

## Youth Perceptions and Patterns of Cultural Imperialism in Bangladesh

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### **Abstract**

Cultural transformation induced and mediated by cultural imperialism has been pervasive in recent years, especially in Bangladesh. The cultural patterns of developed countries are disseminated through social media have largely reshaped the lifestyles and perceptions of the youth of Bangladesh. The widespread use of social media has apparently made it difficult to distinguish between cultures—one's own culture and others. Consequently, the traditional cultural patterns are being transformed, which poses a threat to local cultural identity, influencing perceptions and lifestyles. Therefore, the study focuses on the recent patterns of cultural imperialism and perceptions of youth in this regard. The study employed qualitative methodology using several case studies in Dhaka. In-depth interview method along with thematic analysis was used to collect and interpret primary data. It was found that the youth were influenced in almost all aspects of life due to cultural imperialism diminishing the values of their own culture.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Change; Cultural Domination; Youth Culture; Social Media; Behavioral Change; Globalization*

### **1. Introduction**

Every aspect of daily life that is connected to a group of people's lifestyles is referred to as their culture. As an integral part of human society, culture is inseparable from human behavior. In general, culture refers to the customs and beliefs of a community that provide its members the right and the ability to coexist (Abusaleh K et al., 2022). The term "culture" refers to more than just dance, music, or costumes; it also encompasses social celebration patterns, marriage and birth customs, food, and sports (Sonia, 2014 in Abusaleh K et al., 2022). However, culture encompasses all of the concepts, ideologies, and standards and values that form the foundation of widely accepted social behavior (Arowolo, 2010 in Sonia, 2014). From the very beginning of human civilization, the society has been continuously changing due to various reasons; cultural transformation is one of them. The culture of Bangladesh, which is mostly referred to as a mixture of Bengali and majority Muslim culture, is also going through changes. Since

Bangladesh's cultural heritage is linked to two neighboring countries—Pakistan, which is controlled by Muslims, and India, which is primarily inhabited by Hindus—the question of its cultural roots is fairly complex. Bangladesh's cultural ties to India and Pakistan, which are still recognized and practiced as Bengali culture, are largely due to its historical membership in both nations. In addition, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian cultures also exist here, which are religiously separate and follow distinct norms and rituals, are also being influenced by cultural changes, especially cultural imperialism.

In its broadest sense, cultural imperialism is the practice of dominating cultural interactions by forcing the beliefs, customs, and meanings of a dominant foreign culture on one or more indigenous civilizations (Tomlinson J, 2012). In short, a culture being promoted over another is known as cultural imperialism. This usually happens during colonization, when one country conquers another, usually one that is weaker militarily and/or economically. The invaded country is then forced to adopt the dominating nation's cultural values and customs (Wolff K, 2007)). In another way, cultural imperialism is the act of elevating and enforcing a culture—typically from politically dominant countries—over weaker ones. The powerful one is extending its cultural reach, while the weaker one is comfortably accepting it. The reality is that foreign culture is displacing ours, whether it is because of the media or the government's indolence. Bangladeshis today are mindlessly adopting foreign cultures. Indian culture is very prevalent in this area (Daily Sun, 2015). The origin of cultural imperialism can be traced back to British imperialism in the Indian subcontinent. British imperialism dominated the Indian subcontinent for almost 200 years economically, politically, and culturally. To accomplish their goals of using military force to seize commercial, geographical, and demographic resources, empires must also have a broad cultural base. Instead of being self-effacing, they must demonstrate their presence by showcasing what they see to be the best components of their culture, which they believe to be the core of who they are (MacKenzie J M, 2016). The legacy of British imperialism can also be seen in Indian intervention in Bangladesh economically, politically, and, most importantly, culturally. Moreover, two significant factors that have impacted Bangladesh's and India's cultural development are colonialism and globalization. Traditional cultural practices and beliefs have been suppressed in many nations as a result of colonialism, a type of political and economic dominance (Sen S, 2015). However, globalization is central to contemporary culture, and cultural behaviors are fundamental to globalization (Tomlinson, 1999). For instance, indigenous knowledge systems, identities, and worldviews were marginalized or replaced when colonization brought western education, religion, language, and values (Adger et al., 2013). Globalization and colonialism's legacy have influenced Bangladesh and India's cultural landscapes, with both beneficial and detrimental effects on people and communities (Sakib S N, 2023). The extent of cultural imperialism can also be seen by the state itself. However, the state is only the "outer ditch" that supports a strong network of cultural institutions and beliefs, as well as a system of "fortresses and earthworks," that support the ideology of the ruling classes and their dominance. Social ties and the resulting social structures form a complicated web that mediates and transmits this hegemony. Values and opinions are continuously shaped by the family, the community, the schools, caste, ethnicity, religion, its places of worship and festivals, and other kinds of cultural expression like media, TV, theaters, movies, etc. They are currently supporting the Hindutva monopoly of "ideas" in India. They produce the "myth" of a "common culture" in the process. This "common culture" is really Hindutva's selective dissemination (Siddiqui K, 2022). However, cultural imperialism is driven by various global and local factors that result in changes, transformations, modifications, and, in some cases, threats and aggressions to native cultures. The native culture, on the one hand, faces challenges to sustain its identity, and on the other hand, loses appeal among the natives as a result of global cultures driven by globalization. Moreover, socio-cultural transformation led to changes in perception and lifestyles among the natives and triggered personal, familial, social, and mental effects that affected wider society on a broader scale. Not only is the culture of developing countries undergoing dramatic changes, but it also affects the core belief system of the natives. Underdeveloped nations are increasingly adopting the religious beliefs and ideologies of developed nations, demonstrating the impact of cultural imperialism in the field of religion (Hossain A M,

2022). Moreover, Hindu traditions, etiquette, and artistic expressions are blended with Islamic principles to form Bengali culture (Rahman K A, 2014).

Above all, there is no single space of life that is not in touch with cultural imperialism whether it is based on India or Western or any other country. This massive expansion of culture affects the lifestyles of all people irrespective of class, gender, ethnicity, and religion. Thus, the study has mainly focused on the common pattern and perception found among the people of Bangladesh regarding cultural imperialism.

## **2. Methodology**

### *2.1 Study area*

The study was conducted in Dhaka City, Bangladesh, which is home to 44,215,107 people, which constitutes the highest population record in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The study area was selected purposively on the basis of the availability and convenience of the researchers.

### *2.2 Sampling*

Selection of respondents was done on the basis of the purposive sampling method. Since it was impossible to interview all of the population in the concerned study area, it followed purposive sampling on the basis of availability and high response rate. The respondents were selected with at least the academic qualification of HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) since it involved a matter of perception and understanding regarding the topic under study. A total of 11 respondents were interviewed for the study that included respondents from both male and female categories, different religions, and different occupations, along with different marital statuses.

### *2.3 Data Collection and Analysis*

The study was guided by a qualitative method for in-depth and detailed understanding of the topic under study. Qualitative research is an approach to data collection and analysis that typically prioritizes language above numbers (Bryman, A. 2004). Moreover, the terms "what," "how," and "why" are used in a wide variety of inquiries that the interviewer can choose to explore in qualitative research for in-depth understanding of the topic under study (Bryman A, 2016).

To gain a thorough and in-depth understanding of the subject, the case study approach was used as the major source of data collection. Data was gathered using the in-depth interview method, and semi-structured open-ended questions were employed. With the respondents' permission, a mobile recorder was also used as part of the data collection process. The interview session was conducted using the Bengali language for the convenience of the respondents as well as spontaneous responses and a detailed description of the topic under study. Rapport was also built with the respondents, and maintaining ethical issues, the respondents were informed of the study's purpose and given their verbal agreement. The case study also involved unanimous data to protect the privacy of the respondents. Few respondents were uncomfortable with recording; their responses were written down carefully. Maintaining the culture, the researchers applied rapport building so carefully that the sensitive questions were answered spontaneously and deliberately from the part of the respondents. The fieldwork took place between March 2025 and April 2025. Primary data was gathered, carefully translated to English, and then meticulously revised and assembled. Then, thematic analyses were used to examine and evaluate the data that had been gathered. The researcher's astute observation during the interview was another aspect of data analysis (Nahar K, 2024). Moreover, journal articles, books, reports, newspapers and various websites are examples of secondary sources of data that have also been employed to provide the study a broader perspective.

The following table represents an understanding of the key demographic profile of the respondents

Table-1: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Serial	Gender	Age	Educational Qualification	Occupation	Religion	Marital Status
1.	Female	28	Post-graduation	University Teacher	Islam	Married
2.	Female	31	Post-graduation	University Teacher	Islam	Married
3.	Male	24	Under graduate	Student	Islam	Unmarried
4.	Male	23	Under graduate	Student	Islam	Unmarried
5.	Male	22	Under graduate	Student	Islam	Unmarried
6.	Male	24	Under graduate	Student	Islam	Unmarried
7.	Female	28	Post-graduation	University Teacher	Islam	Unmarried
8.	Female	29	Graduation	Government Employee	Islam	Married
9.	Female	24	Graduation	Engineer	Islam	Married
10.	Female	30	Post-graduation	Technical officer	Hindu	Separated
11.	Male	37	Post-graduation	Engineer	Hindu	Married

### 3. Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study were divided into the following four main sections emphasizing cultural imperialism through (i) dress code and attire, (ii) food habits and cuisine, (iii) entertainment and refreshment, (iv) personal relationships and everyday life.

#### 3.1 Dress code and Attire

The existence of culture can most clearly be seen through the dress code of the people. Dress code plays an important role not just as a veil that covers the human body but also indicator of the faith, practice, and identity that people hold. Moreover, it also represents the specific religion of the followers. For instance, *Borkha* or *Abaya* (a veil that covers head to toe for women) indicates the Muslim religion and Islamic culture, *Sakha* (a bangle made of shell/conch) and *Shindur* (vermilion); *Dhuti* (a special outfit for males) represents the Hindu religion and culture. So, in Bangladesh, the cultural and religious identities are interlinked with each other, making it complex to identify cultural roots: whether it is based on specific culture or religion. Notable differences are also prominent here since the religious identity cannot always be defined by dress code; for instance, women wearing saree or *salwar kameez* can hardly be identified with religious identity; hence, religion and culture are intertwined. However, the dress code of the people of Bangladesh depends on personal choices; many prefer *saree* or *salwar kameez* because of comfortability, many people, especially the younger generation, prefer to wear western outfits since they consider them modern and appealing, and many people like to carry Islamic attire because of religious obligations. The traditional dress code of women is considered to be saree and *salwar kameez*, while the male generally used to wear lungi and *dhuti*, *Punjabi-pajama*, and *shirt-pant*. Bengali people dress according to their original culture, with men wearing Punjabi, pajama, and Lungi and women wearing Saree and salwar kameez (Bohrani et al., 2011). Modern clothing is replacing traditional attire, such as the sari for women and Punjabi for men in Bangladesh (Abusaleh K et al., 2022). However, the majority of people nowadays, especially young people, choose contemporary fashion and attire over the Bengali dress code, which is mostly based on Indian and Western culture. Nowadays, most women occasionally wear saree to celebrate special days, which used to be their daily attire. Saree has become the symbol of special day celebrations, while comfortable dresses like *Genzi*, *Maxi*, and short outfits like tops and skirts, and most importantly salwar kameez, have occupied the place of daily attire.

One of the respondents (female) expressed her view this way:

*“Regarding my dress code, I prefer a combination of tradition and trends from other cultures. Cultural imperialism is a threat to some extent (if it is the issue of completely replacing our cultures or merging them on the verge of extinction), yet not completely. We can always take the good aspects of other cultures to do something better based on fusion. Clothing from other countries is appealing because they have a diversity of designs and many collections that change with different seasons.”*

Another respondent (female) also opined that:

*“Generally, my dress code is inspired by Western culture. I try to have a blending of Eastern and Western choices since it represents fashion, a fusion of tradition and modern. For the celebration of a special day, I prefer traditional culture intertwined with Western culture so that it looks fashionable. For example, a saree (traditional) with a blouse (Western), ornaments (Western), a flip of the saree, and a belt in the saree (Western).”*

It was found that women in Bangladesh are more influenced by dress codes inspired by other countries' cultures (whether by western or neighboring countries) than those of men, and there is more variation in women's dress codes than those of men. Most of the men respondents opined that their dress code is not influenced by other countries' cultures since there is very little option to be.

The effect that other countries' cultures have on Bangladeshi dress codes is due to the movies, songs, and other drama series inspired by those foreign cultures. Moreover, the celebrities, especially actors, singers, and models, also motivate people to follow their culture. Language usage, dress codes, customs, and lifestyle choices all reflect the detrimental effects of foreign dramas on cultural, social, and religious values (Tunna N T, 2023; Anwar M N et al., 2023). The plot of Hindi films essentially mirrors the same realities of Bangladesh, another "least developed" nation, including same-kindred love affairs, marriage, post-marriage complications, familial bonds, and so forth (Rahman M H, 2011). Facebook pages belonging to celebrities in the entertainment industry are promoting the influence of western clothing rules; in addition to attracting men, it has grown fashionable for women, particularly in cities. Since they are regarded as trendsetters and others are adopters of these styles, celebrities are the main source of inspiration for them. Western cultural imperialism is clearly present in the need to gain ratings in response to interactions or growth in social media followings. (Latif M et al., 2021). There has also been an increasing trend of social media vloggers, media activists, and social media influencers who represent different types of dresses in a lucrative way and give positive reviews on social media, especially in Facebook, that also influence and create public perception and motivate people to try out other cultures' outfits.

One of the respondents (men) commented that:

*“Trying to be posh and handsome and also looking cool, social media and mass media contribute a huge change in my dress code. Other countries' culture looks so appealing because they have some basic fashion sense, their color combination, pattern, and, most importantly, their representation also makes us feel that they are the best.”*

One of the respondents (female) stated that:

*“Media influence plays a vital role in changing dress codes. As with Facebook, Instagram is very available to everyone, and all the online sellers sell their Asian outfits and Western outfits on Facebook and Instagram. Every time in one scroll, we find at least one page that sells these items, and I think it provokes us to buy those dresses.”*



Another respondent (female) expressed that:

*"It contributes because through social media, we can see the styles of clothing from different countries, which gives us ideas for creating new collections in our country. For example, the Ambani family marriage celebration, actress Mehzabin Chowdhury's (Bangladeshi actress) marriage celebrations, and such other celebrations of other celebrities contribute much to my dress code preference."*

Thus, the dress code of the people of Bangladesh is continuously being influenced and changed due to cultural imperialism.

### 3.2 Food habits and cuisine

The people of Bangladesh are fond of having different types of foods; traditionally the food habits vary from place to place, from one district or division to another. The rituals and occasions also vary based on culture, and so do the food habits. There is a common proverb in Bangladesh regarding the food pattern, *Mache Vate Bangali* (We, the Bengalis, are fond of rice and fish), that represents the basic food pattern of Bangladesh. Generally, most of the people of Bangladesh take meals 3 times a day consisting of rice and other complementary items such as vegetable fry (*Vaji*), lentils (*Daal*), mashed food (*Vorta*) along with egg, vegetable curry, fish, chicken, meat, and other items. However, there has been an increasing trend of fast-food items nowadays, such as burgers, sandwiches, pizzas, and soft drinks, which has gained much popularity among the people, especially among the youth. Moreover, the children also love to have these fast foods in their tiffin. Diabetes, obesity, and other chronic diseases are on the rise worldwide as a result of the replacement of traditional foods and recipes with contemporary ones that are high in fat, sugar, and salt (Abusaleh K et al., 2022). The popularity of other cultural food items is due to the availability of social media, especially Facebook, where different types of international cuisines are represented in a tempting and lucrative manner. One of the respondents (female) stated that:

*"Again, through social media, different restaurants do their marketing via short ads. Or reels, and it makes me feel interested to try those different foods that are not common in our territory. I try to taste those foods once or twice a month. I search for Japanese and authentic Chinese foods in social media, especially on Facebook and Google, and find the available restaurants near me."*

Another respondent (female) stated that:

*"I love food from other cultures for sure, but I do try to include traditional dishes in my daily menu. Few authentic food blogs, magazines, newspapers, reels, and the like influence the most in this regard. I frequently consume foods that are not part of my cultural cuisine. For example, in any outing or celebration. As I frequently use social media, my food habit gets affected by it to a greater extent. For example, while scrolling down Facebook feeds, I come across images of yummy food and their cooking processes, which I try for myself. Print media and mass media, like newspapers and magazines, also make a significant contribution in this aspect."*

The popularity of fast-food items among the youth can also be expressed this way, statement from one of the male respondents:

*"I am a fast-food lover person. From childhood, by watching cartoons on TV, I became a fan of burgers and double-layer cheese pizza. Social media has greatly inspired me in this regard. Facebook, as a social media platform, not only suggests foreign items, but also, we post the photos that we took at the famous restaurants. This is regarded as modernity, and the likes, comments, and reviews also motivate people to go there and try it out."*

The increasing rate of fast-food love and showing it on social media have mixed consequences. On the one hand, excessive fast-food consumption increases the risk of health problems; on the other hand, it triggers financial costs. Studies indicate that teenagers attending college are excessively likely to eat fast food, which raises their chance of being obese in the future (Banik R et al., 2020). Fast food consumption has also evolved into a lifestyle choice and trend. Going outside and consuming different cultural delicacies are seen as a sign of prestige and a measure of living standards. Moreover, taking photos and sharing them on social media is also regarded as a celebration and kind of obligatory, which also motivates others to try it out. Different types of business activities, such as moving food carts and online food shops, have also been prominent due to the increasing demand of other cultural foods. Thus, the fast food and availability of foreign cultural cuisines have reshaped the tastes and lifestyles of the youth of Bangladesh, triggering cultural imperialism through it.

### 3.3 Entertainment and Refreshment

The field of entertainment is another part in which cultural imperialism is mostly visible and prominent in Bangladesh. Visiting family and friends, gossiping with neighbors, attending invitations to relatives, and making delicious food items, especially cakes, and distributing them among neighbors had been the source of entertainment. Music, theater, folklore, comedy, gossiping, storytelling, dancing, magic, street performances, fairs, and sports like Kabaddi, Gollachut, Kanamachi, and Sholo Ghuti are all common forms of entertainment in Bengali culture. However, these entertainment, performance, and sporting events have been influenced by global ideals (Abusaleh K et al., 2022). The national sport of Bangladesh is Kabaddi, which has become extinct and mostly unknown to the young. Android smart phones and other digital gaming systems have supplanted outdoor sports. Nowadays, entertainment includes going out with family and friends, joining celebration parties such as birthdays, marriage anniversaries, 31st-night, rag day (at the end of graduation), going out to watch cinema, arranging picnics/tours that have replaced the previous source of enjoyment to a great extent. These celebrations are mostly based on Western and Indian ideology; incorporating foreign music and dance supported by high volume sound system, DJ party with related dress code and cuisine. A new trend among the youth has emerged, indicating that Rag Day celebrations are considered incomplete without smearing colors, a practice that originates from Indian cultures. Loud music, dancing all night at band parties, and enjoying Hindi songs have become very common, replacing Bangla songs. Hindi songs are found to be so much important in any occasions that the celebration often seem incomplete without it. Even today, marriage ceremonies are considered incomplete without Hindi song and group dance, which have taken the place of the traditional Bangla song known as *Geet*. Watching movies, dramas, games/sports, and music take up a lot of time, affecting study, job, and personal life. Young people, particularly students, become mired in hedonism and indifference, break off friendships, lack empathy and collaboration, and lose interest in their education and careers (Abusaleh K et al., 2022). The South Asian recreational traditions of theater, chatting, folk music, and local sports—all of which were essential to mental development—are in danger of going extinct (Rahman K A, 2014). Nowadays, foreign movies, especially Indian ones, drama series, and sports matches have gained much popularity among the youth in Bangladesh. Young people, especially men, tend to spend significantly more time watching international sporting events than women do. Because these events typically occur during the nighttime in Bangladesh, they can disrupt sleep patterns and subsequently affect daily routines. The younger generation is severely dependent on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Google+, blogs, and smartphones (iPhone, Smart Phone). These are utilized for leisure activities and friendships that result in meaningless love, which has an impact on their spiritual strength and reading significance (Rahman K A, 2014). Cultural globalization, which is the term used to describe the rise of the media behemoth, has a significant impact on our everyday lives and the society in which we live (Hossin M Z and Mohiuddin M, 2015). One of the (male) respondents expressed his opinion this way:

*"I enjoy watching movies, dramas, songs, and sports for at least three to four hours every day when I have free time. I practically spend twice as much time on entertainment as I do on*

*studying because of the enormous effects of these forms of entertainment. I prefer them because their budget, cinematography, visuals, and story are more improved than those of ours."*

The effects of drama series and movies are found to be more prominent among the women. It was also found that women spend considerably more time watching movies and drama series than those of men. Since women are viewed as the primary caregivers in Bangladesh, watching too many drama series and films has a direct impact on domestic chores. Sometimes it becomes difficult to manage household activities properly and hampers personal routine, most importantly sleeping time. One of the respondents (female) stated that:

*"I am a kind of series lover. I love the Turkey series the most. As a series comprises so many episodes, therefore, I spend a significant time watching them. And, as I start watching a series, I can't resist continuing to watch. I can spend less time studying and working than is necessary. Sometimes, while studying or working, I lose my attention as the suspense of drama keeps me diverted. Due to the thrilling effect of thriller series, my basic tasks like sleeping and preparing meals also get affected. Foreign movies or series portray different types of characters and show something new. I prefer the Turkey series because of its mesmerizing visual presentation and thrilling storyline."*

Watching movies and drama series not only kills time but also leads to financial burden since the availability of the content depends on internet use or subscription fees on various platforms like Netflix, Bongo BD, OTT, etc. The amount to be spent on these platforms varies from 200 Taka to 3000 Taka and above. One of the respondents (female) stated that:

*"I spend 15-20 hours watching foreign movies and drama series. My personal routine and work get hampered due to watching movies and serials since I could spend the time on productive work that I usually spend on movies. Obviously, I need to bear the cost of the online subscription to Netflix, which is nearly 3000 Taka, approximately, per month. The drama series consists of many episodes; sometimes I cannot stop watching the next episode and pass the whole night like this. This way, my office time and personal routine get affected by it."*

Another (female) respondent stated that:

*"I spend about Tk 1000 per month for entertainment purposes. I spend this amount to get the accessibility to OTT platforms. As OTT platforms are becoming expensive, my expenditure in this sector is increasing as well."*

The increasing rate of watching foreign content is also found to be associated with emotional attachment that directly affects personal life. The study indicates that watching foreign cultural content led to the motivation of premarital relationships and increases in marital fantasy and romanticism among the youth. One of the (male) respondents opined that:

*"My life is affected by the entertainment that I consume. I try to be more romantic with my partner by watching this entertainment."*

Another respondent (female) stated that:

*"I like to watch Korean serials consisting of many episodes. The drama serial portrays Korean actors as caring, loving, friendly, and responsible for the partner. Sometimes I also thought to have a partner like them, as caring, loving, and responsible."*

Not only the young; the children also learn to be engaged in watching cartoons on mobile phones from the very early age. This addiction to mobile exposure persists throughout life and negatively affects the youth since it directly hampers study time. Nowadays, screen addiction has become a widespread occurrence. The availability of Android smartphones and internet connectivity has significantly reduced



the influence of television in recent years, allowing people to browse anything at any time. Bangladesh's cable network permits foreign satellite TV stations, including the majority of Indian broadcasters. Every month, Indian channels generate a substantial sum of money from the sale of commercials as well as subscriptions to Bangladeshi households and business owners. However, the Indian government is still preventing Bangladeshi television networks from airing on their domestic cable network by an unwritten rule, depriving Bangla-speaking people of their favorite Bangladeshi shows, particularly drama and music videos (Islam A, 2013). Uninterrupted access to Indian channels in Bangladesh provides legitimate ground for cultural hegemony by circulating their own thinking, ideology, lifestyle, and most importantly, culture. In Bangladesh, it has been customary to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine's Day, and the 31st night. These events, which are mostly centered on Western ideology, are disseminated via a variety of media, particularly social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Magazines and television show also serve as its agents by airing drama series and special issues, respectively. It was observed that just before Valentine's Day, various brands of food, clothing, gifts, and jewelry run advertisements on Facebook promoting discounts and special offers encouraging people to celebrate the occasion accordingly. Print media like newspapers also publish articles/events focusing on fashion, gifts, food items, and lifestyles focusing on the celebration of these days. Individuals, particularly young people, are now celebrating Western cultural holidays like Valentine's Day, Friendship Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and other foreign holidays (Shahen A et al., 2019; Tanvir et al., 2014). One of the respondents (female) stated that:

*"I try to make some memories of my special days, like birthdays and anniversaries. To do so, I arrange family gatherings, plan for outings, and prepare special dishes. I do like to celebrate special days like Valentine's Day and 31st nights as well. Yes, celebrations like these are associated with social media and foreign cultural influence. I get exposed to them through Facebook and fashion magazines mostly. But, in my celebrations, I always try to include something from my culture, like preparing traditional dishes along with some foreign dishes."*

The celebration of the wedding ceremony has also gone through tremendous changes. Nowadays, wedding ceremonies include professional photography, videography, and cinematography in association with event management programs. This has increased wedding costs on the one hand and also led to an increase in related business activities on the other hand. The dress code and pattern of celebration have also been changed; the previously worn saree has been replaced by the Ghaghra or lehenga; personal catering services have been equipped with buffets, and personal management of wedding ceremonies has been replaced by event management.

The presence of cultural imperialism is observed to be penetrating very sharply among the youth, often without their consciousness. As a result, although gradually, people start to alter their lifestyles, the kind of clothing they wear, and the items of food they consume (Abusaleh K et al., 2022; Tomlinson J, 1999). The young people are found to be so obsessed with foreign culture that they even cannot differentiate between own culture and other's culture. Rather, a large number of respondents believed that foreign programs may enhance their own culture and broaden their understanding of other civilizations (Willnat L et al., 2002). One of the respondents (female) stated that:

*"Cultural imperialism is a threat to some extent (if it is the issue of completely replacing our cultures or merging them on the verge of extinction), yet not completely. We can always take the good aspects of other cultures to do something better based on fusion."*

*Thus, celebrating foreign culture has become a normal phenomenon and is found to be linked with modernity, enjoyment, and a matter of fashion sense among the youth."*

### 3.4 Personal relationship and everyday life

Personal relationship is shaped by the environment and culture in which the individuals are born and live. Since Bangladesh is predominantly inhabited by a Muslim majority, personal relationship and everyday life are mostly shaped by Islamic values, norms, and beliefs. From early childhood, Muslim children learn about social rules by observing the behavioral patterns of elderly people around them, especially family members. Language, behavior, manners, and norms are all shaped and regulated by the surrounding cultural patterns. For example, Muslim children learn about the greeting system (*Salam*), prayer (*Salat*), eating habits (eating by the right hand), conversations which are all found to be associated with specific religious culture (Islam). The traditional greeting system is also found to be affected by cultural imperialism and globalization. Muslims from Bengal typically say "*Assalamualaikum*" to their fellow Muslims, while "*Walaikumassalam*" is a response that Muslims use worldwide. It could be accompanied by a right-hand salute. It can be used to welcome outsiders and in any circumstance that calls for a formal greeting. *Namaskar* is typically used by Bengali Hindus in situations that are comparable to those in which Muslims greet one another. But it's also used to say hello and goodbye (Hakim A, 2014). Previously, greetings consisted of *Salam* (Islamic greeting) and *Adab/Namaskar* (Hindu greeting system), which are on the decline due to the introduction of new ones like Hi, hello, and what's up that are excessively used in western cultures. Nowadays, the young people use these greetings to a larger extent than before.

Muslim children are trained to be practicing Muslims from the very beginning by acquiring the basic teachings of Islam. Nowadays, these basic teachings are becoming intertwined with other cultural traits since the children learn to be engaged in watching videos and cartoons on mobile phones that also shape little minds. Exposure to other cultural traits has become more pervasive and prominent due to the availability of the internet and Android mobile phones, making it difficult to differentiate between own culture and others' culture. Children in cities frequently lack access to enough open space for outside activities, which makes screen addiction a bigger issue. Additionally, working women are often pressed for time and occasionally offer to let their kids watch TV or use their phones (Nahar K, 2024). Since the children are exposed to the internet and mobile phones, they learn about singing, dancing, celebrating birthdays, and other behavioral patterns that are contradictory to traditional Islamic lifestyles and more akin to Western ones. In developing nations, the recently imposed Western way of life has been steadily undermining customs, values, and morality while also raising rates of adult and youth promiscuity (Abusaleh K et al., 2022). Thus, the roots of other cultural traits can be traced back to technological advancements to some extent. It is found that the youth of Bangladesh are motivated to carry out other cultural practices mostly due to social media exposure like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Global culture has been portrayed in the media as a modern way of living, which has influenced our tastes in urban living and architecture and given rise to a new way of living (Ayna, 2011). One respondent (female) opined that:

*"As I am exposed to foreign culture through diverse media, I find my thinking pattern and personality being affected by it to a significant extent. Still, I remain vigilant not to allow the negative aspects (negative based on the consideration of our culture) of any foreign culture to get induced in me. I am always open to any positive culture of any foreign country. Inclusion of aspects like celebrations of special days of favorite ones to make them feel loved, showing a good manner to someone to make him/her feel cared for, etc., from foreign cultures sometimes makes my personal relationships healthier. While taking the good ones, I stay careful to be aware of the negative ones, like concepts of broken families, deception, and dishonesty in marriage relations and friendships."*

Excessive use of social media, especially Facebook, has also been found to be associated with an increase in premarital relationships, marital fantasies, and tendencies towards extramarital relationships. In this age of globalization, incidents of living together without marriage, extra-marital affairs, and the so-

called commitment to share life without compromising personal satisfaction have been growing more apparent (Bhoje, 2015). The increasing rate of premarital relationships has also led to an increase in love marriages compared to those of arranged marriages. Bangladesh has seen a notable increase in the divorce rate in recent years; between 2021 and 2022, the rate doubled. There was a minor decrease in 2023, though. Notwithstanding variations, the overall pattern suggests that more people are looking for separation, which reflects a shift in social structure and mentality. Rising knowledge of domestic abuse, changing views on marriage, and rising women's empowerment are some of the factors causing this surge (Shesheir M et al., 2025). The increasing rate of live-together without marriage, broken families, divorce and separation are all patterns of western life-styles that are being adopted in developing countries in the name of personal freedom, personal choice, and personal independence. Acceptance of other's culture over own culture seem to be creating cultural hegemony whereas challenging own cultures.

Other cultural facilities, such as unlimited independence and living together before marriage which is prohibited socially, culturally and religiously are found to be increasing among the youth these days. The young people, especially those who are students, stay away from family, get engaged in premarital relationships, and share the same room with their partner, causing an increase in live together without marital bondage. Moreover, premarital relationships have become so pervasive among the youth that many adults are engaged in having multiple partners at the same time. Compared to their female counterparts, a greater percentage of male students in Bangladesh who view porn have had sex before marriage (Hossen A M and Quddus A H G, 2021). Peer pressure, media exposure, and shifting social dynamics are some of the factors that have led to an increase in premarital sex, but it's still a delicate and frequently contentious topic (Shuvo T A et al., 2025). Availability of pornography and sexually explicit content in cyberspace also leads to an increasing rate in premarital relationships and, ultimately, sexual intercourse. Online chatting in Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram, and imo facilitates getting in touch with others in the easiest way, causing an increased chance to get engaged in a pre-marital/extra-marital relationship. Breaking down the relationship and engaging in a new one has also become an ever-bound cycle for many degrading ethical and moral values. Social conflict and violence resulting from pre-marital/extra-marital relationship has also been prominent. Some overenthusiastic girls get engaged in premarital/extra-marital relationship for financial support, having gifts, and leading better lifestyles. Boyfriend/girlfriend culture has become common among the young people and has become an open secret. Exposure to social media, especially Facebook, has emerged as the common platform to show off a boyfriend/girlfriend. Celebrating Valentine's Day, anniversaries, going out together, having selfies/photos, and posting them on Facebook have become so pervasive that privacy in personal life no longer matters. Due to the excessive exposure to social media, particularly Facebook, the young minds are encouraged to celebrate Valentine's Day in full swing, taking preparations for passing the night with a partner, which contradicts and violates traditional cultural life-styles, instigating moral degradation. Premarital sexual relationships resulting from fake promises to get married in the future also lead to an increase in abortions, which sometimes cause the mother to die. Suicidal attempts and the rate of suicide are on the rise due to physical and societal complications of premarital/extramartial relationships. This social epidemic has a direct negative impact on deceived partners and offspring, and due to this heinous act, sometimes there is a suicidal incidence (Patoari M M H, 2020). About 90% of the population in Bangladesh is Muslim, and they never condone extramarital affairs because Islam forbids such relationships and only allows a man and woman to have sex as long as they are married (Helal, 2013). Familial ties between husband and wife have become weak due to extra-marital affairs, leading to an increase in the divorce rate. The nation is seeing an increase in the number of fractured households. Dhaka has the highest rate of divorces. In Dhaka, divorces were filed on average every 40 minutes last year. Even outside of Dhaka, the number is growing (Rahman S, 2023). According to a Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' report, the country's marriage and divorce rates have both gone up. According to the report, difficulty preserving married life and extramarital affairs are the primary causes of divorce (Ahmed R, 2024). The availability of Android mobile phones, social media addiction, individualism, and

personal independence, along with women's empowerment, instigate young people to get engaged in unethical extra-marital relationships.

Thus, cultural imperialism is spreading other cultural traits through mass media, undermining the traditional cultural patterns of Bangladesh.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Cultural transformation mediated through cultural imperialism has emerged as a concerning issue regarding the existence of traditional cultural patterns. Since globalization has eroded boundaries between countries, cultural flows from one region to another have altered the traditional perceptions, hence affecting day-to-day life. Moreover, digital networking systems, along with the internet and social media, made the overflow of trivial aspects of lifestyle exposure prominent. Neighboring countries, especially India, and Western countries mediated by globalization contribute as the driving force of cultural imperialism in Bangladesh. Extensive use of mobile phones and availability of internet connections have contributed to the much greater diffusion of cultural exchange. Moreover, the role of social media has also exacerbated the spread of culture across the world as the most pervasive tool. The effects of such cultural dominations are observed to be increasing in all aspects of life, including the dress code, food habits, entertainment, and personal relationships, thereby creating a threat to traditional cultures and moral values. We can no longer deny the gift of globalization, which is Hollywood's and Bollywood's exposure. Therefore, positive aspects might be accepted but not the entirety, which could alter standards, ethics, and values (Abusaleh K et al., 2022). Since it is rarely possible to stop cultural flows, accepting the positive aspects and avoiding the negative ones could make a great difference. Moreover, preserving the traditional culture and raising awareness regarding own traditions may help to foster own cultural identity.

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