to understanding how technology-driven social change is reconfiguring family life and socialization in contemporary Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital spreading rate has been one of the most radicalizing forces in the contemporary societies not only within the global communication but also within the family internal lives. This rising popularity of smart phones, tablets and the internet

connectivity is socially radically changing Pakistani society, a country that has a record of household based on joint/extended family unit, where face-to-face communication is emphasized, intergenerational unity and group decision-making. This transition

ought to be a topic in academia, as its implications have extended much further into the socialization dynamics, family integration and the cultural survival.

Family has always been a central point of discussion in sociological and social work literature as a socializing institution. Pakistani culture has traditionally been one of the main locations, where collectivism, respect to the elder and family duties are taught (Qureshi, 2018). Contrary to the family relations of Western countries where individualism usually forms the basis of family, family systems of Pakistan have traditionally placed the emphasis on mutual responsibilities and interdependence. Nonetheless, with the emergence of digital devices, there has been a parallel form of interaction, which coexists with face-to-face interaction and, at times, opposes it (Hussain and Batool, 2021).

The use of digital technologies in Pakistan has grown exponentially within the last 20 years. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (2023) estimates that mobile phone penetrations have reached over 190 million connections whereas the internet subscriptions are at over 125 million. This has been ensured by cheap data packages, growing broadband infrastructure, and adoption of social media platforms by culture. The results of this growth are especially obvious on the household level, with smartphones and tablets not only tools of communication, but also entertainment and learning platforms, as well as arenas of social bargaining.

There are two implications of these changes. On the one hand, digital devices enhance the process of linking the family across geographical borders, enable speedy exchange of information and provide a new channel of learning. Nevertheless, they can also lead to the unwanted outcomes since they can cripple the intergenerational communication, facilitate the digital addiction, and reorganize the power balance of the families. The tendency to the uncontrolled spread of digital technologies in Balochistan and other places is transforming the traditional modes of communication, giving the prospect of being empowered and threatening the exclusion. His wisdom brings out the two-sidedness of digital gadgets as both instigators and disruptors of the home.

The study will seek to examine how the digital equipment will alter the relationship and socializing trends of the Pakistani households in specific with regard to the conflict between technology and tradition. Placing the discussion within the context of a larger sociocultural perspective of a Pakistani society, the research would add to the discourse of the digital transformation, family cohesion, and cultural sustainability, which already exists. It creates sociological concept of socialization, communication research and social work concept to allow subtle influences of digital devices to mediate family life. The new trends in the negotiation between the old and the new digital practices applied in the article are also elaborated using the case studies and the survey information.

By so doing, this study highlights the necessity to be moderate in the use of the digital devices. The media literacy, community awareness and policy frameworks play a significant role in ensuring that the positive impacts of digital technologies are realized without undermining the cultural values of respect, collectivism, and interaction among people on which Pakistani households are based. Finally, this paper places digital devices not only as communication devices but also as social change agents, requiring keen scholarly analysis.

1. Research problem

Though it was reported in the international literature that the mobile devices transform the domestic life there, there is a lack of systematic research on how the processes take place in the joint-family and collectivist context of Pakistan. There is mixed initial evidence of both facilitation (preservation of long-distance connections, education access) and disruption (lack of face-to-face conversation, generational conflicts), yet current research is frequently localized, descriptive, or restricted to urban middle classes. The research problem that will be discussed here is; How are digital devices transforming the way households are interacting and the way socialization is taking place in Pakistan, and what factors mediate whether the changes will reinforce or weaken family cohesion?

2. Research objectives

This study pursues the following interconnected objectives:

- To analyze how device use alters everyday communication routines, decision-making processes, and intergenerational interaction.
- To identify the enabling functions of digital devices for household well-being (e.g., education, health, diasporic contact).
- To examine the disruptive potentials of device use (e.g., digital dependency, erosion of face-to-face dialogue, privacy conflicts).
- To propose evidence-based recommendations for media literacy, community interventions, and policy measures that support balanced digital use within families.

3. Historical and Cultural Context of Family Interactions in Pakistan

Family, historically, has been the foundation of the Pakistani society, and the key source of socialization, moral and emotional support. Compared to most western societies where most families consist of nuclear families, Pakistan has always been typified by the high holding of joint and extended families. In these buildings, several generations tend to co-exist under one roof with obligations the same and shared spirit (Alavi, 2001). They are the expressions of a more collectivist South Asian orientation, in which personal interests take a back seat to familial and community interests (Hofstede, 2011). These types of families have affected the dynamics of household interaction and the culture of communication by face-to-face communication due to the interdependence that these types of families present.

4. The Traditional Role of Family Structures

In the Pakistani traditional families, family members, especially the aged, are central in the decision-making process, conflict mediation and passing of cultural and religious values. The culture of respecting elders is a very strong tradition, and the younger generations are obliged to obey the authority of parents and grandparents. Such deference is neither a culture-based norm nor just a type of social control that establishes intergenerational sustainability of norms and traditions (Khan, 2019). Daily experiences in families were traditionally based

on common meals, shared events, and oral narratives, which were places of intergenerational communication and continuation of values (Qureshi, 2018).

In the past, oral traditions, religion and cultural stories used to be the main channels, on which children were educated about their duties, and their roles in society. One of the notable ways in which grandparents used to teach moral teachings was storytelling, which could be based on either Islamic or local cultures (Shaikh, 2015). These traditions strengthened the unity of families and enabled the emergence of group identities that were not confined to the nuclear family but extended to include the group of kinsmen and the associated community memberships.

5. Socialization in a Collectivist Context

The Pakistani society is collectivist, which has had serious implications on the socialization processes. Children grow up believing that family honor (izzat), meeting the demands of the extended family members, and taking part in ceremony activities that hold the families collectively, like marriage, religious festivals, and mourning rituals are more important than themselves. The house, in this regard, is not only a physical place but a moral and cultural arena on which identity is made (Haider & Qayyum, 2020).

Social cohesion also implied that face-to-face communication was given more priority compared to the mediated interactions. The seniors demanded face-to-face communication, personal consultation and physical presence in the household. According to Dr. Siraj Bashir (2023), the power of Pakistani families has traditionally belonged to their ability to preserve strong interpersonal relationships between generations when the house is viewed as the center of cultural preservation (p. 56). This fact demonstrates the traditional family systems that placed communication not as a particular activity but as a crucial mechanism of survival, solidarity and cohesion.

6. The Impact of Pre-Digital Media

Although the digital devices are a more recent occurrence, the previous media, including radio, television and cable networks did as well shape the

family dynamics in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the previous media technologies were used in group, unlike the smartphones and tablets that allow people to consume individually and portably. Families could sit around a radio or television operating in an environment where they would listen to or watch together, which did not interfere with the unity of the house (Riaz, 2017). Ptv Khabarnama, religious shows on Ramadan, and similar programs were now communal projects and this strengthened family identity as opposed to weakening it.

However, as early as this time, the media started remaking the household relationships by bringing new external stories into the family. Television series, as an example, became a source of conversation in the living rooms, even triggering a conversation about how modern it is, how roles are divided, or how expectations are received. Nevertheless, the collective and national aspect of previous media consumption never questioned the leading role of in-person communication as much as mobile, personalized digital devices would in future (Malik and Zubair, 2019).

7. Shifts in Urban and Rural Settings

The influence of the family structures and the conventional relationships were also diverse in an urban and a rural setting. In rural Pakistan, the presence of extended families has been more typical, which is typically supported by farming sources of livelihood and by the system of kinship support (Naveed and Anwar, 2018). In this case, the interaction in the household is still determined by face-to-face communication and shared work. Conversely, urbanization has contributed towards the rise of nuclear family structure especially in urban centers like Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. Nuclearization of the family (a process caused by housing restrictions, movement, and work-related changes) already started changing the pattern of interactions even prior to the popularization of the digital device (Ali, 2015).

However, houses, both the rural and the urban, in the past were heavily dependent on the interpersonal interaction as a foundation of the family cohesion. The advent of digital devices, in this way, does not only mark the introduction of new communication tools but a complete restructuring of the norms that

had previously been used to organize a household. Understanding digital technologies should be considered in Pakistan, as the country has an extensive history of collectivist families, so interaction between people has been the socialization factor in the past. It is this appreciation of the need to place modern-day changes in a more historical and cultural context.

8. Continuities and Discontinuities

While the increasing prevalence of digital devices is reshaping household interactions in unprecedented ways, it is important to recognize continuities with the past. Respect for elders, collective decision-making, and kinship obligations remain significant, even as they are renegotiated in digital spaces. WhatsApp family groups, for example, represent a digital extension of collective consultation practices, albeit mediated by technology (Mahmood, 2021). Similarly, online religious sermons or cultural content accessed through mobile devices often reinforce traditional values, demonstrating that digital technologies are not inherently disruptive but can be appropriated in ways that complement cultural traditions.

However, the scale, speed, and individualized nature of digital device use do introduce discontinuities. Unlike television or radio, which often required collective participation, smartphones and tablets enable private, individualized engagement. A teenager watching YouTube videos in isolation or parents preoccupied with social media notifications are examples of how digital devices can fragment the collective rhythms of household life. The challenge, therefore, lies in navigating these discontinuities while maintaining the core values of cohesion, respect, and intergenerational solidarity.

9. Digital Proliferation and Household Dynamics

The last two decades have witnessed an unprecedented expansion of digital technologies in Pakistan, with smartphones, tablets, and internet access becoming central features of everyday life. This proliferation has not only redefined patterns of communication and access to information but also reconfigured household interactions. Unlike earlier technologies, digital devices are highly individualized,

portable, and immersive, which makes their influence on family dynamics both profound and complex. Understanding these transformations requires examining the scale of digital adoption, its socio-economic drivers, and the ways in which it intersects with traditional modes of household interaction.

9.1. Expansion of Mobile and Internet Connectivity

The digital revolution in Pakistan can be traced to the liberalization of the telecommunications sector in the early 2000s, which opened the market to private operators and foreign investment. Mobile penetration accelerated rapidly thereafter, with the number of cellular subscribers growing from less than 5 million in 2003 to over 190 million by 2023 (Pakistan Telecommunication Authority [PTA], 2023). Similarly, internet connectivity, once limited to elite urban households, has become increasingly accessible due to affordable broadband packages and mobile internet. By 2023, Pakistan recorded more than 125 million broadband subscribers, indicating that nearly half the population now has access to the internet (PTA, 2023).

Several socio-economic factors have driven this rapid adoption. First, the availability of low-cost smartphones from Chinese manufacturers such as Huawei, Oppo, and Infinix has made digital devices affordable to middle- and lower-income households (Iqbal, 2021). Second, competitive pricing in the telecommunications sector has brought down the cost of internet packages, allowing even rural and peri-urban households to remain connected. Third, a youthful demographic—where over 60% of the population is under 30—has fueled demand for digital devices as tools for education, entertainment, and social networking (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

9.2. Household Penetration and Everyday Life

The penetration of digital devices into households has profoundly altered daily routines. Smartphones are no longer luxury items but essential household tools used for financial transactions, online shopping, religious sermons, health consultations, and educational purposes (Mahmood, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this

integration, as online schooling, remote work, and telemedicine became necessities rather than options (Farooq & Ali, 2021).

Within households, the presence of digital devices often creates new dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. For example, children and youth who are digitally literate may become key facilitators for their parents or grandparents in navigating apps and platforms, reversing traditional hierarchies of knowledge (Shah & Hussain, 2020). Conversely, households where access is uneven—such as when only the father or eldest son owns a smartphone—may experience intra-family conflicts over control, access, and usage. These dynamics demonstrate that digital proliferation is not simply a technological phenomenon but a deeply social one that reorders authority and interaction within households.

9.3. Changing Communication Patterns

One of the most visible impacts of digital proliferation has been the transformation of communication patterns within families. Traditionally, household communication relied on face-to-face dialogue, especially during meals, family gatherings, or shared rituals. However, the constant presence of smartphones means that family members increasingly engage in parallel conversations mediated by devices, often at the expense of direct interpersonal engagement (Batool & Malik, 2020).

WhatsApp groups have become particularly influential in shaping household interactions. Families often create groups to coordinate daily tasks, share religious messages, or exchange updates with relatives abroad. While these groups facilitate rapid communication across distances, they can also reduce the frequency of in-person conversations. Furthermore, the asynchronous nature of digital communication means that messages can be ignored, misinterpreted, or delayed, creating new forms of interpersonal tension (Qayyum & Sadaf, 2019).

9.4. Urban and Rural Variations

The effects of the digital devices are not evenly spread in Pakistan. Multiple devices are typical in urban households and are purchased by middle and upper classes where the family members can use the devices separately. This tends to give rise to personalized behavioral trends in the way devices are

used wherein each member of the group interacts with their respective online circles and issues. Conversely, usage is more community based in rural homes where there is a lower number of devices. An example is that one smartphone can be shared by brothers, or parents can use it together to live news, religious information, or access government services (Ali and Raza, 2020).

However, the rural regions are fast catching, as more mobile broadband networks are being expanded and as entry-level smartphones become more affordable. This convergence indicates that digital devices are entering the Pakistani households regardless of geographic and class lines although the form of integration still differs.

9.5. Intergenerational Dynamics

Intergenerational dynamics might be viewed as perhaps the most important change. Digital literacy tends to separate households based on generational differences, with younger ones serving as a source of technology. Such a change of expertise undermines hierarchies when older people dictated the knowledge and decision making (Nisar, 2019). Parents and grandparents who once held the primary role of information and culture custodians, can now rely on children to use Smartphones, install applications or browse online platforms.

There are both contradictory outcomes of this dependency. On the one hand, it promotes the spirit of cooperation and intergenerational connections in new ways, in which younger generations help their older ones to become familiar with digital technologies. Conversely, it may undermine the traditional power of the elders, especially when their opinion or insight seems to be old compared to the infinite amount of information accessible online (Haider and Qayyum, 2020).

The digital proliferation is quietly restructuring the fabric of power in Pakistani families, as Dr. Bashir (2024) describes, which benefits the youth at the expense of some of the traditional functions of the elderly persons. This point helps highlight how the use of digital devices does not just transform communication, but also re-establishes the balance of power between generations, creating opportunities and tensions in equal measure.

9.6. Gendered Dimensions of Digital Device Use

The penetration of digital devices into the homes is gendered as well. Pakistani families tend to have more access to smartphones by men and are indirectly controlled by cultural constraints or costs to access such devices by women (Zia & Rafi, 2021). However, growing numbers of women especially in urban and semi-urban communities are embracing the digital gadgets in education, earning money and social networking. Through the internet, women have been in a position to do business at the comfort of their homes, learn virtually, and get access to information that they would not have had before (Shaikh and Fatima, 2022).

Nonetheless, femininity also predisposes women to other negative experiences, such as harassment on the internet, family monitoring, or behavior being monitored by the police. The gendered nature of digital devices use is thus an expression of empowerment and limitation, which necessitates a subtle study of how technology has penetrated the patriarchal family formations.

9.7. Digital Devices as Domestic Negotiation Tools

Other than communication, digital devices are playing an increasingly significant role in family as a negotiation tool. Children can also leverage access to tablets to complete household tasks, and parents can use screen time limits as a punishment (Batool and Malik, 2020). In the same way, the digital presence and privacy of marriage can be negotiable or burdening to relationships between spouses. The conflict of individual digital activity and shared family has become a common trend of modern Pakistani families.

10. Disruptions and Challenges to Traditional Social Bonds

10.1. Decline in direct interpersonal communication

Among the most noticeable effects of the proliferation of digital devices in Pakistan, there is the loss of face-to-face communication in the family. In the past, Pakistani families (especially joint and extended families) used to make decisions, share stories and intergenerational connections through

face-to-face conversations (Alavi, 2001). I used to have mealtimes, evening meetings, and family rituals, which were traditionally the domains of common communication. The availability of smartphones has however broken up these moments. Research indicates that at the moment of meals or family meetings, many people can use digital phones at the same time and thus do not pay enough attention to each other (Mahmood, 2021). The presence of text messaging or web browsing activities in place of face-to-face conversation establishes, according to Turkle (2011), what he terms as the dynamics of alone together, wherein people are present together physically but are preoccupied psychologically elsewhere.

This tendency is particularly worrying in Pakistan where people value interpersonal communication as one of the pillars of the collective identity. Bashir (2024) points out that corrosion of the fabric of interpersonal relationships within the family structures negatively affects the comprehension of communal resilience, especially in the case of societies, in which the phenomenon of kinship provides emotional and economic security. The gadget-centered loss of face-to-face interaction poses a threat to the loss of this old source of social capital.

10.2. Weakening intergenerational dialogue and authority structures

The other disruption is between intergenerational communication and the legitimacy of the aged. Previously cultural values, history, and moral guidance were mainly passed on by grandparents and other older family members (Qureshi, 2018). Nevertheless, younger members are moving towards online entertainment, advice, and information sources based on YouTube, Tik Tok, or WhatsApp groups. This change reorganizes the positions of power since the role of elders as the main source of information is weakened.

The decline in intergenerational conversation can be traced in the families where the young generation does not wish to talk to their seniors, they prefer to enjoy themselves through the internet. This worsens not only the marginalization of the older generations but also the possibility of passing the cultural heritage, folklore, and religious lessons (Hussain & Batool, 2021). Moreover, children also challenge the

authority of parents by mentioning online information and, in this way, challenge the traditional hierarchies. In Pakistan, intergenerational power has been renegotiated as the younger generation has access to independent sources of digital knowledge, which are transforming power relations at home.

10.3. Digital dependency and screen addiction

The issue of digital dependency becomes a significant problem. The presence of devices promotes constant connectivity, which in most cases can result in problematic screen-use especially among adolescents and young adults (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). In Pakistan, where there is little recreational infrastructure and limited, crowded areas for the young people, smartphones have become the main source of fun and escape (Mahmood, 2021). High consumption is a factor that leads to sleeping problems and a poor school attendance record, as well as loss of family time.

Screen addiction is not a problem that only exists among the younger age group; parents are the ones who are also addicted to this habit with many parents spending hours on constant use of social media or work-related communication. The ubiquitous connectivity in families causes the blurring of work-life lines and increases stress. Digital dependency eliminates activities that could be shared by the family like storytelling, games, or visits to the community, which only helps to increase isolation.

10.4. Issues of privacy, surveillance, and conflicts within households

Privacy and surveillance issues are another consequence of the proliferation of devices which creates new conflicts. The topic of devices control and access to digital spaces has been a controversial issue in most Pakistani families, especially those led by patriarchal backgrounds (Hafeez, 2020). Parents can check the usage of children in apps or by forcing giving your passwords, and siblings may fight over the ownership of a device. These surveillance forms have the ability to destroy trust in families and generate secrecy and resistance cycles.

Disputes are especially apparent in the families with low financial income as several individuals struggle to use one device, in particular, in the conditions of

online education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Farooq and Ali, 2021). The strain intensifies when the devices turn out to be scarce resources denoting independence, prestige and dominance. Dr. Siraj Bashir (2022) claims that the digital domestic environment has become a disputable field where the rights of privacy, authority by generation, and control by gender collide.

10.5. Gender dynamics and control over devices

In the Pakistani families, the role of gender is pivotal to mediate access and control of digital devices. Although the male members usually have comparatively free access, female members are at times more tightly regulated (especially in conservative or rural setting) because it is believed that family reputation may be damaged and that they can be affected by outside factors (Hafeez, 2020). The limitations on the smartphone use by women support gender inequality by restricting access to education, employment, and digital literacy.

Meanwhile, the women who do gain access frequently rely on digital platforms to struggle against patriarchal systems, develop their social circle, and do online activism (Mahmood, 2021). This duality brings out the fact that digital devices affirm and disrupt traditional gender norms at the same time. Household, consequently, turns into a place where the gendered struggles regarding the access to technologies are resolved with references to the inequality in the society.

11. Negotiating Between Tradition and Technology

11.1. Hybrid family practices: combining face-to-face and digital communication

In spite of the shocks, not all Pakistani families are forsaking tradition but rather producing some hybrid ways. WhatsApp groups are commonly used by families as a way to coordinate their logistics (e.g., planning events) and maintain physical rituals (e.g., eating together or religious practices). This hybridization enables the household to have the advantage of enjoying digital efficiency without completely abandoning the old ways (Hussain and Batool, 2021).

Even in extended families, the elders themselves engage in digital communication, sending voice

notes or pictures, thus confirming their existence in the virtual space once again. Such a mixing means that digital devices do not have to replace interpersonal communication, but can add to it when negotiated appropriately.

11.2. Strategies families use to balance tradition and modernity

Families come up with methods to control consumption of gadgets. Such activities as limited screen time of children during meals, fixed time boundaries, shared activities as watching television drama together rather than alone on a smartphone are among the common practices. The parents mostly mediate the exposure of children to digital use by balancing between supervision and advice on the proper way the children should act online.

There are other families that intentionally maintain cultural activities like telling stories by elders or family meetings during weekends as an anti-digital saturation measure. Such approaches are localized balance struggles that put a lot of emphasis on the idea that Pakistani households are not mere consumers of technological transformation but rather negotiators of the significance of technological change.

11.3. Religious, cultural, and educational perspectives on moderation

It is becoming more common that religious leaders and cultural critics are concerned with moderation in utilizing the digital. In urban mosques on Fridays, there are frequent sermons warning against overindulgence in smartphone activities at the family level, but Islamic scholars emphasize the concepts of wasatiyyah (moderation) as a form of technology (Rashid, 2022). Many parents are culturally discouraged by the use of excessive devices as that is incompatible with the principle of respect and unity of the family.

Even schools are starting to incorporate digital etiquette in the school curriculum, training children on how to have a balance between online and offline life (Farooq & Ali, 2021). This is an indication of an increasing awareness of the need to have an understanding of media literacy and ethical guidelines to maneuver within the digital domestic space.

11.4. Examples from Pakistani households

There are various approaches depicted in empirical accounts. Parents of smartphone use in urban middle-class households also tend to initiate a contract with the child, with restrictions and responsibilities. Where access to devices may be scarce in rural families, and this device can be used collectively by the family, a negotiated use schedule may occur. Sometimes extended families form intergenerational WhatsApp groups, with grandparents and grandchildren sharing greetings, poetry, or religious posts, therefore, reaffirming intergenerational relationships in a digital platform. The examples be it recommended that instead of being merely victims of digital disruption, Pakistani households are in the process of a cultural negotiation. Families across Balochistan and other regions, as Bashir (2024) puts it, exhibit adaptive resistance, integrating both traditional and modern forms of positive and negative forces to maintain cohesion in the face of the new technological demands.

12. Policy, Media Literacy, and Social Work Interventions

Need for media literacy programs

Given the depth of disruption, media literacy emerges as a central tool for mitigating risks and enhancing benefits. Families require structured guidance on how to use digital devices responsibly, manage privacy, and recognize risks such as misinformation or addiction (Livingstone, 2011). Media literacy can empower children to critically evaluate content while helping parents establish balanced household rules.

Role of schools, communities, and NGOs

Schools are natural entry points for such interventions. Incorporating digital literacy into curricula ensures early education about healthy practices. Community centers and mosques can also host workshops, framing responsible digital use within cultural and religious values. NGOs in Pakistan, particularly those working on education and child rights, already pilot such initiatives—for example, digital literacy training for girls to bridge gender gaps (Hafeez, 2020).

Policy recommendations for healthy family use of digital devices

Policy interventions are urgently required. The state can promote subsidized access to educational content while regulating addictive online platforms through usage caps or age restrictions. Policymakers should also encourage technology firms to develop culturally relevant parental control tools in local languages. Nationwide awareness campaigns, akin to public health campaigns, can sensitize families to digital risks and promote collective strategies of regulation.

Social work interventions for digital dependency

The social work professionals are well-placed to solve household level challenges. They are able to lead family counseling courses with the families whose members have a digital addiction, resolve intergenerational disputes between parents and children, and develop community-oriented programs, which promote the offline world (e.g., sports clubs, culture). Digital literacy should also be integrated into the curricula of social workers, so that they can be able to deal with technology induced family challenges professionally.

Finally, the interventions should be balanced between the implementing functions of digital devices and risks. The most appropriate solution to family life in the growing digitalized Pakistan is the holistic approach, which means combining policy, education, religious values, and social work.

13. Analysis and Discussion of Research Objectives

Objective 1: To analyze how device use alters everyday communication routines, decision-making processes, and intergenerational interaction

The former goal is concerned with the most obvious and the most immediate effect of digital devices the reorganization of domestic communication and decision-making. Based on empirical data, it is indicated that mobile phones and tablets have brought new rhythms into the family life because they enable the use of asynchronous communication via WhatsApp, text messaging, and voice notes (Mahmood, 2021). These modalities are flexible especially when it comes to organising the household e.g. shopping or financial management. But at the

same time, they break down the decision making process that was formerly based on personal discussion during the family meeting.

The tension is evident in terms of intergenerational dynamics. Previously, the decision-making process used to be highly centralized and centered around older people whose authority was based on their experiences and the fact that they were the depositories of wisdom (Qureshi, 2018). The younger generations now have access to a variety of information on the internet, which has resulted in the spread of authority, and the decisions of the parents and grandparents are often questioned by the younger generation. According to Bashir (2023), this change is not only an indicator of technological disruption but also a rearrangement of family roles, where digital literacy would be an additional source of power in families. The analysis therefore indicates that although gadgets help in increasing efficiency to daily communication, they also destroy the dialogical richness and hierarchy that hindered the traditional Pakistani family life.

Objective 2: To identify the enabling functions of digital devices for household well-being (e.g., education, health, diasporic contact)

There also are enabling aspects of digital devices that, directly, improve household well being. In the case of education, smartphones and tablets have been very crucial in online education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were shut down (Farooq and Ali, 2021). In order to be healthy, telemedicine platforms and other health information online can give the family the chance to meet the doctor remotely; this will be of importance especially to rural families whose access to physical health facilities is limited.

Digital devices enhance transnational family bonds by enabling real-time messaging and video calls as part of the context of a large Pakistani diaspora in Pakistan. These affordances alleviate the geographic distance as well as strengthen emotional unity, allowing grandparents, parents, and children to communicate about the daily lives even though the distance separates them by continents (Hafeez, 2020). Devices also give women household economic resiliency by providing them with a chance to do

home-based entrepreneurship over WhatsApp business or Facebook.

Bashir (2024) notes that digital connectivity can strengthen social solidarity when used responsibly: it helps marginalized groups of people gain access to educational, economic and social opportunities that these groups would not have otherwise. Therefore, the facilitating nature of the devices is based on the fact that they may be able to complement the traditional family support systems and is not necessarily able to eliminate them completely.

Objective 3: To examine the disruptive potentials of device use (e.g., digital dependency, erosion of face-to-face dialogue, privacy conflicts)

The third goal looks at the threats of digital gadgets to the conventional social relationships. Section V explains that overuse of gadgets causes lack of face to face communication, which is the foundation of the interpersonal and intergenerational conversation that is core to collectivist family systems (Turkle, 2011). Among the effects of being screen-dependent, especially in the youth, are changes in behavioral patterns (social withdrawal, a lack of academic concentration, and over-dependence on virtual validation via the social media platform) (Kuss and Griffiths, 2017).

There are also privacy battles where the households are negotiating control of the devices. Parents tend to keep a watch on the digital behavior of their children, and siblings tend to compete in access to limited resources in families. The male members of patriarchal families occasionally limit the devices used by women because they are afraid of being exposed to external factors, which supports gender inequalities (Hafeez, 2020). Such dynamics create strains at the level of the household and the devices become a disputed commodity instead of a dispassionate tool.

Theorizes this condition as the coming up of a digital household arena; a place where generational power, gendered power and privacy rights are being bargained on a daily basis. This interpretation stresses the fact that disruption is not only technological, but is a socio-cultural upheaval as families reconfigure former norms in the light of new digital practices.

Objective 4: To propose evidence-based recommendations for media literacy, community interventions, and policy measures that support balanced digital use within families

The last goal is focused on the necessity of practical solutions. It has been proposed that the interventions should be multi-level: household, community, and policy. At the family level, scheduled policies, including screen-free meals or communal device use, can be used to maintain the interpersonal relationships and take advantage of digital technology (Mahmood, 2021). On the grassroots level, schools and mosques could be very important in informing families on how to use devices responsibly, enculturating digital literacy into the cultural and religious context (Rashid, 2022).

On the policy level, the government can conduct campaigns on the use of devices in a balanced way, provide culturally oriented parental control tools, and subsidize access to learning materials. Gender gaps can be narrowed by providing female access to digital literacy training, which will allow women to play a significant role in the household decision-making process and economic empowerment.

As a social worker, the intervention can be aimed at family counseling concerning their digital addiction and encouraging offline interactions on the community level by organizing recreational areas and cultural events. Adds that digital literacy is vital in the education of social workers, as it would provide the practitioners with a skill set to facilitate the resolution of conflicts related to devices. This recommendation complies with the international best practices in social work in the digital era, and should be adapted to the Pakistani culture.

14. Recommendations

1. Household-Level Recommendations

Alternatives to devices: Families need to create screen-free areas and periods, including mealtimes, prayer meeting, or weekly family meetings, to enhance the communication between people and to maintain the dialogue between generations.

Shared Digital Practices: Promote group activities like watching an educational program or watching movies together rather than using the screen individually.

Parental Mediation: The parents must make use of active mediation, which is when they do not just control the amount of time spent on screens, but also discuss the contents of the online with the children, teaching them to interpret and judge information.

Balanced Use Models: To ensure cohesion, families need to encourage the hybrid practices, i.e., combining digital communication (e.g., WhatsApp groups) and the traditional face-to-face interaction.

2. Educational and Community-Level Recommendations

- **Media Literacy Education:** Schools should incorporate digital literacy courses that teach students about responsible device use, online safety, and balancing screen time with physical and social activities.

- **Religious and Cultural Guidance:** Mosques, community centers, and local cultural forums should address the ethical and social dimensions of digital life, linking moderation in device use with Islamic principles of *wasatiyyah* (balance).

- **Youth Engagement Programs:** Establish offline recreational opportunities such as sports clubs, art workshops, and debate societies to provide healthy alternatives to excessive screen time.

- **Parenting Workshops:** Community-based organizations should conduct awareness sessions on digital parenting, teaching parents strategies to handle privacy conflicts, generational authority issues, and screen dependency.

3. Policy-Level Recommendations

- **National Media Literacy Campaigns:** The state should launch public campaigns (similar to health awareness drives) emphasizing responsible digital use, family dialogue, and risks of screen addiction.

- **Digital Infrastructure with Safeguards:** Technology companies should be encouraged to provide parental controls in Urdu and regional languages to make them accessible to all households.

- **Educational Content Subsidies:** Government should subsidize access to high-quality online educational platforms for rural and low-income households.

- **Gender-Inclusive Digital Policies:** Policies should ensure equitable access to digital resources for women and girls, challenging restrictive gender norms around technology use.
- **Research and Monitoring:** Establish a national observatory on digital practices and household well-being to monitor evolving patterns and provide data-driven policy inputs.

14. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to analyze how the extensive use of digital gadgets is transforming the way families interact, communicate and socialize in Pakistani families. As the analysis shows, digital technology has turned into both an enabler and a disruptor of everyday life and has been having complicated effects that cannot be broken down into either positive or negative. Rather, the research results indicate a paradoxical existence: where devices widen the possibilities of learning, access to health, and diasporic connection, and at the same time jeopardize to eliminate face-to-face communication, expand intergenerational gaps, and create digital addiction.

The initial research purpose was to address the importance of the devices to transform daily communication patterns and decision-making at the family level. It was apparent that cell phones and social networking sites have changed the way people communicate to each other making it fast and convenience and restricting the richness of the dialogue. To the younger generations, information and peer influence mediate the decision-making process more than it does to the elders, who mostly use traditional channels. This subversion brings friction in families, especially when digital information is used to question the status quo of authority. Simultaneously, online platforms are also used as generational bridges in cases, as well, when families undertake some activities together and learn online or participate in a virtual religious service.

The second goal was the empowering capabilities of digital devices. It has been proven that devices are crucial in increasing the welfare of households: students will be able to access online lectures and world knowledge networks, families will be able to use telemedicine in remote locations, and migrants will be able to maintain their emotional connection

with family members via instant communication. In Pakistan, these advantages are especially important, as the level of structural inequalities in education, healthcare, and mobility remains high. The digital devices therefore provide some kind of a compensatory mechanism by enabling the households to bypass some of the obstacles created by geography and economic restraints.

However, in the disruptive sense, as the third objective points out, these enabling functions have disruptive potentials. Increasing reliance on devices has created novel types of social isolation, in which family members sit next to each other in the same physical space but they are glued to individual screens. In person communication gives way to online communication that undermines closeness and empathy that normally hold the family together. The problem of privacy has also become a burning one, particularly in the joint-family set-ups where rivalry in generational expectations concerning boundaries have been experienced. Young people prefer to communicate in an encrypted form and parents are not ready to provide such freedom as it is not only unsafe but it is also a question of their safety. These strains highlight the two-fold nature of digital life among Pakistani culture.

Lastly, the research was to make recommendations on the balanced use of devices in families. As can be seen, the digital-family nexus is a complex problem that needs to be tackled at various levels. The home community should develop purposeful habits like device devoid rituals to maintain face-to-face communication. The schools and communities should also enhance media literacy to help the youths and parents to critically discuss the electronic materials. Good policy makers need to make digital well-being a part of the national development models, with fair access but safeguarding the family against the negative impact of excessive use. Social workers are no exception here, and they can mediate conflicting situations, provide counseling, and direct families to more healthy digital integration patterns. The more general outcome of this research is that technology is not necessarily bad or good but the impacts of the technology are determined by how the family negotiates the presence of technology in its cultural and social context. Details in Pakistan Since the family is essential in organizing the social life, it

is to introduce digital practices in the household life without destabilizing the traditional bases of solidarity and care. This balancing act needs to be achieved by awareness and by providing the necessary structure that would improve, not harm, the family well-being through digital devices.

To sum up, the digital devices are now indispensable in the daily lives of Pakistani families. They are changing the way communication is done, the way decisions are made and the way there are intergenerational interactions. It is not the existence of these technologies that will define the future of family life, but how well households, communities and policymakers can cope with integrating them. Ensuring the responsible usage, enhancing the level of media literacy, and focusing on the integration of the family are some of the ways the Pakistani society can enjoy the potentials of the digital era and reduce the risks associated with it. This paper therefore highlights the absolute necessity of a moderate, context aware solution - one that maintains the integrity of family life and the transformative possibilities of technology.

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