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<b>Article:</b>	<b>Impacts of Cultural Identity Crisis on Self-Concept among Pakistani Young Adults</b>
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**ABSTRACT**

The present study aimed at exploring the lived experiences of young adults in Pakistan and the impacts of cultural identity crisis on their self-concept. Participants of the study comprised 8 university students (4 males; 4 females) ranging from 20-40 years in age; two participants (1 male; 1 female) from each province. Qualitative research was used and the sample was collected through a purposive sampling technique. Transcripts were analyzed by using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Four themes arose from the data, which are named cultural facets, ethnocentrism, cultural diffusion, and self-concept. Results revealed an understanding of the prevailing cultural identity crisis, and how it affects the self-concepts of adults. It was concluded that globalization, technology, and colonization are important contributing antecedents of the cultural identity crisis in Pakistan, which is ultimately affecting the self-concept of young adults. Future implications attempt to restore native culture and thus, stability of the self-concept of young adults.

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity Crisis, Self-Concept, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Globalization, Technology, Colonization

**Introduction:**

Culture makes any human society accomplished. A person and his culture are inseparable from each other. "Culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, customs, beliefs, morals, laws and other capabilities which are learned, shared and transmitted from generation to generation by the members of society" (Baldwin et al., 2006). People ensure and preserve their persistent and firm adherence to several elements of their culture to make society operate functionally and effectually. Culture provides people with an identity and a sense of differentiation from others.

Identity is a complex term to define due to its dynamic and constantly evolving nature. Identity refers to how individuals and collectivities are differentiated from other individuals and collectivities in their social relations (Jenkins, 2004). Cultural identity is the sense of belonging to a particular culture including the aspects of nationality, religion, ethnicity, and education (Kim, 2007). It's a self-identification, the extent to which a person is a representative of his culture behaviorally, psychologically, communicatively, and sociologically. Cultural identities have histories and they go through constant change (Hanafiah, 2016). It engulfs an individual's heritage, reflecting the shared historic experiences and collective cultural codes which provide a single reality, an established and fixed frame of reference and significance.

Cultural identity also provides the psychological basis for self-concept construction. "Self-concept is an idea we have about who we are physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually and in terms of any other aspect that make who we are" (Neill, 2005). It is the cognitive component of one's self, which gets influenced by one's belongingness towards culture, people with whom one interact, and the context in which one communicates with others. Culture impacts the self-concept of an individual as research suggests that people belonging to more collectivist cultures form more group self-depictions than those from individualistic cultures (Bochner, 1994). Self-concept in the cultures of East Asians may be more flexible than in American cultures as East-Asian people easily accept self-contradictory beliefs (Choi & Choi, 2002). Previous research has shown that cultural identity influences various aspects of personality. The connection between cultural identity clarity and both well-being and self-esteem is constantly mediated by self-concept clarity (Tylor & Osborne, 2010). There is a positive correlation between degrees of identification and view of racialism and the efficacy of community (Adams et al., 2006). Without obvious cultural identification, there may be no adherence group through which an individual develops a reasonable sense of self-concept. A person's culture and identity are established and learned over time and cannot be replaced easily. One can borrow another culture or identity however the actual self has been crushed and torn (Dugan, 2007). The core of cultural identity is an image of the self and the culture knotted into the individual's total conception of reality. It is a *mélange* of internalized norms, rules, and roles, which works as the coordinating system in personal and interpersonal situations. Lustig notices that cultural identity is central. Individuals learn to understand their culture's core beliefs, values, and social practices and begin identifying with that culture. Culture thus becomes a fundamental part of their self-concept (Lustig & Koester, 2006). Collective identity is a matter of identification, it is the image that a group has of itself and with which its members relate themselves. Its strength depends on how vivid it is in the consciousness of individuals, and to what degree this image influences the participants in their thinking and actions (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). Hecht states that four layers of identity

play off each other personal, enacted, relational, and communal. These four layers are not separated from each other, they are inter-presented (Hetch, 1993).

Factors including technology, colonization, and globalization affect indigenous norms and values, thus leading to cultural conflict and consequently, cultural identity crisis. Identity crisis is the condition of being ambiguous about one's feelings about oneself, concerning character, roots, and goals, taking place, particularly in adolescence as a result of growing up under troublesome and rapidly changing situations (Erikson, 1970). The term cultural conflict implies that a particular culture is undergoing some process of change, confusion, or crisis. And this cultural conflict affects the cultural identity of its members. Findings revealed that social forces like colonialism, westernization, and loss of cultural values exist in a positive relationship. The local family system and the foreign culture also have a positive relationship (Wahab et al., 2012). Globalization has generated many cultural, psychological, and religious identity crises, and has also changed the conventional social system, secularization, decrease social unity and create complexity in social relations (Naz et al., 2012). There is a relationship between globalization and cultural identity crisis; globalization has substantial effects on cultural identity through the encouragement of conflicts rather than reconciliation (Kaul, 2015). The research investigates how global media and communication technologies transform cultural identity and how education systems can recognize and react to this emerging reality (Koc, 2006). Evidence suggests that countries that had lived under the colonial regime have suffered from serious damage in terms of their cultural values because the colonizer attempted to change their behaviors and values (Wahab et al., 2012). This invasion has long-lasting consequences on the colonized country (Frideres, 1998). Living in a post-colonized region under the influence of technology, westernization, and globalization, Pakistanis are also suffering from such a cultural identity crisis which ultimately affects their self-concept.

### **Material and Methods**

**Design.** A qualitative research strategy was used to explore the phenomenon. The approach was selected because the study aimed to explore the cultural identity crisis among Pakistani youngsters and its impacts on their self-concept.

**Participants.** Participants of the study comprised 8 students (females= 4; males= 4) selected from different universities in all four provinces of Pakistan by using a purposive sampling technique. One male and one female from each province were recruited. Students of early adulthood (according to Erik Erikson, 20-40 years) with stable mental and physical health were selected. Participants who have got an education of at least 10 years in their respective provinces and those who know both languages (English and Urdu) were included. Students of age above 40 and below 20 students with psychological issues and who didn't know both languages were excluded from the research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The permission of carrying out research was given by the board of studies. Before conducting interviews, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the research and then informed consent was taken after ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of their identity and the idea that they presented during the interviews. Interviews were recorded with the consent of participants. They were told that they can withdraw from the interview anytime they want.

### **Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews based on a literature review were conducted with participants and developed semi-structured interview schedules to collect qualitative data about their experiences of cultural identity and self-concept. The interview schedule consisted of 17 open-ended questions which were about their lived experiences and perceptions of their culture, cultural identity, and self-concept. Interviews were conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All interviews were audiotaped and their duration lasted from 20-40 minutes.

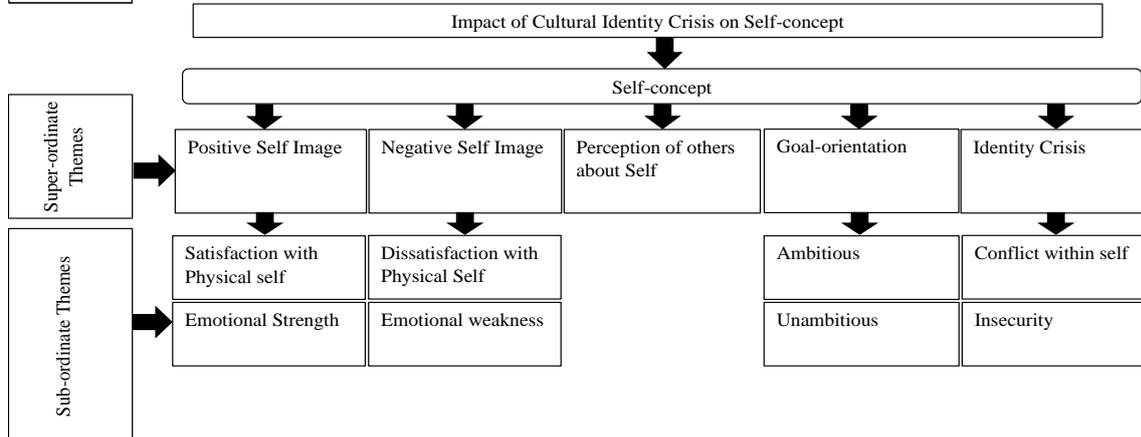
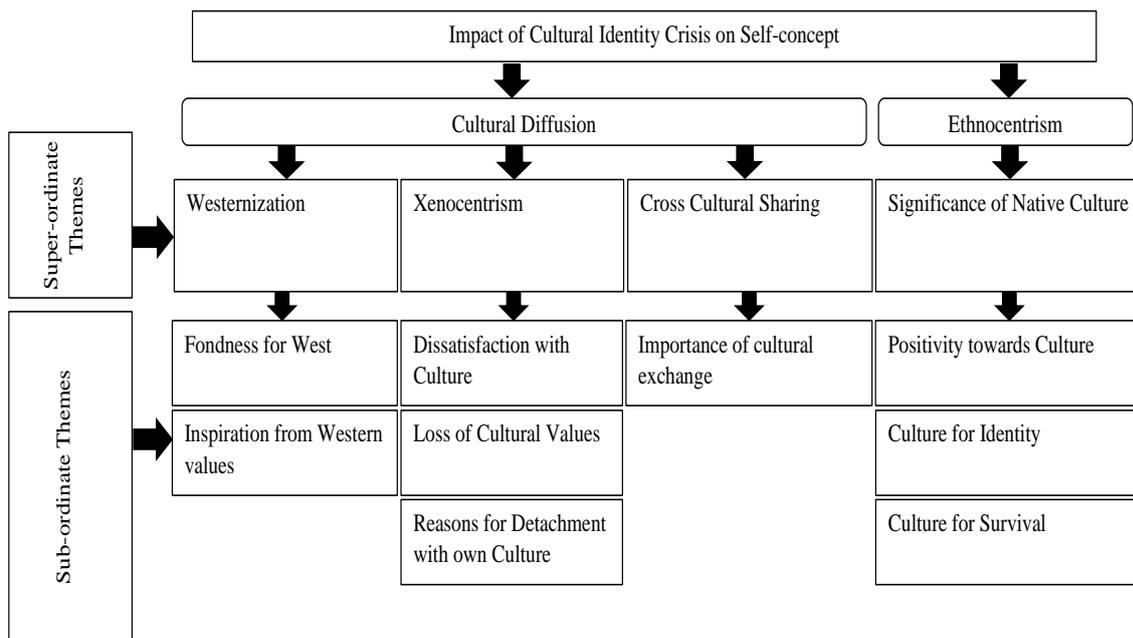
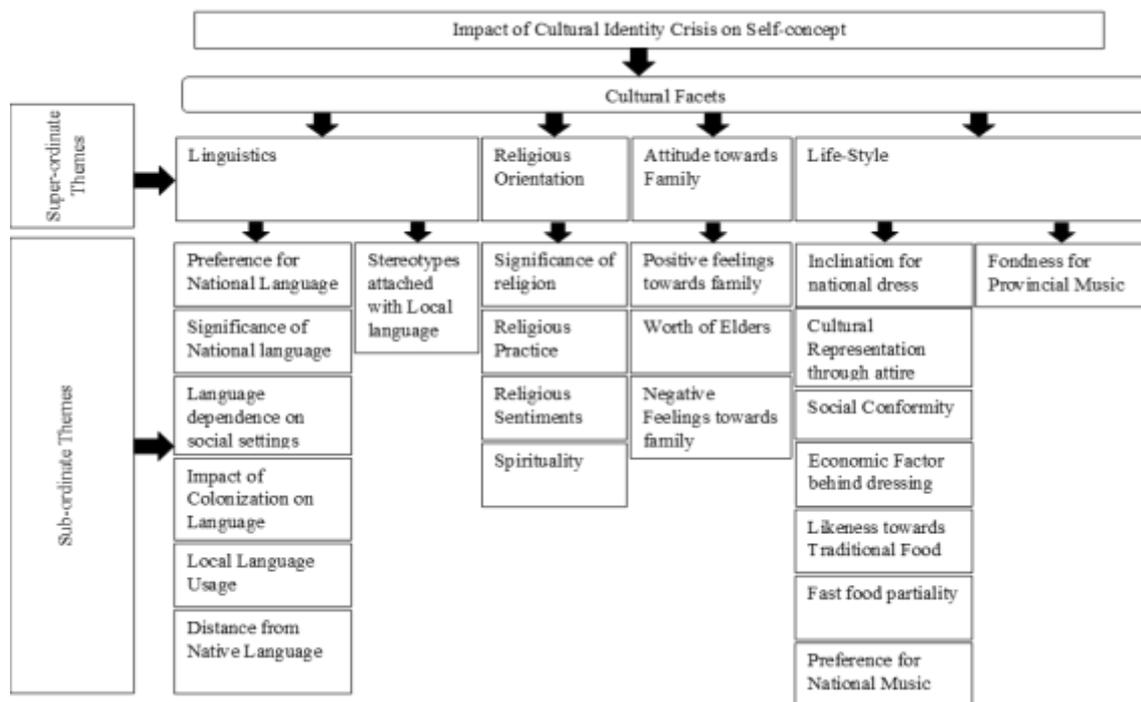
The interviews were held in calm and relaxed settings, where the interviewer established a friendly and welcoming atmosphere with the interviewees. The interviewer followed the standard practice of conducting a semi-structured interview, starting with a general question to gauge the participant's perspective on cultural significance, followed by more targeted questions based on their responses. The interviewer also employs various techniques, such as active listening, summarization, and clarification, to ensure a better understanding of the interviewee's idea. Additionally, probing questions were used to elicit detailed responses, and verbatim playback was utilized as necessary.

### **Analysis**

The research aimed to investigate the personal experiences of the students regarding their cultural identity and self-perception, therefore, interpretative phenomenological analysis was selected as the appropriate method for analyzing the data (Smith & Osborn, 2003). First participants' verbatim was transcribed and subjected to IPA first within the case, then across cases. The initial stage of the analysis involved carefully reading through the verbatim multiple times to ensure a comprehensive understanding. Once this was achieved, the researcher used the right-hand margins to note down any initial themes or noteworthy aspects of the verbatim. Subsequently, the researcher examined the left margins to identify any emergent themes that arose from the initial themes. Lastly, the researcher identified and extracted overarching themes from the cluster of sub-ordinate themes.

### **Results**

Four master themes have emerged; cultural facets, cultural diffusion, ethnocentrism, and self-concept. Cultural facets encompassed Pakistani adults' preference for national and local linguistics due to various reasons, orientation towards religion including importance and sentiments for religion and religious practices, individuals' positive and negative attitudes towards family and importance of elders, and their lifestyle including their likeness for different attire, cuisine, and music. Cultural diffusion depicted the importance of cross-cultural sharing for improvement of knowledge, economics, and language, inclination towards westernization, and the presence of xenocentrism due to many reasons like injustice, and poor education system within Pakistan. Another master theme ethnocentrism showed few adults' fervor towards the native culture of Pakistan. Self-concept portrayed both positive and negative self-images of young adults, emotional selves and their anticipation about how others perceive them, as well as the presence of identity crisis in them. Results revealed an understanding of the prevailing cultural identity crisis, and how it affects the self-concepts of adults. It was concluded that globalization, technology, and colonization are important contributing antecedents of the cultural identity crisis in Pakistan, which is ultimately affecting the self-concept of young adults.



## General Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate how Pakistani adults with cultural identity issues perceive and experience their situation, as well as how it affects their self-concept. The study generated four master themes; cultural facet, cultural diffusion, ethnocentrism, and self-concept.

Cultural diffusion surfaced as a master theme. Participants showed their inclination toward Westernization and hatred toward their culture. In 1978, Edward Said stated that colonial dissemination results in the adoption of Western culture, morals, and language by the local societies where the native people do not feel comfortable with the customs, culture, and structures of the local system that they have suffered for generations (Hamadi, 2014). Evidence also suggests that countries that had lived under the colonial regime have suffered from serious damage in terms of their cultural values because the colonizer attempted to change their behaviors and values (Wahab et al., 2012). Pakistan was a colonized land, and there are possible chances that the evident loss of traditional and cultural anchors has catalyzed it because bounds were already weakened by colonialism. Therefore, Pakistani adults still possess a postcolonial mindset. Another reason seemed to be the influence of technology like social media which is attaching prestige to the Western lifestyle and traditions due to which people try to follow Western culture, this is under the observational learning theory of Bandura (1977). Previous literature supported it, diffusion of technology developed in an external society in some situations has significant consequences for our way of life and culture (Ellul, 1964; Heidegger, 1977). This loss of cultural values is impacting cultural identity hence leading to a crisis. Lustig and Koester (2006) stated that self-concept is built on social, cultural, and personal identity. Therefore, a change in cultural identity affects the self-concept of an individual.

Some participants stated poor education system, injustice, and inequality as reasons for their unlikeness. Previous studies supported the participants' argument that the educational system of Pakistan failed to deliver the aspired quality of education (Ahmed et al., 2014). The public is losing confidence in the judicial system for the reason that the legal association is not observing moral standards in legal practice. Concerning cross-cultural sharing, participants highlighted the importance of cultural exchange for the improvement of knowledge, economy, and language. Thompson (1977) indicates cultural exchanges improve culture, beliefs, societies, language, and knowledge. But it showed a discrepancy between their expectations and the actual practices in society.

Ethnocentrism appeared as a unique master theme. When cultural values are in line with their attitudes and belief system, they experience cultural fit and positive feelings towards their native culture. This is the reason why participants expressed positive sentiments towards their culture and its history. They considered it important for their identity and Lustig and Koester (2006) also noticed that people internalize values, beliefs, and social practices of their culture and start identifying themselves with it. Therefore, culture becomes the central part of their self-concept. Another supporting research indicates that a person's culture and identity are developed and learned over time and cannot be replaced easily. A person can adopt another culture or identity but the original self becomes distorted (Dugan, 2007). Participants also considered culture important for survival and this is in line with previous literature as culture is a significant and crucial means that people use to adapt to their surroundings, infer their understanding of the world, and shape feelings and behaviors. Therefore, it becomes obvious

that human life is intertwined with culture in many ways i.e., adaptation, organization, and interpretation (Valsiner, 2000). It revealed that some adults are not experiencing cultural identity crisis therefore, their self-concept is intact.

Self-concept was one of the four major themes that emerged. Some participants reported negative images about themselves such as dissatisfaction with their physical appearance. The reasons behind this seemed to be colonization and technology as mass media is constructing an image of beauty in people's minds, and when people can't meet those standards, they start feeling inferior or ugly. A previous study has shown that there is an association between body dissatisfaction and ideal images in media (Mills et al., 2017). Therefore, this impact of colonization and globalization induced a cultural identity crisis which produced a negative self-image.

Identity conflicts were very prominent among participants. The most obvious reason behind it appeared to be a cultural identity crisis and loss of cultural values because culture and identity are interlinked and culture is a part of one's identity. In 1995, Assman and Czaplicka claimed that cultural factors play a significant role in shaping both individual and personal identities. This relationship is already proven by previous studies, a person's culture and identity are developed and learned over time and cannot be replaced easily. A person can adopt another culture or identity but the original self has been crushed and torn (Dugan, 2007). Globalization may also be a contributing factor to an identity crisis, the study showed that globalization has created various cultural, religious, and psychological identity crises, such as change's traditional social structure, secularization, the decline in social solidarity, and creating complexity in social relations too (Naz et al., 2012). Some participants expressed inferiority because of the impact of colonization. As Fanon observed an inferiority complex being produced in the colonized communities by burying their native cultural originality (Fanon, 2007). This conflict in personality emerged due to globalization and colonization which are antecedents of a cultural identity crisis, hence in Pakistan cultural identity crisis has produced personal identity conflict. Goal orientation toward a career was very prevalent among adults. The underlying reason is a wish to become financially stable and secure to survive in society as Darwin (1969) gave the concept of survival of the fittest" (Claeys, 2000). Few participants showed aimlessness, this is because they feel alienated, and feelings of insecurity within are due to cultural instability (Marx, 1895).

Some of the participants having fair complexion and height showed satisfaction with their physical selves. Reasons behind this appear to be the impact of colonization and the influence of media. Colonization has a drastic yet unconscious impact on the natives of the sub-continent. White-complexioned individuals consider themselves more privileged and are more satisfied with their physical selves. Chen et al. (2020) indicated that globalization and colonization have convinced people of color to adopt Western standards of beauty. Media plays a significant role in shaping views of society about beauty standards. Therefore, participants were contented with their physical selves as they met the beauty standards shown by the media. Previous research is in line with our finding that media is impacting the way people adopt the ideals of beauty and the way they put effort to govern others' perceptions about their looks (Mills et al., 2017).

The cultural facet was a master theme. Participants showed their preference for national and local languages for their comfort and better understanding. This is supported by previous

research that students showed a better understanding of concepts in their language than foreign language (Kocakulach et al., 2005). One of the participants reported that his preference for his language is because language depicts identity. The language indicates identity as well as signal identity by those who speak it (Byram, 2006). There is the dilemma that adults showed their preference for the national language but in real circumstances, they can't speak it at all levels due to social pressure, this showed that they have been facing cultural identity conflict as participants reported that they feel hesitant while speaking the national and local language. They recalled that they felt humiliated and embarrassed as people avoided talking to them and made fun of their accents. Hence, people want acceptance from society thus they conform to achieve harmony and approval and avoid rejection (McLeod, 2018). According to Said (1978) west consciously misconstrues the East as uncivilized and inferior. In Orientalism, the East is characterized as inferior, backward, irrational, and voiceless, and the West is embodied as progressive, moral, and rational (Hamadi, 2014).

In Pakistan, the family system is also being affected due to the impact of Western culture, parents are not treating their children the way they should and all family members remain busy on technological devices. This use of social media is leading to a generation gap and consequently, this generation gap is producing family problems. These could be the possible reasons behind participants' negative feelings towards their families. Family relationships shape out self-concept of adults. There is another dilemma that people emphasize religion but in actual circumstances, they don't practice it. From the responses of some participants, it was established that the family system in the West is very weak in comparison to the East. Pakistan has a collectivistic culture. That's why they like being a part of the family system and respect their elders for their involvement in taking decisions and providing them emotional support. Dressing choice appeared as dependent upon societal pressure and economic conditions, not on personal choice which is an indicator of cultural and personal conflict. Karl Marx (1859) proposed that the economy is the base for all the institutions like culture to rely on, therefore a weak economy can result in the breaking of cultural borders and making space for Western penetration. Pakistan has been going through an economic crisis for a long, therefore, participants reported that their inclination towards Western dressing was due to financial conditions. And many stated that their dressing choice depends upon social pressure. Kelman (1958) states in his theory of social influence that people accept impacts and accept the tempted behavior to obtain agreement from others and avoid disapproval. Few participants showed a preference for cultural dresses. According to Akdimer (2018), the practice of dressing involves using garments to express and showcase one's culture and social identity. Cultural hybridity occurs due to globalization and the world is called a global village now, people are connected and cultural diffusion is happening. Due to cultural diffusion, different cultural values and lifestyles are getting exchanged. People's preferences for food and music are now mixed. Results showed cultural hybridity. Hence results have indicated the presence of a cultural identity crisis and torn self-concept, as self-concept is built on social identity, cultural identity, and personal identity (Lustig & Koester, 2006), therefore, change in cultural identity affects the self-concept of a person. Therefore, the self-concept of youngsters is ultimately getting affected.

### **Limitations and Implication**

The present study has some limitations. The sample was interviewed online due to pandemic restrictions, so the contextual features i.e., facial expressions, emotional gestures, hand movements, and so on were not observed clearly. There are always chances of some data loss during transcription. The results will contribute to understanding how the cultural identity crisis is prevailing in Pakistan and how this affects the self-concept of adults. This information may help restore cultural values by making efforts to deal with factors responsible for the crisis. By restoring native culture, stability of self-concept among youngsters would be achieved.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, globalization, technology, and colonization appeared to be major antecedents of the cultural identity crisis in Pakistan, which is ultimately affecting the self-concept of young adults. Furthermore, the present study provides valuable insights into the impacts of the cultural identity crisis on the self-concept of young adults in Pakistan. The findings suggest that the cultural facets, ethnocentrism, cultural diffusion, and self-concept are interrelated and play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of young adults in Pakistan. The study highlights that globalization, technology, and colonization are the significant antecedents of the cultural identity crisis, which ultimately affects the self-concept of young adults. The results of the study imply that it is essential to take concrete steps toward restoring native culture to stabilize the self-concept of young adults in Pakistan. The study has implications for policymakers, educators, and researchers to develop interventions that promote cultural integration, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance the self-concept of young adults in Pakistan. In conclusion, the study provides a significant contribution to the literature on cultural identity and self-concept and emphasizes the importance of cultural identity in the lives of young adults in Pakistan.

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