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Original Article

TikTok's Consumption Among Pakistani Youth: A Uses and Gratifications Theory Approach

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Dr. Rahman Ullah¹ Mr. Aqib Iqbal²

Abstract

Social media platforms are used more extensively than traditional media, like television, radio, and newspapers. People actively seek to gratify their social, informational, and entertainment needs through digital platforms. This study explores the TikTok consumption patterns among Pakistani university students through the lens of the Uses and Gratifications theory. TikTok is rapidly gaining popularity in Pakistan, particularly among the youth. The research investigates the motivations driving their engagement with the platform. The study employs a qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with (n=50) Kohat University students, (25 male and 25 female). The study identifies key gratifications, including entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, education, lifestyle inspiration, and emotional relief. The findings conclude that youth actively use TikTok to satisfy diverse psychological, social, and informational needs, with content consumption shaped by algorithmic personalization and short-form video design.

Keywords: youth, social media, TikTok, uses and gratifications

¹ Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Kohat University of Science & Technology, Pakistan Email: rahman.jmc@gmail.com (corresponding author)

² Research Scholar, Kohat University of Science & Technology, Pakistan. Email: iaqib1836@gmail.com

Introduction

Social media has become a primary platform for communication, information sharing, and entertainment for young individuals (Shifman et al., 2025). Social media offers quick connectivity, diverse content, and opportunities for self-expression. The majority of social media users are young. According to David and Marija (2023), half of the world's population is under the age of 30. This generation has grown up in rapid change in technology and social-political transformation, especially in the global south. In January 2024, Pakistan had 71.7 million active social media users, which is 29.5 percent of the Country's total population (PromiAD, 2024). The youth population (under 30) is 64 percent. At the same time, about 29 percent are between 15 and 29 years old (Asia et al., 2024; Warraich & Ahmed, 2024).

Different platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, have long dominated the digital landscape, but in recent years, TikTok has emerged as a leading platform, particularly among younger users. This application was launched in China in 2016 by ByteDance, and in 2019, it became the most downloaded App worldwide and one of the outstanding social media platforms in annual growth (Xiaoye, 2019). Pakistan has also had the same flow in TikTok usage, especially among the youth, while increasing internet penetration and smartphone accessibility in the country.

User engagement on TikTok mainly arises from intrinsic motivations such as curiosity, entertainment, and self-expression (Jin et al., 2023). People use social media by choice; they participate in these platforms to satisfy personal interests and social needs (Tolokonnikova et al., 2020). Curiosity plays an essential role in encouraging individuals to explore viral trends, online challenges, and diverse viewpoints (Thomas & Vinuales, 2017). The visual nature of these platforms enhances engagement, as videos are easier to process than text, generating more powerful cognitive and emotional responses. Then text, eliciting stronger mental and emotional reactions (Lackmann et al., 2021).

Behind the personal motivation, TikTok has grown into a powerful tool for education, social awareness, and marketing (Sheak & Abdulrazak, 2023). The businesses utilized most of TikTok's audience to engage young users, while educators and social activists used it to share information and raise awareness about important issues. Numerous studies have pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of social media (Anderson, 2020; De Leyn et al., 2022; McCashin & Murphy, 2023; Montag et al., 2021; Zenone et al., 2021). Some scholars (Kencana et al., 2024; Merga, 2024); Slongo (2024) pointed out that there are some potential negative aspects of social media, including transmission of misinformation and false news, effects on mental wellbeing,

cyberbullying and online abuse, privacy issues, addiction and time management challenges, and impact on social interaction skills (O’Sullivan et al., 2022).

The use of TikTok among special youth in Pakistan is rising; it uses entertainment, self-expression, and social engagement among young Pakistanis. But research on this topic remains limited. Most existing studies focus on China and Western contexts (De Leyn et al., 2022; O’Sullivan et al., 2022; Sheak & Abdulrazak, 2023). This study provides qualitative thematic analysis (semi-structured interviews with university students) and insights into TikTok’s cultural significance and impact on youth engagement in Pakistan. This research explores how psychological, cultural, and social factors influence TikTok engagement, offering insights into the evolving digital behaviours of young Pakistanis. However, concerns about privacy, inappropriate content, and youth behaviour have led to regulatory scrutiny in Pakistan. Given these complexities, examining how TikTok influences students’ social and academic lives is crucial. Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), this study investigates why young Pakistanis engage with TikTok, what needs they seek to fulfil, and how their consumption patterns compare to broader media trends.

Research Questions

1. What principal uses and gratifications influence TikTok usage among Pakistani youth based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory?
2. In what ways do TikTok’s features satisfy Pakistani youth’s social, psychological, and entertainment needs in contrast to other social media platforms?

Research Objectives

- To explore the primary uses and gratifications behind TikTok usage among Pakistani youth through the Uses and Gratifications Theory.
- To examine how TikTok fulfils Pakistani youth’s social, psychological, and entertainment needs compared to other social media platforms.

Theoretical framework

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory provides a valuable framework for understanding media consumption patterns, particularly in developing digital platforms like TikTok. This theory posits that media consumers are active, goal-oriented, and purposeful in their media choices (Blumler & Katz, 1974). It stresses why individuals choose specific media by looking at their media

selections (i.e., uses) and the needs these fulfil through media engagement (i.e., gratifications) (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

In this study, U&G theory helps analyse why young Pakistani users engage with digital media platforms, what needs are fulfilled, and how TikTok's unique features enhance user satisfaction. Looking at the nature of TikTok as interactive and algorithm-driven, modern uses of U&G go beyond traditional media (Newspaper, Radio, and Television) motivations. They now offer new types of gratification enabled by advanced technologies and social interactions (Lin et al., 2017).

Traditionally, U&G theory focused on the media's role in fulfilling fundamental psychological or social needs. However, advancements in media technology have changed user behaviour and the influence of platforms like TikTok in meeting these needs (Montag et al., 2021). As the theory progressed, it addressed how newer media technologies, like TikTok, fulfil more specific gratifications, such as novelty, social interaction, and instant gratification.

TikTok's focus on short-form videos is a key factor that sets it apart from platforms like YouTube, which has traditionally supported longer content (Violot et al., 2024). It's a key source of entertainment, self-expression, and social engagement among users, especially young adults (Sheak & Abdulrazak, 2023). A significant element of TikTok's charm is the entertainment it offers users, which is recognized as a key satisfaction across various social media channels (Nath & Badra, 2021). These short-form videos enable users to effortlessly and easily consume content, meeting their needs for immediate gratification. The concise nature of TikTok's content appeals particularly to young adults looking for entertainment during other daily activities, as shorter videos are viewed as more accessible and less time-intensive (Söğüt & Öngel, 2022).

TikTok is significant in promoting social interaction and providing escapism, addressing users' desires for connection and helping maintain relationships through activities such as liking, commenting, following, and creating and sharing content (Schellewald, 2024). This trend is frequently observed on other social media platforms, including Facebook and Snapchat, and has been recognized as a common theme in U&G studies of these platforms (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020).

Content sharing on TikTok is centred on the platform's social dynamics, including presence, conversation, and connection (Ham et al., 2019). It allows the creation of relationships, friendships, and community sense (like, Singing,

artists, photographers, carpenters, and designers groups) (McLean et al., 2024).

TikTok's "Original Culture" feature allows users to express themselves freely and creatively through short videos using different designed templates (Pei et al., 2024). Other platforms, like YouTube or Instagram, often focus on longer or polished content, while TikTok encourages quick, authentic, and often natural posts (Omar & Dequan, 2020). This gives users the space to explore and show who they are (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020). These creative self-presentations not only entertain but also help users gain attention and appreciation from others (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020).

The Key point of the TikTok success is the use of artificial intelligence (AI), which gives freedom to each user to see what they want to see (Kang & Lou, 2022). The algorithms of the application track how people interact with videos and use that data to suggest more content they're likely to enjoy and keep them for long periods (Francisco & Ruhela, 2021). This shows how the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory is evolving, platforms like TikTok now offer more personalized experiences through advanced technology (Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021)

TikTok also helps users escape from daily stress. Many Users turn to the app for light, funny content, like Music, dancing, and humour, which allows them to relax and take a mental break from their routine (Abbasi et al., 2023). This escape fits with the U&G theory, which suggests people use media to cope with stress and find emotional relief. TikTok's growing popularity among young people makes sense when viewed through the lens of U&G theory. The platform offers content that entertains the user and is personally meaningful. Whether it's for Fun, connection, self-expression, or stress relief, TikTok meets different needs through a mix of smart algorithms, easy-to-use design, and engaging short videos.

TikTok's growing popularity among young people makes sense when viewed through the U&G lens. The platform offers content that's entertaining and personally meaningful, whether for entertainment, connection, self-expression, or stress relief. As the technology grows, TikTok brings a new phase to Uses and Gratification theory by showing how the AI and short-form of video content impact youth in their media consumption habits.

Significance of the Study

Currently, the social media platforms (like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok) are becoming the main source of information, education, and entertainment. This research is designed to understand how digital platforms, like TikTok, influence Pakistani Youth, Culture, Education, entertainment,

and behaviour. Using the Uses and Gratifications approach, this study exposes why Pakistani university Students actively engage with TikTok, what they gain from it, and how it influences their daily lives. The findings are useful for academics, policymakers, and content creators by providing guidance on promoting healthy and positive use of social media. They can also support efforts to build media literacy and address the negative effects, including addiction and unhealthy comparisons.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach to explore the use of TikTok among Pakistani University students. The qualitative approach helps to understand participants' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours in detail. The research was framed using thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of the themes and patterns within the collected data, aligning with the research objective.

The data was collected from (n=50) university students (25 male and 25 female) through a random purposive sampling technique. Students using TikTok at Kohat University of Science and Technology. The data collection took place during November and December 2024 through semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 10 to 20 minutes, and sessions were recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis

After gathering the data, we analyzed the responses using thematic analysis, a qualitative approach that identifies, analyzes, and interprets patterns (themes) within the data. We adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps.

1. Familiarization: Engaging with the transcripts through multiple readings to deeply immerse ourselves in the data.
2. Generating Initial Codes: Identifying and labelling significant segments of data.
3. Searching for Themes: Organizing the codes into potential themes based on common meanings.
4. Reviewing Themes: Refining the themes to ensure they align with the research questions and removing redundancies.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Clearly articulating the core of each theme.
6. Producing the Report: Synthesizing the findings into coherent narratives backed by participant quotes.

During the Thematic analysis process, the key themes identified include TikTok's roles in entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, and information sharing, and its broader influence on students' social and academic behaviours.

Entertainment

TikTok's social media application has gained recognition as a popular entertainment platform (McLean et al., 2024). It also serves as a career opportunity for many young people, providing them with fame (Azmi et al., 2025). The majority of the participants agreed they use TikTok primarily for entertainment and enjoyment. Participant 9 noted, "I use TikTok for fun; users share short videos of dramas, films, and songs. As a music lover, I enjoy watching new Pashto and Indian Urdu songs for entertainment." Participant 14, a 20-year-old female, further mentioned, "I mainly watch romantic songs and music content. I follow various singers and artists on TikTok."

A standout feature of TikTok is its audio background. Musicians used to invest weeks recording in the studio. Today, technological advancements allow anyone with an Internet-connected device to record a track or music video easily (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2022). The platform's unique communication networks leverage this audio, including music from a broad range of genres and original sound clips: users' voices, industry songs, and lip-syncing competitions Zhang et al. (2013). Participant 32 further explained that

TikTok's trending music, dances, and lip-sync challenges have emerged as popular ways for users to engage, showcasing the platform's focus on performative content. I uploaded my own videos featuring trending songs, then edited and finalized them on TikTok before sharing with my friends on the platform.

Feng et al. (2019) have an opinion that users often turn to TikTok to alleviate stress through entertaining and humorous content, mainly utilizing its music and audio features. It promotes emotional expression, interactivity, and user-friendly design, making it attractive for short, funny videos and shared trends (Abidin, 2021). Participants 35 and 19 have shared their thoughts on comedic relief and entertainment.

I usually watch humorous content on TikTok because it makes me feel refreshed and happy after a hectic day. I enjoy watching comedy skits as they are entertaining and help me unwind.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory illustrates how engaging content can create immersive experiences that uplift mood and alleviate stress (Zhao & Wagner, 2022). For certain users, TikTok provides an emotional connection and release. Participant 6 noted, "I enjoy watching sad videos and poetry on TikTok because I appreciate this content." Conversely, some users seek out positive content to elevate their spirits. Participant 11 remarked, "I primarily view comedy and entertainment on TikTok for stress relief and to improve my mood."

Lifestyle and Self-Improvement

On TikTok, the consumption trends and lifestyle aspirations reflect Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital and social hierarchy theories, implying that lifestyle content builds symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Furthermore, Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid modernity" highlights how individuals frequently reshape their identities according to evolving social standards, which helps explain the popularity of lifestyle vlogs and aspirational content (Bauman, 2000). Certain users seek lifestyle enhancement and luxurious aesthetics. Participant 47 noted, "I view luxury and old money lifestyle videos on TikTok to elevate my lifestyle." Additionally, vlogs present insights into daily life and cultural traditions. Participant 23 emphasized, "I love watching lifestyle vlogs because they offer useful tips and insights into various cultures."

TikTok also serves as a source of personal inspiration. Many users seek the platform for motivational content that keeps them focused and optimistic. As participant 46 shared, "*Motivational content inspires me and gives me positive energy to tackle challenges in my life.*" This kind of content promotes personal growth, resilience, and the motivation to overcome challenges, making TikTok an effective tool for self-improvement and fostering a positive mindset.

Similarly, Life events and personal interests, such as weddings or hobbies, hold cultural importance and are increasingly showcased on digital platforms like TikTok (Turner, 1969). This platform allows users to document and seek inspiration for meaningful occasions, including weddings. As Participant 19 stated, "*I primarily watch wedding decorations because my wedding is coming up, and I'm gathering ideas.*" Additionally, TikTok has become a space where niche interests, like car enthusiasts, can connect with others. Participant 34 mentioned, "*I mainly watch car content because I love learning about them.*" Thus, TikTok functions as a cultural hub where personal interests and key life events are expressed, celebrated, and collectively shared in a digital setting.

Education and Information

TikTok has emerged as an essential social media platform for education, information sharing, and promoting learning. Wahid and Jenuwa (2024) Research indicates that university students regard TikTok as a beneficial addition to traditional education, providing quick and accessible learning resources. In addition, Conde-Caballero et al. (2024) Studies suggest that TikTok's brief videos are well-suited to microlearning strategies, enhancing the overall educational experience and the learning experience. Users like Participant 32 shared, *"I watch informative videos on TikTok to encourage my knowledge,"* reflecting the platform's role in expanding knowledge. Educational materials like documentaries, informational videos, and news features appeal to many users. Participant 38, a Journalism student, remarked, *"I turn to TikTok for documentaries about individuals and locations, as I am eager to learn about them and find inspiration in those videos."* In contrast, Participant 4 noted, *"I appreciate educational videos because they are brief yet informative, allowing me to absorb knowledge swiftly."*

TikTok also plays a role in the political sphere. Research Ibrahim et al. (2025) TikTok's algorithm influenced the spread of partisan content during the 2024 U.S. presidential election, increasing visibility for Republican-aligned content. Participant 36, a political science student, shared, *"I watch political content, sports analysis, and cricket news to stay informed,"* highlighting TikTok's importance in informing users about current events. The studies emphasize TikTok's dual function in education and political discussions while stressing the necessity for media literacy and critical engagement with the platform's content.

Culinary content, beauty, and fashion trends

TikTok is a major platform for discovering food content, beauty, and fashion trends. The platform encourages users to share quick recipes, cooking hacks, and styling tips, positioning itself as a central hub for culinary and fashion inspiration, predominantly for female users.

Culinary exploration is a popular theme for food enthusiasts on TikTok. According to Wiklund (2022), the hashtag "# food" has reached an astonishing 268 billion views on the app, while "#recipes" and " #restaurant" have attracted 9.1 billion and 6.9 billion views, respectively. Additionally, Andrews (2021) found that 36 Percent of TikTok users in the USA have either visited or ordered from a restaurant after seeing a TikTok video related to it. Furthermore, 55 Percent of users went to a restaurant simply because the food appeared appealing in the video and the food looked appetizing. As a female participant, 27 shared, *"On TikTok, I love watching food videos as I am really*

passionate about food. I enjoy exploring different cuisines, learning about popular dishes, and discovering unique places.”

TikTok has also influenced consumer behaviour, particularly in the beauty industry. According to Alfreyah Shahla and Fitri (2024) 89 Percent of TikTok users have purchased beauty products influenced by what they see on the platform, highlighting its influence on sales. Trends such as ‘glass hair’ and vibrant lashes have garnered millions of views on TikTok, highlighting the app’s impact on beauty standards.

The #lashlift and #lashtint are big and growing lash trends of 2024, with 89 million and 116.7 million views on TikTok, respectively, shaping global beauty trends. TikTok serves as a hub for beauty-related content, such as makeup tutorials, beauty products, and live product unboxing. The young female users, like Participant 45, added, *“I am really interested in looking beautiful. I usually enjoy watching makeup videos and shopping from different online websites because the international products are unavailable in my hometown. Watching those videos is enjoyable and helps me discover new products”*. With its interactive and captivating video content, TikTok strongly influences beauty trends and buying habits, making it an important platform for beauty lovers.

Discussion

This study was designed to find out why Pakistani University students use TikTok and what their basic motivations are. It utilized the Uses and Gratifications theory as its theoretical framework, which shows that the theory is still important for understanding how users, especially young users, use digital platforms to fulfil different personal and social needs. The study involved a qualitative thematic analysis of (n=50) Pakistani university students (Kohat University of Science and Technology), split evenly between male and female participants. The study identified key motivations for using TikTok, including entertainment, social connection, self-expression, learning new things, educational content, and inspiration for lifestyle and fashion.

Entertainment is a key motivation for using social media, especially on TikTok (Masciantonio et al., 2020; Bossen & Kottasz, 2021; Meng & Leung, 2021). Pakistani university students have noted that humour, music, lip-syncing, and emotional content are the primary reasons for their engagement on TikTok. They also mentioned that they enjoy Pashto, Urdu, Hindi, and romantic music. The findings suggest that the easy and quick creation of self-videos satisfies young people’s desire for instant entertainment and emotional relief, particularly following long academic days. This serves as a means of relaxation and enjoyable release for emotional stress.

Interestingly, Self-expression and the exploration of identity are central themes for youth deriving gratification from TikTok, facilitating cultural exchange, personal development, and global connectivity. As TikTok grows, it will consistently play a vital role in shaping individual identities and broader societal norms. Many users leverage TikTok to display their creativity through various means, including fashion, women's makeup tutorials, cultural vlogs, dance performances, wedding content, and automotive videos. The findings of Omar and Dequan (2020); Shabbir et al. (2023) also support the idea that short video platforms enhance self-presentation and social interaction. They also affect consumer behaviour, especially in the beauty, fashion, and culinary industries. Their capacity to boost trends and sway purchasing decisions is notable.

This study also highlighted that students interact with their friends and family on social media by liking, sharing, and commenting on each other's content, fostering a sense of connection and engagement in digital communities. It further supports the McLean et al. (2024) research, which has claimed that TikTok is a platform for digital social bonding and emotional exchange.

The social interactions are not limited to always being directed at friends or familiar groups; they remain vital through likes, comments, duets, and interactive trends like challenges, strengthening the connection and involvement in these online communities. The significance of community on TikTok is underscored, even though interactions are primarily influenced by algorithmic content discovery instead of close personal networks. Although

Educational content on TikTok, such as informative short videos, documentaries, news segments, and motivational material, is popular among Pakistani students for quick and easy learning (micro-learning). Research by Conde-Caballero et al. (2024) and Wahid and Jenuwa (2024) also shared the concept of microlearning, particularly through TikTok. They highlight TikTok's role in enhancing students' general knowledge and its effectiveness as a microlearning platform, especially for tech-savvy students who are pressed for time.

TikTok is now introducing a special educational *STEM* feed to highlight content related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This new feature adds an additional layer of moderation, guaranteeing that shared videos remain accurate and relevant. It showcases TikTok's expanding influence in microlearning, with students leveraging short videos for efficient and straightforward learning. This trend is particularly noticeable in countries like Pakistan, where educational content, including short clips, mini-documentaries, news updates, and motivational videos, is gaining popularity. The research Conde-Caballero et al. (2024); Wahid and Jenuwa (2024) also

supports the idea of microlearning through TikTok, noting how the platform blends entertainment with education in creative ways. For students who have limited time or access to traditional learning resources, TikTok offers an engaging and flexible alternative. The launch of a dedicated STEM feed shows that TikTok is not just a place for fun anymore; it's becoming a serious platform for focused, meaningful learning.

TikTok is also used for lifestyle and inspiration-focused content, including wedding videos, luxury living, and cars. It influences youth aspirations and mirrors contemporary digital life's symbolic dynamics. Additionally, although escapism is not the primary motivator, some users still noted it. They mentioned turning to TikTok for emotional release, such as viewing sad poetry, nostalgic clips, or calming content to escape real-life stressors.

Conclusion

This study determines that TikTok is not merely a platform for pleasure; it is a complex, culturally rooted digital space where young Pakistani users find entertainment, education, links with community, and social identity. The findings support the U&G theory of the core assumption that media users are active, goal-oriented, and gratify their specific needs by utilizing media.

The primary motivations for using TikTok are Entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, education, and lifestyle inspiration. These findings also reveal that Pakistani youth consume and contribute to digital culture uniquely, locally, and meaningfully, offering perspectives often overlooked in Western-centric social media research. Furthermore, the Platform's algorithmic personalization and short-form content design particularly appeal to Gen Z and university students. Social media is central to youth life, and TikTok will likely continue shaping their digital, social, and emotional landscapes.

This study pointed out the need to balance digital engagement and promote the constructive use of platforms like TikTok for educational and productive activities while being aware of their possible downsides. By acknowledging the platform's distinct impact and grasping its gratifications- such as self-expression, entertainment, microlearning, and community engagement-educators, families, and policymakers can collaborate to cultivate a digitally savvy, critically aware, and creatively empowered generation. In Pakistan, TikTok represents the vibrant digital spirit of youth: expressive, curious, adaptable, and inherently social. Understanding its effects on the lives of young people is vital for grasping modern identity formation, cultural negotiation, and youth psychology in a globally interconnected, algorithm-driven media landscape.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study hold significant implications for educators, policymakers, parents, content creators, and social media platforms. Given that many young people turn to TikTok for short educational and motivational videos, educational institutions and teachers might consider adopting TikTok-inspired formats or micro-content to engage students better. Moreover, the stress relief and emotional connection reported by participants indicate that TikTok could serve as a resource for youth well-being, provided appropriate guidance. Implementing content moderation and digital literacy initiatives is essential to foster positive, informative, and non-toxic content. Additionally, TikTok mirrors and amplifies cultural values, acting as a platform for expressing both traditions and modern aspirations. Pakistani youth play a significant role in creating and consuming cultural content, promoting opportunities for cultural preservation and contemporary storytelling. Awareness initiatives on TikTok should aim to educate young users about the risks associated with excessive use, social comparison, and addictive behaviors, while encouraging critical thinking regarding media consumption. Businesses and influencers must acknowledge the Pakistani youth's psychological and cultural sensitivities, as authentic, value-centered content will likely resonate more deeply than overt commercialization.

Theoretical Implications: Uses and Gratifications Theory

This research highlights TikTok's significance in addressing the diverse needs of young users through the framework of Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory. The theory posits that media consumers actively engage with content to satisfy specific desires (Blumler & Katz, 1974). For the youth in Pakistan, TikTok fulfills their needs for entertainment, social interaction, self-expression, and education.

The platform's algorithm-driven content delivers instant gratification, offering tailored, swift entertainment that particularly appeals to younger audiences, as noted by Violot et al. (2024). Its interactive features enhance social interactions, cultivating a sense of community, which aligns with U&G's emphasis on social needs (Schellewald, 2024). Moreover, TikTok supports self-expression through creative content, enabling users to seek social validation, a point discussed by Sheldon & Bryant (2016). The educational aspect of TikTok further illustrates U&G's focus on meeting informational needs. TikTok likewise affects consumer behavior, with trends spreading quickly and influencing buying decisions. This study highlights TikTok's extensive global impact, especially among young people, emphasizing its cultural importance in Pakistan and worldwide.

In summary, TikTok's effectiveness can be interpreted through the lens of U&G theory, as it caters to multiple user needs, from entertainment and social connections to self-expression and educational resources. This research advances our understanding of how platforms like TikTok shape digital habits and influence youth culture.

Limitations of the study

This study offers valuable insights but has limitations: It focused on 50 university students chosen through random sampling. While the participants had diverse academic backgrounds, the results might not reflect the experiences of all Pakistani youth, especially those in rural areas or outside the university setting. Additionally, the semi-structured interviews depend on participants' memories and self-awareness, which could lead to biases such as selective memory or social desirability. Furthermore, unlike some global studies, this research did not examine participation in TikTok challenges, which may mean that related motivations or behaviours (such as peer pressure and virality) were overlooked.

Future research

The long-term psychological impact of TikTok consumption on youth, gender-specific or regional differences in usage patterns, the role of TikTok in shaping political views or consumer behaviour, the impact of influencer culture on youth identity formation, and comparative studies between TikTok and newer platforms like YouTube Shorts or Instagram Reels.

Conclusion

The study concludes that TikTok is a multifaceted platform that meets the diverse needs of Pakistani youth, offering entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, and cultural representation. However, concerns about viral challenges, privacy, and mental health implications highlight the need for further research. Future studies could focus on the long-term psychological effects of TikTok usage, particularly with peer influence, self-image, and academic performance. Additionally, research into regulations and responsible platform use is necessary to ensure that TikTok contributes positively to youth development.

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Original Article

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Dr. Mumtaz Hussain Shah¹ Shaleem Eliasaph John²

Abstract

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region has become one of the most sought-after foreign direct investment (FDI) destinations in recent years. However, there is still room for improvement. This research aims to study the importance of good governance for FDI inflows, along with other classical factors (market size, development level, trade openness, and human capital), in the ASEAN region from 2000 to 2022. Using the fixed effects panel data technique, the results show that the control of corruption exerts a positive and significant influence on FDI in ASEAN. Meanwhile, voice and accountability, though significant, still swayed FDI in the opposite direction, while political stability is found to be insignificant for FDI in ASEAN. Market size, development level, and human capital proved equally important in positively influencing FDI. Trade openness is significant but negatively associated with FDI. The key finding is that improving good governance factors like the control of corruption can play an imperative role in further enhancing the FDI attractiveness of ASEAN.

Keywords: good governance, panel data, FDI, corporations

JEL Classification Codes: C330, F130, F140, F210 and G380

¹. Associate Professor of Finance, Institute of Management Studies, University of Peshawar.

². Post Graduate research scholar at Institute of Management Studies, University of Peshawar.

Introduction

Countries around the world are competing to secure Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Gonchar & Greve, 2022; Shah, 2011c). This trend is particularly pronounced among emerging and developing economies (Shah, 2021). Over the last three decades, there has been a significant increase in global FDI flows. The statistics for worldwide FDI inflows have risen from approximately US\$ 55 billion in 1980 to about US\$ 1.3 trillion in 2023 (UNCTAD, 2024). Good Governance (GG) is integrated into various aspects of the international investment arena. Consequently, GG has experienced a rise in attracting FDI. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) defines good governance as a broad term that encompasses how a nation is governed, taking into account economic policies, the rule of law, and regulatory quality (IMF, 2018). A growing number of research studies discuss the conventional factors influencing FDI; however, when it comes to governance and its impact on FDI, there remains a need for further research (Shah & Tahir, 2024). This paper aims to examine the importance of good governance for inward FDI in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

FDI has become a major driver of economic growth since the 1980s. Therefore, to secure FDI, emerging economies are integrating it into their policy frameworks (Deng, Delios & Peng, 2020; Shah, 2009). In the past, emerging nations have employed various incentives like cost reduction, cost-effective labor, and tax incentives to attract and promote FDI (Shah, 2011d). Newman, Rand, Talbot, and Tarp (2015) noted that FDI serves as a means of technology transfer, stimulates job creation, fosters strong business competition, increases capital flow, and acts as a critical revenue source. Dang and Nguyen (2021) confirmed that FDI is driven by long-term objectives.

The Asian Development Bank (2017) reported that with a combined population of over 600 million, ASEAN has the third-largest labor force in the world after China and India. Additionally, ASEAN has liberalized trade through tariff reductions. The organization is focused on building remarkable infrastructure and exceptional cross-border links to enhance market access and production capabilities (Shah, 2011b; 2014b). According to the World Investment Report (2024), the top 100 MNCs are significantly present in ASEAN. Compared to developed countries, the emerging nations attracted more FDI, despite the 2009 slowdown (UNCTAD, WIR, 2024). In light of the aforementioned benefits and incentives, it's clear that there is immense FDI potential in ASEAN. However, there is still room for improvement in governance (Shah & Gulelala, 2017). The events of the 1997 Asian Crisis stirred international finance experts and researchers to further investigate the

governance quality of a country and determine if better governance enhances capital flows and improves the economy of a country (Peres, Ameer & Xu, 2018).

The significance and role of good governance cannot be overlooked, especially since all major developmental bodies are currently working towards making GG an essential part of their programs (Ross, 2019). This can be summed up by the following quote of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan: “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development” (United Nations, 1998). Mahmood, Shakil, Akinlaso, and Tasnia (2019) stated that, although the classical factors (such as trade openness, market size, and infrastructure) remain important for FDI, nations with strong institutional quality and governance policies prove to be more appealing to foreign investors. The significance of the relationship between GG and FDI is becoming more pertinent in today’s globalized world (Shah, 2023). It’s increasingly clear that the presence of good governance factors leads to increased inward FDI. This paper is expected to contribute to the FDI literature in several ways. The findings of this work will provide insights into the factors that require consideration in order to augment inward FDI and enhance growth in ASEAN (Kannen, 2020). Improving good governance not only attracts inward FDI but also proves rewarding for domestic businesses and industries, resulting in economic prosperity (Shah & Zeb, 2017).

Due to the unavailability of data for states such as Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia, several relevant and potentially important variables and proxies—like interest rate spread, education expenditure as a percentage of GDP, and research and development expenditure as a percentage of GDP—were not included in this study. The economic situation of a country depends on various dynamic determinants, some of which are unique to specific regions. Generalizing findings from one country to another unrelated country can lead to misleading results (Shah 2018a; 2019). Therefore, the outcomes of this research are limited to ASEAN for the period from 2000 to 2022. The results should not be generalized to other groups of states or individual countries unless they share similar economic and social environments as ASEAN members.

This research consists of seven parts. The first part provides an introduction and a brief description of FDI, good governance, and ASEAN. The second part offers a literature review. The third part reviews the methodology and overall research design. The fourth part discusses the tools and techniques used for data collection and analysis. The fifth part contains the results, 23

analysis, and their interpretation. The sixth part presents recommendations, while the seventh part concludes this research with some conclusions and future extensions.

Literature Review

The majority of empirical research regarding FDI determinants has been conducted using classical factors such as market size, gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), trade openness, human capital quality, exchange rates, and inflation rates (Shah 2016a; 2018b). Thus, these factors are considered key motivators in the investment decisions of overseas investors (Shah & Jamil, 2016). However, as the modern world continues to evolve, good governance (GG) has become a crucial component across various disciplines (Shah, 2011a; 2017b). Consequently, trade and business, particularly FDI, have integrated GG, making its importance increasingly evident (Shah & Faiz, 2015). This literature review aims to ascertain the previously mentioned claim about the significance of GG for FDI in light of the empirical literature. According to UNCTAD (1996), incentives are crucial when competing globally to attract MNCs. Fazio and Talamo (2008) state that FDI is a global phenomenon, with countries, regardless of their geographical location and developmental stage, aspiring to be part of the FDI race. Therefore, several governments have developed various incentives to attract investors. These incentives include fiscal benefits, commercial gains, and the right to engage in monopolistic practices. With increasing globalization, various economic opportunities have been created for enterprises, but it has also heightened the necessity for better governance in host countries. The authors further state that social structure and governance play a more important role in attracting FDI than financial benefits, such as lower production costs. Consequently, with the growth of global trade, it is becoming crucial to survive in this globalized world. Many countries have embraced various policy changes to facilitate and encourage FDI.

Studies Related to Developed Countries

Mody and Srinivasan (1998), studying US and Japanese FDI, showed that Japan favored states encouraging trade openness more than US MNCs. Allessandrini and Resmini (1999) examined FDI in Europe and the Mediterranean region from 1900 to 1997 and found that trade openness adversely affected FDI inflows, while market size was insignificant. Lucke, Karmann, and Eichler (2013) investigated Japanese FDI into 59 developed and emerging host countries, revealing that Japanese investors are attracted to

developed economies with open markets and lax regulations. Emerging nations prove to be more attractive when they have enhanced governance policies, such as greater transparency, effective governance, and superior regulatory quality. However, political stability seemed to be important to a lesser degree, especially in developed countries. Surprisingly, the findings revealed that a high level of corruption seems to attract more Japanese FDI; this does not imply support for corrupt regimes, but indicates that in the presence of overburdening and strict regulations, government officials share the FDI profits. Mahmood et al. (2019) studied Canada's inward FDI. Canada is a developed country and was arguably the least affected during the financial and economic troubles of 2008-09, thanks to its excellent governance policies. Their findings confirm the positive relationship between governance and FDI, indicating that improving governance policies is not only beneficial for developing nations but also favorable for developed countries.

Studies Related to Developing Countries

Li and Reuveny (2003) state that voice and accountability (VA) negatively influence FDI. High levels of VA empower an unskilled labor force, which may create challenges for MNCs trying to exploit cheap labor. Similarly, Carkovic and Levine (2005) identified that inward FDI leads to technology transfer in developing regions, suggesting a positive relationship between incoming FDI and economic growth. Li and Resnick (2003) find a negative link between VA and FDI due to the availability of cheap labor, entry deals, low costs, and the suppression of labor forces in regions with weak VA. Ahlquist (2006) found a positive connection between FDI and VA. FDI flows toward democratic states, as they create a more accountable and credible business environment. Moosa and Cardak (2006) consider market size and trade openness to be the most significant drivers of FDI. Nourzad (2008) found a negative relationship between FDI and openness. Fereidouni, Masron, and Amiri (2011), evaluating FDI and VA in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, discovered an insignificant relationship between them. Berden, Bergstand, and Etten (2013) show that VA tends to decrease the import and export of goods, which may negatively impact FDI. Cantah, Wiafe, and Adams (2014) found that trade openness affects FDI negatively.

Shah and Afridi (2015), examining the significance of GG for FDI in SAARC from 2006-2014, showed that market size, political stability, and the quality of regulations exhibited a positive association with FDI, whereas corruption

had a negative one. Khan and Banerji (2016), analyzing the FDI from 63 countries in India for 2010-2013, found that promoting and improving corporate governance codes (including transparency) and aligning them with those of the developed countries (UK/US) were vital for attracting investment from abroad. Sabir, Rafique, and Abbas (2019), considering governance factors and FDI in developed and developing countries, concluded that governance plays a significant role in driving FDI. Their findings further indicate that VA positively influences FDI in developed countries, but it is insignificant in developing countries. Corruption control and political stability also show a positive link with FDI.

Studies Related to Asian Countries

This section includes studies related to both Asian and ASEAN countries, as ASEAN is part of Asia. Sun and Parikh (2001), using GDP growth as a measure of development level, found a significant relationship between it and FDI. Zaman, Shah, Khan, and Ahmad (2012), studying FDI in Pakistan, show that low-quality human capital negatively affects economic growth, whereas trade liberalization, population, government size, inflation, and human capital positively influence the FDI-growth nexus. Masron and Nor (2013) explore the effect of institutional quality (IQ) on FDI in ASEAN nations. They show that, except for regulatory quality, all other indicators had a significant positive impact on FDI. Ahmad and Ahmed (2014) studied the IQ effects on FDI in Pakistan for 1980-2012. Poor governance indicators, such as a high level of corruption, inefficient government, and miserable regulatory quality, seriously deter MNCs. White III, Chizema, Canabal, and Perry (2015) studied Southeast Asian economies and proposed that uncertainty of the legal system and regulatory inferiority have a curvilinear relationship with FDI. This means that FDI will decrease as the legal uncertainty of the law increases until a certain point, after which FDI inflow begins to show a greater surge with increasing legal uncertainty. Enterprises are attracted to highly uncertain legal systems because they offer opportunities to reap greater rewards, use financial leverage, and acquire favorable positions in the market. Xaypanya, Rangkakulnuwat, and Paweenawat (2015), using Dunning's eclectic paradigm, examined FDI determinants in ASEAN from 2000 to 2011. They found that market size and infrastructure play a significant role in attracting FDI, and even with limited trade openness, investors remain willing to invest. Rashid, Looi, and Wong (2017), scrutinizing 15 Asia-Pacific nations from 2000 to 2013, revealed that foreign enterprises prefer large markets with stable

political and economic conditions for their investments. Likewise, Masron (2017) studied how the inward FDI of a host country was affected by the institutional quality (IQ) of its competitor country. He considered ASEAN nations while referencing Chinese IQ for comparison from 1996 to 2013. Results showed that the ASEAN FDI pattern was considerably influenced by the “relative” Chinese IQ. He further stated that if ASEAN nations can improve their governance, it will benefit their economies a world of good, as it will enable them to “escape the middle-income trap” as well.

Importance of Good Governance for FDI

Hausmann (2000) believes that incentives, such as tax, financial, and regulatory stimuli, may lead to less favorable economic conditions for the host economies. In contrast, Shatz (2001) postulates that nations with developed governance and investment environments improve their inward FDI potential. Similarly, Kaufmann and Kraay (2024) and Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2004) state that governance factors such as lower corruption, transparency, and superior legal regulations pave the way for MNCs' decisions to invest in a particular country. The OECD's (2003) report suggests that governance factors and FDI have a bidirectional bond. At times, transparency leads to FDI growth and, while at other times, FDI can give rise to new and improved transparent practices. Moosa and Cardak (2006) also found political stability to be a significant FDI determinant. On the other hand, corruption and the absence of transparency cause a strong negative effect on FDI (Fazio & Talamo, 2008).

Alguacil, Cuadros and Orts (2011) stressed that if a nation wants to improve FDI inflow, merely enhancing conventional incentives, such as cost reductions and tax incentives, is insufficient; they should also focus on strengthening governance practices and enhancing economic infrastructure. Similarly, Masron (2017) suggested that the conventional incentives employed by host countries add substantial costs and are difficult to maintain in the long run. Thus, relying solely on conventional incentives to attract FDI is not a wise choice; improvements in good governance policies can be extremely beneficial in this regard.

In light of the previously mentioned literature, signalling a positive impact of good governance and FDI on host economies, it is also wise to discuss some of the literature that presents conflicting outcomes. Wheeler and Mody (1992) were unable to find any significant FDI-governance rapport; their results indicated that FDI decisions were largely dominated by classical determinants and agglomeration benefits. Some authors are of the view that FDI negatively

impacts a nation's growth, as this growth is not natural and is induced by foreign intervention, ultimately resulting in sluggish growth (Disney & Amin, 1976). Tekin (2012) argued that FDI positively affects economic growth only if it is assumed that foreign investment does not crowd out domestic investment. Dang and Nguyen (2021) examined FDI into ASEAN-7 from 1996 to 2019 and found, through Pooled-OLS and Feasible Generalized Least Squares (FGLS) for Seemingly Unrelated Regression, that FDI is negatively affected by political stability. Krifa-Schneider, Matei, and Sattar (2022) analyzed FDI into 80 developed and emerging countries, finding that political stability has a significantly negative influence on FDI in emerging economies. Antonietti and Mondolo (2023), studying FDI into 102 developing and emerging states over 25 years, from 1995 to 2019, found that it Granger causes voice and accountability.

To conclude this section and reiterate the importance of good governance for host countries, and specifically for ASEAN, Daude and Stein (2007) state that poor regulations, an unstable political environment, and government inefficiency significantly affect FDI negatively. Kaufmann and Kraay (2024) emphasize the need of enhance good governance (government efficiency, political stability, control of corruption, sound regulation) to attract and sustain FDI. Numerous studies have demonstrated that good governance codes positively and significantly impact FDI and economic growth (Ahmad & Ahmed, 2014; Shah & Afridi, 2015; Saidi, Ochi & Maktouf, 2023; Shah & Tahir, 2024).

Hypothesized Relationship of the Explanatory Variables

In the light of the literature review, the hypothesised relationship of GG with FDI is given below, whereas, for other explanatory variables, it is mentioned in Table 1.

H₀: Good Governance has no effect on inward FDI in ASEAN

H₁: Good Governance has a significant effect on ASEAN inward FDI

Table 1: Hypothesized Relationship of the Explanatory Variables

Variables	Expected Effects
Market size	Positive
Development Level	Positive
Trade Openness	Positive
Human Capital	Positive
Good Governance	Positive

Methodology

This part covers the research methodology employed in this research work. It states the population/sample, conceptual framework, explanation of dependent and independent variables, and mix of tools and techniques used for data collection and analysis (Shah, 2011e).

Population

To explore and examine the impact of good governance on inward FDI of the host countries belonging to the ASEAN region we have taken in account data for 2000-2022 of all the ten member nations of ASEAN which are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam (ASEAN, 2024). As all ten member nations of ASEAN are considered for this study, the population and sample are the same.

Model Specification

A bivariate analysis would cause omitted variable bias (Shah & Khan, 2017). Therefore, other control variables are added to decrease omission bias and get superior and more reliable results (Appiah, 2018; Shah, 2012a; 2013b; 2017d). The functional form of the FDI good governance rapport is explained through equation 1:

$$FDI_{jt} = f \left(\begin{matrix} \text{Market Size, Development Level, Trade Openness,} \\ \text{Human Capital, Good Governance} \end{matrix} \right)_{jt} \quad (1)$$

Where “j” represents the member countries varying from 1 to 10, and “t” represents the time period 2000-2022, varying from 1 to 23. Annual secondary data is collected mostly from the World Bank (WB), Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), World Development Indicators (WDI), and Lee and Lee’s

(2024) educational data set. It is analysed using multiple regressions to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

$$FDI_{jt} = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 Market\ Size_{jt} + \beta_2 Development\ Level_{jt} + \beta_3 Trade\ Openness_{jt} + \beta_4 Human\ Capital_{jt} + \beta_5 Political\ Stability_{jt} + \beta_6 Voice\ \&\ Accountability_{jt} + \beta_7 Control\ of\ Corruption_{jt} + \mu_{jt} \quad (2)$$

Where “ α ” is the intercept, “ β_j ” stands for the coefficient of the explanatory variables, while “ μ ” is the error term of the model.

Variable Explanation

Dependent Variable - Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

When a multinational enterprise enters a foreign market either by acquiring a business as a whole or extending its business activities, it is known as an investment (Shah, 2010). The data for annual net FDI inflows and FDI stock have been collected from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2024).

Controlling Variables:

Four control variables: market size, development level, trade openness, and human capital have been selected in order to reduce the chances of omitted variable bias (Shah & Samdani, 2015; Shah & Khan, 2016). These are discussed below.

Market Size

Market size is perhaps one of the foremost FDI determinants that influence an investor’s decision (Shah, 2012c). Gross domestic product (GDP) is used as a proxy for market size (Xaypanya et al., 2015). Population is also utilised as a possible proxy for market size (Shah & Azam, 2018). It is expected to have a significant positive effect on FDI in light of extant literature (Moosa & Cardak, 2006; Rashid et al., 2017; Nguyen & Cieřlik, 2021).

Development Level

Pulselli et al. (2015) say that gross domestic product per capita (GDP PC) should be adapted using purchasing power parity (PPP) rates, in order to get more reliable comparisons between the development level of countries (Shah, 2016b). For this reason, gross domestic product adjusted for purchasing power parity per capita (GDP PPP PC) is used as a proxy to measure the development level (Shah & Qayyum, 2015). A greater development level is preferred by potential investors (Shah, 2017c; 2018d).

Trade Openness

Exports as a percentage of GDP are used to measure the trade openness of the host countries. Investors prefer to invest in trade-friendly countries compared to isolated economies. FDI flows to countries that allow the import of raw materials and the export of finished goods. A positive relationship is expected (Mody & Srinivasan, 1998; Wang, Yang & Yang, 2023).

Human Capital

To measure human capital, tertiary education enrolment is used as a proxy. The quality of human capital informs investors about the education, competencies, and skill level of available labour in the host country (Shah, 2014a). Skilled and affordable labour is highly preferable in order to ensure a successful investment endeavour in a foreign nation. Human capital is expected to have a positive affiliation with FDI (Ahmed & Kialashaki, 2023; Rehman & Islam, 2023). Tertiary education stats are collected from Lee and Lee's (2024) dataset.

Independent Variable – Good Governance (GG)

Good governance is the main independent variable. It doesn't have a universal definition. The World Bank defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised and how the rules are created and imposed by the concerned authority. Furthermore, it relates GG with factors such as efficient government, rule of law, political stability, superior human rights, and transparency (World Bank, 2017). Whereas, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) outlines GG as the practices considered essential for growth and advancement. In addition, it describes GG as the procedures through which public concerns, resources, economic goals, and political aims are managed while ensuring transparency, accountability, avoiding corruption, and abiding by the rule of law (OHCHR, 2024). To measure the effect of good governance, the World Governance Indicators (WGI) by Kaufmann and Kraay (2024) are used. Governance indicators consist of six dimensions: voice and accountability, government effectiveness, political stability and absence of violence, the rule of law, regulatory quality, and control of corruption. However, three governance dimensions are chosen as proxies to study the impact of good governance on FDI in the ASEAN region, which are control of corruption, political stability, voice, and accountability. Studies carried out by Brewer, Choi, and Walker (2007) and Shah and Afridi (2015) use three out of six and four out of six dimensions of GG, respectively. Following Kaufmann and Kraay (2024) and Saidi et al.

(2023), we expect a positive and significant relationship of GG with FDI. The conceptual framework is provided as Figure 1.

Control of Corruption

Corruption is interpreted as the extent to which public power is exploited for personal advantage. The presence of corruption can prove to be a deterrent for inward FDI, as evident from the extant empirical literature (Fazio & Talamo, 2008; Ahmad & Ahmed, 2014; Shah, 2018c; Krifa-Schneider et al., 2022).

Conceptual Framework

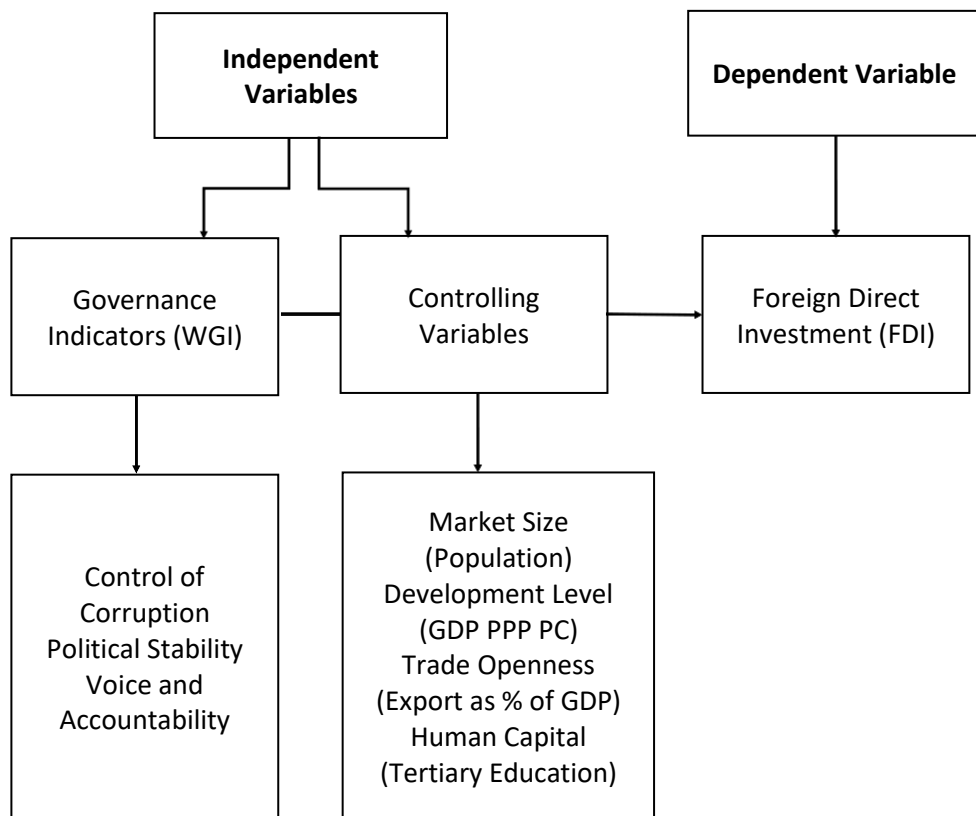


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Political Stability

The perception of a government's tendency to collapse due to violent means, such as terrorism, negatively influences potential investors. Foreign investors looking to invest prefer politically stable countries, expecting them to be favorable and supportive of their investments. The lower the political risk, the greater the attraction for foreign investors (Okara, 2023). A positive effect is anticipated, in light of previous studies (Gonchar & Greve, 2022; Moosa & Cardak, 2006; Rashid et al., 2017).

Voice and Accountability

Voice and accountability can be defined as the perceptions of the extent to which citizens perceive their ability to choose their government. This concept also encompasses freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association. A negative relationship is anticipated based on the studies discussed in the literature review (Li & Resnick, 2003; Li & Reuveny, 2003; Fereidouni et al., 2011; Berden et al., 2013; Antonietti & Mondolo, 2023).

Estimation Issues

Before running the regressions on the data, it's important to observe the data and look for any outliers, which may cause issues in the reliability of the results. The statistical tests used for this study are given below: STATA 13 is used for running the regressions.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the data. It includes the number of observations, mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum value for all variables. It demonstrates the absence of outliers in the data; hence, there is no unreliability in the results for this reason.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Proxies	Obs	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
FDI	Ln FDI	230	23.7080	1.8390	19.7320	27.8820
Market Size	Ln Pop	230	16.8760	1.8040	12.6270	19.3910
Development	Ln GDP PPP PC	230	9.0897	1.2709	6.8817	11.3668
Trade Openness	Ln Exports	230	3.7910	1.1470	0.0950	5.4480
Human Capital	Ln Tert Edu	230	1.7190	0.6900	0.2070	3.9730
Good	CoC	230	-0.2810	0.9990	-1.7000	2.3000
Governance	VA	230	-0.7240	0.7030	-2.2000	0.5000
	PS	230	-0.1800	0.9550	-2.1000	1.6000

Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity refers to the extent to which independent variables are correlated with one another. When problematic multicollinearity exists among them, it can complicate the results of the study being conducted (Shah & Khan, 2018). In the presence of multicollinearity, the outcomes of regression become unreliable, and the significance tests of regression coefficients may be flawed (Shah, 2013a). For this reason, it is crucial to check the data for the presence of multicollinearity before proceeding with regression analysis.

Correlation Matrix

To check for any potential extreme multicollinearity in the data, correlation coefficients for the variables were calculated using STATA 13 in the form of a correlation matrix (Shah, 2016c). The presence of extreme collinearity can lead to biased outcomes. Wooldridge (2015) states that if the correlation coefficient exceeds 0.90, it's an indication of problematic multicollinearity. However, all of the correlation coefficients are below 0.90, suggesting an absence of extreme multicollinearity.

Table 3 Correlation Matrix

No	Variable Name	Proxy Used	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Foreign Direct Investment	Ln FDI	1.00							
2	Market Size	Ln Pop	0.37	1.00						
3	Development Level	Ln GDP PPP PC	0.46	-0.56	1.00					
4	Trade Openness	Ln Exports	0.41	-0.28	0.57	1.00				
5	Human Capital	Ln Tert Edu	0.67	-0.20	0.72	0.34	1.00			
6		CoC	0.54	-0.46	0.85	0.68	0.75	1.00		
7	Good Governance	VA	0.52	0.12	0.46	0.55	0.39	0.53	1.00	
8		PS	0.14	-0.70	0.68	0.58	0.40	0.72	0.11	1.00

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Variance inflation factor, or simply VIF, is another means to check for multicollinearity. According to Asteriou and Hall (2021), if the VIF value is above 10, then this signals the presence of problematic multicollinearity, which will lead to biased regression coefficients. However, if the values are

below 10, then multicollinearity is non-problematic. As visible from Table 4, VIF for all variables are below 10. The mean VIF is also well below 10 at 4.17, which indicates that this data doesn't suffer from multicollinearity.

Table 4 Variance Inflation Factor

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Control of Corruption	7.83	0.127778
Ln GDP PPP PC	5.53	0.180789
Political Stability	4.04	0.247523
Ln Tertiary Education	3.65	0.274035
Ln Population	2.90	0.344366
Voice and Accountability	2.67	0.374885
Ln Exports as % of GDP	2.57	0.388624
Mean VIF	4.17	

Heteroscedasticity

Regression analysis operates under the assumption that the error terms of a regression model are uniform across all values of the dependent variable, a condition known as homoscedasticity. In this scenario, the regression model can reliably predict the dependent variable across all values (both high and low) of the dependent variable. However, when the error terms are not uniform, this condition is referred to as heteroscedasticity (Shah, 2012b). This leads to unreliable regression models because of the model's inability to predict the dependent variable consistently across all values (high and low values) of the dependent variable, ultimately rendering the outcomes unreliable.

The test used for checking for heteroscedasticity is the Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test. The null hypothesis of this test is that the variance of the error term is the same for all variables. If the resulting p-value of this test is below 0.05, then the null hypothesis can be rejected, which will mean heteroscedasticity is present. A list of models and their corresponding heteroscedasticity test results is presented in Table 5. In all the models, p-values are less than 0.05, which rejects the null hypothesis, meaning the presence of heteroscedasticity. In models where heteroscedasticity is present, robust standard errors should be used to control for this problem.

Table 5 Test for Heteroscedasticity

No.	Model Tested	P-Value
1	$\alpha_0 + \beta_1(\text{Ln Pop})_{jt} + \mu_{jt}$	0.0001
2	$\alpha_0 + \beta_1(\text{Ln Pop})_{jt} + \beta_2(\text{Ln GDP PPP PC})_{jt} + \mu_{jt}$	0.0000
3	$\alpha_0 + \beta_1(\text{Ln Pop})_{jt} + \beta_2(\text{Ln GDP PPP PC})_{jt} + \beta_3(\text{Ln Exports})_{jt} + \mu_{jt}$	0.0000
4	$\alpha_0 + \beta_1(\text{Ln Pop})_{jt} + \beta_2(\text{Ln GDP PPP PC})_{jt} + \beta_3(\text{Ln Exports})_{jt} + \beta_4(\text{Ln Tert Edu})_{jt} + \mu_{jt}$	0.0116
5	$\alpha_0 + \beta_1(\text{Ln Pop})_{jt} + \beta_2(\text{Ln GDP PPP PC})_{jt} + \beta_3(\text{Ln Exports})_{jt} + \beta_4(\text{Ln Tert Edu})_{jt} + \beta_5(\text{CoC})_{jt} + \mu_{jt}$	0.0000
6	$\alpha_0 + \beta_1(\text{Ln Pop})_{jt} + \beta_2(\text{Ln GDP PPP PC})_{jt} + \beta_3(\text{Ln Exports})_{jt} + \beta_4(\text{Ln Tert Edu})_{jt} + \beta_5(\text{CoC})_{jt} + \beta_6(\text{VA})_{jt} + \mu_{jt}$	0.0000
7	$\alpha_0 + \beta_1(\text{Ln Pop})_{jt} + \beta_2(\text{Ln GDP PPP PC})_{jt} + \beta_3(\text{Ln Exports})_{jt} + \beta_4(\text{Ln Tert Edu})_{jt} + \beta_5(\text{CoC})_{jt} + \beta_6(\text{VA})_{jt} + \beta_7(\text{PS})_{jt} + \mu_{jt}$	0.0000

Data Specifications

Pooled Ordinary Least Squares (POLS) Method

This is the first model applied to the collected data to use as a base for comparisons with other panel-based models. Multiple regressions are run using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) on pooled data. Pooled data doesn't account for variations in time and treats the data as having similar characteristics throughout all time periods. In other words, heterogeneity and individuality, which may exist in the different countries of ASEAN, are missing from the data. Due to this reason, pooled OLS model results are skewed and fail to provide the real picture (Gujarati & Porter, 2017).

Panel Data Techniques

Panel data techniques are appropriate for data having both time-series and cross-sectional characteristics. This research aims to study the good governance-FDI Nexus in ten ASEAN member states over a time period of 23 years. The collected data have the two mentioned characteristics; consequently, panel data techniques should be employed. Panel data techniques are appropriate for data having both time-series and cross-sectional characteristics. This research aims to study the good governance-FDI Nexus in ten ASEAN member states over a time period of 23 years. The collected

data have the two mentioned characteristics; consequently, panel data techniques should be employed.

According to Baltagi (2021), there are various benefits of using panel data. The heterogeneous properties of individual nations are able to measure effects that are not possible in pure time series or pure cross-sectional data. There is more variation in the data, which reduces the collinearity among the variables. Panel data techniques also reduce or even eliminate the aggregation effects among nations, providing more reliable and unbiased results. The two main types of panel data techniques are fixed effects and random effects.

Fixed Effects Model (FE)

In the fixed effects model, the independent variables are assumed to have a fixed (non-random) nature, meaning the characteristics don't change over time. However, there is a chance that the change may be caused by some exogenous effect. In this model, the intercept may vary across individuals (nations), but the intercept doesn't change over time. Also, omitted variable bias can be controlled in this model, while it's difficult to do in OLS models.

Random Effects Model (RE)

In the random effects model, the independent variables are assumed to have a random nature, and it is assumed that all errors are accounted for in the model, and exogenous effects do not exist (Shah & Khan, 2019). In this model, the individuals (nations) have a common average intercept value.

Specification Diagnostic Tests

These tests are used to identify the most suitable estimation technique for this study. As the nature of the data is panel data, some tests are needed to check which types of panel data techniques are more appropriate for this data set. The result of these specification tests is mentioned in Table 6.

Table 6 Specification Test

Test	To Select Between	Null Hypothesis	P-Value	Results
Fischer-Test	Pooled OLS & Fixed Effects	Pooled OLS is Better	0.0000	Use Fixed Effects
Breusch-Pagan Langrange Multiplier Test	Pooled OLS & Random Effects	Pooled OLS is Better	0.0000	Use Random Effects
Hausman Specification Test	Fixed Effects & Random Effects	Random Effects is Better	0.0000	Use Fixed Effects

Fischer Test

This test is used to decide between pooled OLS and fixed effects model. The null hypothesis for this test is that pooled OLS is appropriate, whereas the alternative hypothesis is that fixed effects is apt (Shah & Ali, 2016). As mentioned in the specification test table, for this test, the p-value was statistically significant. Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis, meaning that the fixed effect model is applicable.

Breusch-Pagan Langrange Multiplier Test

To select between the pooled OLS and the random effects model, this test is used. The null hypothesis for this test is that pooled OLS is suitable, while the alternative hypothesis is that the random effects model is a better fit (Shah & Sikander, 2025). As evident from the specification test table, the p-value was statistically significant; therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis, meaning that the random effects model is applicable.

Hausman Test

This is a commonly used test to identify the precise panel data model between fixed effects and random effects models. This test was developed by Hausman in 1978. The null hypothesis is that both random and fixed effects models are appropriate, while the alternative hypothesis is that the fixed effects model is more suitable. If the p-value is statistically significant, then the fixed effects model should be used; otherwise, the random effects model can also be

applied. As shown in Table 6, the p-value was statistically significant; therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis, meaning that the fixed effects model should be applied.

Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of GG on FDI in the member nations of ASEAN. The results of the regression analysis, using a fixed effects panel data technique, are shown in Table 7. A total of seven models were constructed, and their results are mentioned in the table. The R-squared values range from 13.58% to 58.91% across models 1 to 7.

The first one shows FDI regressed on market size alone. The highly significant coefficient illustrates that an increase in market size would lead to an increase in FDI activity. In model 2, the development level (GDP PPP PC) is introduced to the previous model. The addition of the new variable noticeably increased the R-square from 13.58 % to 28.19%. The coefficient of development level is also highly significant and positively influences FDI. Model 3 introduces trade openness (exports as a percentage of GDP) to Model 2. It is found to be insignificant with a coefficient of -0.1062. Market size and development level still remain highly significant and positively linked with FDI. The R-square slightly increased from 28.19% to 29.83%. It seems that FDI in ASEAN is primarily market-seeking horizontal FDI. Though insignificant, it signals that investors seek closed markets in ASEAN. The introduction of human capital (tertiary education) in model 4 is found to be significant. The coefficient value of 0.6824 indicates that an increase in human capital will cause an increase in FDI activity. Market size remained significant with the largest coefficient. However, its coefficient decreased from 3.9203 to 2.6901, perhaps due to the inclusion of human capital and its noticeable influence over FDI. The R-square value increased from 29.83% to 43.56%. It shows that multinationals sought high-skilled labour, probably producing high-end tech-specific products.

Control of corruption is added in Model 5. The coefficient is significant at a 1% significance level and positively associated with FDI. The coefficient value of 0.5551 means that enhanced corruption control leads to an increase in FDI activity. Trade openness also became significant (significant at 5% significance level), however, with a coefficient value of -0.1234, which indicated that an increase in trade openness would lead to a decrease in FDI activity. The rest of the variables exhibited a similar pattern to that of the previous model. The R-square increased from 43.56% to 53.89%. In model 6, voice and accountability are introduced and are found to be highly significant

at 1% but negatively related to FDI. The coefficient value indicates that a one-unit increase in voice and accountability would lead to a decrease in FDI activity by 0.5124 units. The coefficient value of control of corruption almost doubled to 1.0526, with the introduction of voice and accountability. It indicates that the presence of voice and accountability increases the influence of control of corruption on FDI. The rest of the variables displayed a similar pattern to that of the previous model. The R-square increased from 53.89% to 59.00%. The final model introduces political stability to model 6. The coefficient of political stability is 0.0111, which is found to be insignificant, meaning it has no effect on FDI in ASEAN. The rest of the variables displayed a similar pattern to that of the previous model. The R-square slightly decreased from 59.00% to 58.91%, which indicates that 58.91% of the variation in FDI is explained by market size, development level, trade openness, human capital, and good governance.

Variable-Wise Discussion

Market size was found to be positive and highly significant in all models, with the largest coefficient. This indicates that foreign investors favour big markets while deciding to invest in a host country. This is highly confirmatory of the literature review, as various studies have shown the positive effect of market size on FDI (Mahmood et al. 2019; Moosa & Cardak, 2006; Rashid et al. 2017; Shah & Sikander, 2025). This indicates the possible presence of horizontal FDI, which is generally market-seeking and mostly carried out in mature markets.

Development level is statistically significant and positive in all models. The significance level and the direction of the relationship are as expected from literature and theory (Shah & Tahir, 2024; Sun & Parikh, 2001). This indicates that MNCs prefer host countries with enhanced development levels, as the economic growth of the host nation also positively affects the living standards, infrastructure, and labour skills. This is also affirmed by the fact that out of ten ASEAN countries, the biggest FDI recipient last year was Singapore, the most developed of the member nations.

Likewise, human capital was found to be significant in all models after its inclusion in model four. This indicates that the quality of the labour force is a primary concern for MNCs considering investment in ASEAN. These outcomes are also in line with the findings of the study conducted by Zaman et al. (2012) and Guechheang and Moolio (2013).

Trade openness is found to be significant, but with a negative sign. It is in contrast to the majority of literature, which states that a reduction in trade

barriers positively affects FDI, as it enhances the overall commercial and business environment (Mahmood et al. 2019; Mody & Srinivasan, 1998; Rashid et al. 2017). However, this negative relationship between openness and FDI is also reported by other studies conducted by Alessandrini and Resmini (1999), Nourzad (2008) and Cantah et al. (2014). The negative relationship suggests that MNCs operating in ASEAN are making horizontal FDI and are focused on capturing new markets (also indicated by the large market size coefficient value) rather than focusing on (re)exports.

Control of corruption is highly statistically significant and has a positive effect on FDI in all the models, which is as hypothesised in the literature review. It has the third-largest coefficient in Model 7, indicating the importance of corruption control in attracting FDI. It shows that foreign investors prefer countries with no or a negligible level of corruption. Regions with high corruption levels will generally be less likely to attract investors from abroad, as the business environment in corrupt regimes presents an inherent financial risk. Therefore, a high level of corruption will be a barrier for the MNCs looking to invest in a certain host economy in ASEAN. This result is also supported by the findings by Ahmad and Ahmed (2014), Fazio and Talamo (2008), Kaufmann and Kraay (2024), Masron and Nor (2013), Sabir et al. (2019), Shah and Afridi (2015) and Shah (2018c).

Voice and accountability are statistically significant; however, it is found to be negatively linked with FDI. The findings of past research are inconclusive when it comes to voice and accountability, as in some cases, it exhibits a positive bond, while in others, it's negatively associated with FDI. For example, Lucke et al. (2013) say that the presence of corruption may create extra benefits (bribery and profit sharing) for government officials and MNCs, which leads to a positive connection with FDI.

Table 6 Regression Results

Variables	Proxy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Market Size	Ln Population	7.2541*** (0.9695)	4.1416*** (0.8878)	3.9203*** (0.9607)	2.6901** (1.1169)	2.6838** (1.0782)	2.7216** (0.8579)	2.7250** (0.8632)
Development Level	Ln GDP PPP PC		1.3452*** (0.3611)	1.4618*** (0.4339)	1.2728** (0.4178)	1.3418*** (0.4102)	1.3273*** (0.3383)	1.3207*** (0.3490)
Trade Openness	Ln Exports as a % of GDP			-0.1062 (0.1159)	-0.1234 (0.1107)	-0.2407** (0.0775)	-0.2262* (0.1027)	-0.2224** (0.0910)
Human Capital	Ln Tertiary Education				0.6824* (0.3206)	0.6304* (0.3317)	0.5341** (0.2064)	0.5338** (0.2108)
Good Governance	Control of Corruption					0.5551*** (0.1702)	1.0526*** (0.2569)	1.0496*** (0.2418)
	Voice and Accountability						-0.5124*** (0.1413)	-0.5202*** (0.1489)
	Political Stability							0.0111 (0.1126)
R-Square		13.58 %	28.19%	29.83%	43.56%	53.89%	59.00%	58.91%
No. of Observations		230	230	230	230	230	230	230

Note: Coefficient values are rounded off to four decimal places. Robust standard errors are mentioned in parenthesis.

****, **, * show significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively. Ln is used for natural logarithm*

VA represents the power of people to select their government; however, in the absence of VA, this can lead to corrupt governments focused on accumulating wealth for a select few. For this reason, the presence of voice and accountability may be seen as a hindrance for some MNCs, particularly those seeking tax havens and tax evasion. In contrast, lower voice and accountability—characterized by lax reporting practices, opportunities for tax fraud, exploitation of cheap labor, and oppression of labor unions—might be viewed as favorable conditions by some foreign investors, especially in developing countries where voice and accountability practices are weaker. Consequently, this may explain why VA shows a negative relationship with FDI in ASEAN. This finding also resonates with the conclusions of Li and Resnick (2003), Li and Reuveny (2003), and Berden et al. (2013).

Results for political stability are insignificant but positively associated with FDI. Aside from the significance level, the direction of the relationship aligns with expectations from the literature review (Daude & Stein, 2007; Kaufmann & Kraay, 2024; Rashid et al., 2017; Sabir et al., 2019). This relationship may be insignificant because other variables with large coefficients, such as control of corruption, market size, and development level, overpower the model, and hence, make the effect of political stability insignificant.

Recommendations

Even though voice and accountability were found to have an inverse effect on FDI, this phenomenon may indicate that a lack of VA yields promising results in the form of an immediate boost in FDI. However, in the long run, this could create serious issues for the economic and financial stability of ASEAN member states, such as tax fraud, loan defaults, and increased levels of corruption. Given the high volume of FDI share in developing countries, this may even disrupt the global financial system and lead to another financial crisis, similar to the downturns of 1997 and 2008-09. In some cases where the VA is absent, MNCs can also coerce the labor force and suppress local citizens for their own advantage. Therefore, to avoid such catastrophes, ASEAN policymakers should consider this and actively work to enhance their VA standings by tightening the reporting standards for MNCs, ensuring transparent asset declarations, amplifying the voice of the labor force, promoting freedom of speech and free media, and curbing corrupt practices such as bribery and tax fraud. In the long run, this will certainly foster an investment-friendly and sustainable business environment.

ASEAN should also focus on improving the quality of its human capital. As one of the fastest-growing regions in internet and mobile phone users, this has led to the rapid spread of the digital economy in ASEAN. Many companies, such as Facebook, Yahoo, and Amazon.com, are focusing on ASEAN to take advantage of these opportunities. However, since these MNCs require highly skilled workers because of the nature of their products and services, ASEAN will need to continue providing them with a highly skilled labor force to remain attractive to these enterprises and capture new prospects. As reported in the ASEAN Investment Report (AIR) 2018 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2018), Australia and the Netherlands have shown extraordinary interest in future projects in ASEAN. One of the main reasons could be the quality of human capital in the region and improving it will certainly create further opportunities for inward FDI from other economies as well. Hence, enhancing and improving human capital is another way to increase FDI flows to the region.

Control of corruption was the third most significant and positive influencer of FDI in model 7, alongside political stability, which, although statistically insignificant, had a positive coefficient associated with it. Therefore, improving governance is an exceptional way to increase FDI, as relying solely on classical factors is insufficient for attracting FDI. There is a reason these are considered conventional factors; most nations have employed them to sway FDI in their favor. These factors are arguably easier to achieve compared to governance factors, which require changes at the foundational level of the overall system. However, once improvements are made in governance, these factors not only become favorable for foreign investments but also enhance the business environment for local companies. Consequently, it is expected that they will have some complementary effects as well.

Conclusion

The focus of this research study was to examine the effect of good governance on foreign direct investment in all ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, for the period from 2000 to 2022. The data were analyzed using fixed-effect panel data techniques in STATA 13. The empirical findings of this research study showed that market size (population), development level (GDP PPP PC), and human capital (tertiary education) exhibited a positive influence on FDI. These findings align with the previous literature, indicating that conventional/classical factors are dominant in affecting FDI. However, trade

openness (exports as a percentage of GDP) displayed a negative effect on FDI in ASEAN.

Control of corruption is found to be highly significant and positively related to FDI, implying that economies with corrupt regimes struggle to attract foreign investors. However, with appropriate laws and policies in place, when corruption is kept in check, the host country becomes favorable for investment from abroad. Political stability did not show any significant influence on inward FDI, indicating that political stability does not play a major role in affecting FDI in ASEAN. Voice and accountability demonstrated a significant negative influence on ASEAN inward FDI, which aligns with previous studies. The voice of labor unions and the power of people to have a say in government can sometimes obstruct the path of MNCs, especially those looking to exploit corrupt practices to take advantage of certain resources, such as cheap labor, lax reporting systems, weak property rights, or tax evasion opportunities. For this reason, having a weak voice and accountability may be perceived as favorable by foreign investors.

To conclude this research study, good governance is a significant factor when it comes to MNCs' FDI decisions, especially in ASEAN. Therefore, policymakers of ASEAN specifically and other developing nations in general should include GG in their future policies and development plans in order to attract FDI and, as a result, develop their economy.

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Original Article

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Zameer Hussain¹ Faiz Ali² Haider Abbas³

Abstract

This research aims to explore the political evolution of Punjab, focusing on the period before and after British occupation. Before British rule, Punjab was a vibrant region governed by a series of local kingdoms, empires, and dynasties, most notably the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The pre-colonial political landscape was characterized by a combination of religious, feudal, and tribal structures that fostered a diverse and often turbulent political environment. The British annexation of Punjab in 1849 marked a turning point, as the colonial administration introduced new political, economic, and social policies that radically changed the governance of the region. The period witnessed new land reforms, the introduction of modern bureaucracy, and legal restructuring that reshaped traditional power structures. A new class emerged under the banner of the British that replaced the feudal class. They were loyal to their masters and remained loyal to Jinnah at the time of the partition of Punjab and India. As a result of this political engineering, the newly emerged class was in the driving seat in Punjab. By illuminating the political environment of Punjab, this research adds to a greater understanding of colonialism, regional identity, and political transformation in South Asia.

Keywords: Sikh Empire, colonial Punjab, bureaucracy, feudalism

¹ Visiting Faculty, Qaid e Azam University, Islamabad

² An officer of FBR, Islamabad

³ Lecturer, Ibadat International University, Islamabad, haider.abbas@dms.iiui.edu.pk

Introduction

In British India, the Punjab was a large territorial unit with a significant population. Its mores, customs, traditions, and strategic location contributed to the survival of British rule. The political and administrative characteristics further elevated the Punjab within the overall context of British India (Gilbert, 1994). With its fertile lands, which attracted many foreign invaders, the Punjab was often under foreign rule (Tinker, 1961). The British annexation of the Punjab on March 29, 1849, effectively concluded colonial expansion in India. The occupation of the Punjab marked the beginning of a new era of historical developments associated with colonial rule. In turn, colonial rule also brought benefits, including improved connectivity through enhanced road and railway networks, along with a canal system that reshaped society (Frykenberg & Viswanathan, 1992). Before 1901, five districts of the North Western Frontier Province (present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)—namely Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Hazara—were also part of the Punjab. Notably, Punjab was the last major area to fall under British rule, and it expanded to Delhi (Grare, 2005). By 1849, the boundaries of Punjab stretched from the Afghan frontier to Delhi and encompassed the colonial aim of controlling the tribal belt of the frontier regions adjacent to Afghanistan (Dalton & Edwardes, 1969).

The frequent struggles for supremacy in the Indian subcontinent encouraged numerous intruders to compete for control of the prosperous territories. The Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud was the first Turkish ruler of Punjab, and in 1186, his descendants were defeated by Shuhab-uddin Ghauri. By 1206, Punjab became part of the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire, lasting until the mid-18th century. As chaotic conditions arose from the decline of Mughal rule, Punjab found itself caught in the competition among Afghans, Persians, Marathas, and Sikhs (Grewal, 2008). Throughout the 1700s, the Mughal Empire leaned toward decline and an anarchic scenario. The rise of the Marathas, the expansion of British rule, and the ascent of the Sikhs were all consequences of the weakening Mughal authority in the Indian subcontinent. Sikh power contributed to both the material and spiritual growth of the Sikhs under their respective Gurus. The Marathas, who controlled territories in the Deccan, participated in the power struggle during this tumultuous era and were defeated by the Afghan King Ahmed Shah Abdali at the third battle of Panipat in 1761 (Sarma, 2017).

The rapid shift of power to Abdali in Punjab and then to the Sikhs created a scenario of rampant disarray and anarchy, destabilizing the prevailing social peace and harmony in the region. Specifically, the aftermath of Abdali's rule set the stage for the new political ascendancy of the Sikhs. In 1772, Ahmad

Shah Abdali died, and Punjab experienced weak Afghan rule, which allowed the Sikhs to dominate the province. Ranjit Singh established his rule in Lahore in 1799, transforming Punjab into a dominant state marked by complete Sikh political supremacy, and occupied Multan, Peshawar, and Kashmir. The death of Ahmad Shah Abdali proved to be a formative phase for Sikh power in Punjab, which subsequently began expanding as many other states fell under the sway of the Sikh Kingdom. The Sikh rule flourished, bringing Kashmir, Multan, and Peshawar under its influence. During the peak of Sikh rule, Ranjit Singh's approach focused on establishing a trustworthy environment by gaining the support of the feudal nobility of Punjab; in return, he elevated them to exceptionally powerful and high-status positions within the province. Both Hindus and Muslims were given substantial roles in the affairs of the new empire (Talbot, 1991).

Ranjit Singh established an efficient and highly trained army, similar to that of the East India Company. His prudent policies regarding state affairs for revenue collection, various administrations, and increasing trade brought stability to the Punjab (Malhotra, 2013). He sought to unite the Sikhs and aimed to further strengthen his rule while securing the loyalties of the key chieftains of the Punjab in exchange for benefits from Sikh governance. However, following Ranjit Singh's death, the Punjab descended into chaos, disorder, and anarchy, which ultimately attracted foreign rulers and led to two wars between the weakened Sikhs and the British (Ahmed, 2011). The defeat of the Sikhs ultimately paved the way for the domination and annexation of Punjab into the British Empire in 1849, marking the beginning of a new era of governance, administration, politics, education, and socio-economic development in the region. The consequences and impacts of British colonial rule remain evident in the system of governance, politics, and the approaches of the bureaucracy in both India and Pakistan.

Punjab in the 20th Century

Extending its territorial boundaries from Delhi to the Indus River, Punjab, along with Bengal, was one of the largest provinces, boasting a 56 percent Muslim population according to the general census of 1931. The Sikh population was an important minority located in the parts of the Hindu and Muslim-dominated divisions of Jullundur and Lahore, respectively. The eastern part of Punjab primarily had a Hindu majority, whereas Western Punjab was mostly Muslim (Gilmartin, 1989). From its inception, the British administration implemented measures to strengthen its rule in the Indian subcontinent. The annexation of Punjab marked one of the largest territorial and political gains. General infrastructural development and sound administrative measures were top priorities of the British Raj (Gondhalekar &

Bhattacharya, 2017). Initiatives such as constructing railway tracks, roads, and canals, along with significantly expanding agricultural frontiers, facilitated the masses and helped them maintain strict control over and better access to the region. Furthermore, the collection of land revenues was rigorous, and the environment of peaceful progress under the British Empire (1849-1947) fostered agricultural growth (Ferris, 2011). The enhancement of outdated means of communication, along with the arrival of real-time and improved services of the Imperial Postal Department, bridged distances between remote provinces and the center. For social advancement and the enforcement of law and order, the British modernized the policing system (Griffiths, 1964). To manage the affairs of the newly annexed Punjab, the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, established a three-member Board of Administration in 1849 (Noon, 1966). Under the leadership of Henry Lawrence, responsible for the matters of the Defence and the association with the local chieftain and *Sardars*, John Lawrence worked as his aide entrusted with the responsibility of land settlement, agriculture, and monetary issues while, Charles Grenville Mansell was in charge of the general administration, police, law and justice. Having full-fledged powers and the final authority to respond to any appeal for life and death sentences, the Board of Administration was further assisted by officers of the British Empire in India (Lovett, 1969). The Board prioritized law and order, the prevalence of peace, and ensuring a strong defensive posture by disarming the rebels with local loyal support. The Board was allowed to directly communicate with the Governor General about the matters of the newly annexed province. Later, in 1911, with the shift of India's capital from Calcutta to New Delhi, the Delhi district was also parted from the Punjab (Dutton, 1981).

The Sikhs harbored resentment towards the British because they had lost their power and empire to them, and they sought to regain their influence. These continual attempts further deepened the divide between the Sikhs and the British administration. In the early 1850s, the former ruling elites of the Sikh Empire appeared hostile to the British administrators who aimed to diminish their authority. The lavish entourages of the previous Jagirdars gradually disappeared, and the British administrators anticipated weakening them by providing pensions (Wagner, 2011). However, the treatment was not uniform, as the British administration's attitude towards the rebels remained severe. Notable fighters like Jawahar Singh, the son of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, who had courageously fought against the British at the Chillianwala and Gujrat campaigns, were stripped of all his jagirs and other privileges. Similarly, notorious rebels like Sardar Chattar Singh Atariwala and his son Raja Sher Singh were expelled from Punjab (Telford, 1992). Influential political figures such as Raja Tej Singh and Sardar Shamsheer Singh Sandhanwalia, among

others, were granted lands, leading the British administration to expect their loyalty. Following 1857, the British administration in Punjab supported the livelihoods of Sikh noble families, ensuring their elevated status in society. The British patronage of this elite class aimed to engage them in social reforms and constitutional politics in Punjab (Fenech and Smith, 1999). This patronage of the landed elite represented a strategy of political consolidation for the British, allowing them to influence the social, economic, and political structures of Punjab down to the grassroots levels.

Colonization and Administration

Before British rule, Indian states lacked proper institutionalization, and society was caste-based. The British rulers emphasized the goals of management and administration in India, which later established a systematic vision of governance. The Punjab under the British Empire was much larger than the Kingdom of Ranjit Singh and was positioned within the context of global politics and the economy. Under British rule, innovative measures were implemented to ensure the rule of law and public administration through functional bureaucracy, initiating a phase of association between the state and the individual. The personalized rule of the early decades was eventually replaced by rational rules, laws, codes, and procedures (Kerr, Roseberry, & Ali, 1989).

Power was delegated, and the executive was separated from the judiciary and finance. New reforms and technological advancements, such as telegraph offices, railroads, and the press, were introduced. Communication and transportation were priorities for the British. The Punjab, being an agricultural economy, saw the British invest in the agrarian system with periodic settlements aimed at generating new sources of revenue (Zafar, 1985). Over 10,000,000 acres of uncultivated land began agricultural production between 1860 and 1920, which in turn created a layer of progress, prosperity, and economic development in the province that ultimately reshaped the agrarian economy and demographic dynamics. This new development increased the volume and value of trade and commercial activities. Economic exploitation was prevalent across India under colonial rule. The high demand for the export of agricultural products was under the control of British export-import firms, exchange banks, and shipping corporations. The British administration collected revenues and converted rupees into sterling at lower rates and maintained strict control over the monetary matters of the Punjab so that, after all exchanges, the net financial balance remained in favor of colonial interests.

Education was considered an objective of the British Raj. Therefore, from the beginning, the British administration in Punjab introduced a system of education in Western sciences, English literature, and social studies. The

efforts of Dr. G.W. Leitner over 20 years aimed to revive Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic learning and teaching Western sciences in the vernacular and enhancing the quality and standards of contemporary Indian literature. His concept of a university was distinct from the traditional higher education system and the established universities of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. However, in 1882, when the Punjab University was established, its characteristics were similar to those of other universities in India, and it marked a setback in native education in Punjab. Although Punjabi was the dominant language of the population in the province, it was replaced by Urdu as the medium of education up to the matriculation level (McGowan, 2009). The Christian missionaries became allies of the government in promoting English as a medium of education. The classification of grant-in-aid primarily served the school system. They used the press as an effective means of communication in indigenous languages such as Punjabi, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Urdu for evangelization. They criticized native religious beliefs, customs, practices, social trends, and the morals of Punjabi society due to their theological orientation and their view of colonial rule as providential. The British administration and the education system were closely aligned with the ruling class. The local population of Punjab reacted against the presence of Christian missionaries, especially because of their surprising success; in 1881, the total number of Christians was roughly 4,000, which rose to 300,000 within 40 years (Subrahmanyam, 1999).

The colonial administration also shaped social conversion in Punjab, and the emergence of prosperous farmers by the early 1880s was principally attributed by the British to improvements in permanent assessments, choice of contracts, personal possessions of land ownership, and the adoption of practices favored by agriculturists. After the British took over in India, new large irrigation units were constructed, which in turn enhanced agricultural production and greatly contributed to the revenue collection and generation of revenue for the colonial power. This innovative irrigation system proved to be a game changer for both poor peasants and landlords, bringing a variety of opportunities to the agricultural economy in British Punjab. Through a highly personalized administrative structure of bureaucratic rules and effective management of the canals, an assured supply of water for cultivation was established. The British bureaucratic system was so effective that it realized the long-cherished dream of canal management and land distribution projects. Even after the independence of the Indian subcontinent, there was no such example; however, the newly formed states of India and Pakistan aimed to manage the canals and the land (Cullet, 2010). The agriculture of Punjab during British colonial rule relied on the canal irrigation system, which contributed to socio-

economic development, and even after the end of colonial rule, the canal structure effectively sustained the agricultural system.

Aside from the improved agricultural production and water management system, the plight of small farmers was reflected in the growing number of tenants-at-will, while an extraordinary level of agricultural commercialization contributed to this phenomenon in the main districts of the province and in the canal colonies. The socio-economic division among landholders, emphasized by the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900, aimed to mitigate some of the adverse effects of commercialization (Saraswati, Kumar, & Corbridge, 2006). Traditional commercial communities such as the Banias, Khatris, Aroras, Shaikhs, Khojas, and Pakhtuns benefited from the expansion of settlements. In pursuit of better opportunities, various castes heavily invested in local industries and enterprises. In 1895, purely indigenous entities were established, leading to the creation of the Punjab National Bank and later numerous other commercial ventures, including the Bharat Insurance Company and the People's Banking and Commercial Association. By 1901, moneylenders profited from interest charges and the forced sale of land at minimal market value following loan defaults, facilitated by *Munsifs* and the legal system imposed by colonial rulers (Kessinger, 1977).

Certainly, the agrarian and business-oriented middle classes evolved into the professional middle class. With the aid of English education, a new era of opportunities and employment opened up for them in the mid-levels of the bureaucratic apparatus and in other professions such as law, teaching, and medicine. In the late 19th century, Punjabi Hindus dominated the middle tiers of administration. Castes like Khatris led employment among Hindus, while Muslim Pashtuns, Shaikhs, and Syeds were at the forefront. The educated youth of Punjab were competing for secure government jobs and aimed to catch up to or surpass the others. Furthermore, these middle-class individuals aspired to embrace the egalitarian principles of English education and reform their traditional societies (Bagchi, 1978). Compared to Christians and Sikhs, both Muslims and Hindus were significantly weaker in government positions, which concerned them. The Indian Councils Act of 1861, implemented in Punjab in the late 1800s, established nine members of the provincial council, all appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. The Act of 1909 expanded the legislative council to 30 members, with only one-fifth being elected representatives (Roy, 1987). The British rule in Punjab aimed to establish an indigenous hierarchical structure that supported state authority by enticing local notables with political prominence within society. This indicates that the role of political Islam in British Punjab remained potentially strong.

Geo-Economic Importance of Punjab

Based on the five administrative divisions of Delhi, Lahore, Jullundur, Multan, and the princely states, Punjab was an exceptionally important province that significantly enhanced the power and economic leverage of the colonial rulers. The proximity of Punjab to the North-Western regions and Afghanistan created a sense of insecurity, and the British had to maintain forts and forces to deter foreign invasions or rebellious misadventures (Panayi & Virdee, 2011). The geographical position of Punjab enabled the British to project power along the Afghan frontier to secure the rest of India. Increased resource exploitation and revenue generation from the colonized land ensured a return on their investments in resources, supporting the objectives of maintaining British rule. The fertile lands of Punjab, along with their role as the primary recruitment ground for the Indian army, made it central to the stability of British rule. The gallantry and loyalty of Punjab's soldiers were regarded as significant assets for the British Empire.

The fertile plains of Punjab were an outstanding source of revenue generation for the colonial rulers, who effectively managed water resources that led to the initiation of the canal system for irrigation and increased output. Another major issue was the unequal distribution of land, as some landlords had exceptionally large holdings that often went uncultivated, while the peasantry, eager to cultivate the less fertile land, struggled to secure even a small plot. Likewise, poor peasants lacked land to grow their own crops and sustain their minimal needs. Most of Punjab, particularly in the Eastern region, was under the control of moneylenders who acquired vast areas by deceiving ignorant and uneducated rural people. The British rulers recognized Punjab's distinct identity as an established society with unique features. Its geographical position was tied to a tumultuous history in colonial times, necessitating plans to develop Punjab's characteristics as a model of prosperity and agricultural strength (Carter & Harlow, 2003). With such aims, the canal colonization process began in 1885, paving the way for a vast network of canals that extended from rivers and spread across most uncultivated plains in Western Punjab. Consequently, the canal colony became a catalyst for the cultivation of over fourteen million acres over time (Kapur and Kim, 2006).

Apart from agriculture, the politics of Punjab were significantly influenced by the broader politics of the subcontinent. For instance, the role of the Punjab Unionist Party, of the landed aristocracy, protected domestic politics from religion or race and encouraged inter-communal participation. It was regarded as the third major political force in Indian politics, alongside the Indian National Congress (INC) and the All India Muslim League (AIML) (Perrill, 1975). Recognizing the importance of Punjab, at a pivotal moment in the Pakistan movement, Jinnah stated (Civil & Military Gazette, 1946),

Punjab has been the sword arm of India, and you have played your part heroically on different battlefields that have been reorganized by the world. Now, your sword arm plays a more magnificent part in the achievement of Pakistan. You can do it; we shall do it if Muslims stand united. Your triumph in the Punjab is all the greater, for you had to face the most unscrupulous methods that were resorted to by your opponents. The power and authority of the government were abused flagrantly, officers were let loose to hinder, coerce, and threaten the Muslim League candidates and those who were supporting them. It was almost a criminal conspiracy that you had to face. You have toiled and sweated after fighting against all odds, you have secured a wonderful victory, thereby you have rendered a service not only to the Punjab but to the hundred million Muslims in India and posterity. Punjab is the cornerstone of Pakistan, and such a clear, thumping majority of Pakistan has given me one of the most pleasant shocks I have ever received in my life, and it has stunned our enemies. If you continue this remarkable unity, this discipline by the Muslims of the Punjab of all classes, and maintain your discipline and organize your people for all future contingencies. Pakistan is in the hollows of your hands.

Even after 1947, Punjab has been the political heart of the nation and remains at the center of all political, social, and economic progress. It has significantly contributed to the national resources, industrial development, and agricultural production of Pakistan and continues to be the focus of its military-political economy.

Impact of Political Consciousness on Punjab

The political movements and the rise of anti-colonial sentiment gradually became key factors in the political awareness of the Indian people in general and the people of Punjab in particular. For instance, in the aftermath of the announcement of the partition of Bengal by the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, in July 1905, tremendous polarization occurred both for and against this decision (Barman, 2009). Hindus viewed the move as detrimental to their interests, believing the partition of Bengal would deprive them of their dominance over the Muslim-majority areas. Conversely, the Muslims of East Bengal perceived the partition as a beneficial opportunity, as it promised improved chances of education and employment; therefore, they opposed the (Swadeshi) movement. This local movement of the locals and the Indian

National Congress initiated a process of boycotting British goods and institutions through propaganda, which was carried out via the press and diplomatic means to persuade the British and to reverse their decision to partition Bengal. However, opposition to Bengal's division also received support from the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Henry John Stedman (Neale, 2012).

The success of the movement served as a lesson for all communities in India. The larger segments of Hindu society participated in the movement and in general political consciousness. Ultimately, due to widespread political crises and protests, East Bengal was merged with West Bengal on December 12, 1911. This reunification, however, did not halt division along linguistic lines, and the Oriya, Hindi, and Assamese regions were separated administratively. The Indian capital was moved from Calcutta to Delhi, and new provinces of Bihar and Orissa in the West, along with Assam in the East, were established. Like the rest of India, political consciousness in Punjab evolved gradually, with circumstances paving the way for greater public involvement in political affairs. With Lord Minto's appointment as Viceroy of India in 1905, new reforms were introduced, including extended electoral principles. Following the anti-separation agitation, Muslims grew cautious of the Congress and the Hindu majority, demanding separate electorates from Minto in Simla on October 1, 1906. The Viceroy responded to this Deputation with assurances that Muslim political rights and community safeguards would be maintained under his administrative reorganization. The efforts of the Simla Deputation yielded positive results, establishing a distinct Hindu-Muslim distinction at constitutional and electoral levels (Beverley, 2015). This moment marked a turning point, forming the basis for the understanding that there was no homogeneous Indian nation, as Muslims represented a separate community with their own unique identity.

During the first decade of the 20th century, the Indian masses developed a significant level of political consciousness that ultimately enhanced the roles of political parties such as the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. The previous reforms and acts were subsequently void and null to the politically aware citizens with growing political aspirations, thus presenting a need for innovative reforms that were needed of the hour. The colonial rulers recognized this importance of the fact and prepared options to accommodate the will of the two leading parties. The populace also understood the role of politics in their daily lives. It became clear that collective bargaining could multiply the options for success (Reinsch, 1910).

The Indian Councils Act, also known as the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909, was a political development that reflected popular awareness in favor of

political rights and participation in public affairs. The British Parliament, recognizing the demands of the Indian people, increased local representation in British India (Wolpert, 1965). In England, the Liberal Party had come into power, and the political discourse of authoritarianism had begun to shift away from authoritarianism. The British rulers pragmatically chose to accommodate certain groups and extend consultation and representation to landed elites. To increase the number of legislative council members, the sizes of the Governor General's Council and the Governors' Councils in many provinces were expanded (Israel, Zinkin, & Zinkin, 1965). With these reforms, elected council members of the councils could obstruct or at least critique Raj policies that did not serve the public interest. The councils played a larger role in policy formulation, and the participation of Indian political leaders in these councils significantly influenced the decision-making processes of the colonial state. Following the introduction of the Minto-Morley Reforms, demands for separate electorates arose from and within the masses, thus allowing the Muslim minority to have their representatives as members of the Legislative Council.

Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

The self-governing institutional reforms were outlined in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918, which became the basis for the Government of India Act of 1919. Indian nationalist leaders felt that the reforms did not go far enough, while traditionalists criticized the changes. This was the first instance where a mass popular elective procedure was introduced. Meanwhile, Indian Muslims successfully persuaded Governor General Lord Minto about the unique aspects of their minority status, securing separate representation and weightage in the provinces where they were in the minority compared to Hindus. Following the example of Indian Muslims, the Chief Khalsa Diwan became representative of the Sikhs and lobbied the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, emphasizing the crucial role of the Sikh community in provincial life and demanding consideration for measures to ensure their representation in elections. However, there was no response to this request from the Governor General's side, and neither the Sikhs nor the Hindus were granted separate electorates (Report, 1918). While unwilling to concede separate electorates to the Sikhs, the British did allocate 18 out of 93 members in the Punjab Assembly, along with three additional members. This was significantly greater than the 1206 members of the population that was Sikh (Elangovan, 2016).

Nationalist Leaders and Political Awareness

The role of nationalist leaders was a driving force behind the political and social awareness of the masses in the Punjab. The formation of the Akali Dal in 1920 resulted from the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee's

ambitions of creating a task force mainly representing the political interests of the Sikh community in the Punjab. Initially led by Sardar Sarmukh Singh Chubbal, the Akali Dal advocated for the demands of a separate state for Punjabi-speaking people under unified West Punjab (Prakash, 2004). After 1937, Congress held predominant representation in eight out of eleven provinces, creating a sense of danger for the Muslim political leaders and encouraging them to struggle for Pakistan. Unfortunately for the Muslim League, the rural Muslim population aligned with the Unionist Party, which solidly supported and safeguarded their interests. Conversely, circumstances eventually shifted with the escalating conflicts within the structures of imperial power. In response to the crises of imperial strategy, the demand for Pakistan represented the essentiality of Islamic ideology as a solution for the Muslims of India (Zachariah, 2009).

The first to establish a press for the propagation of their ideas in Punjab, alongside Christian missionaries and the government, were the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj, who began publishing their version of social restructuring. In 1877, magazines such as the monthly Hari Hakikat, influenced by the Brahmo Samaj in Punjab, were inspired by the movement initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Bengal. This idea was grounded in Upanishadic influence, while also admiring Western developments and Christian principles. This faction advocated for press freedom and education in the English language, and it also championed the rights of lower castes and Hindu women. Although willing to utilize Urdu and Punjabi for spreading ideas, the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj had a strong preference for the Hindi language in the Devanagari script. The Brahmo Samaj served as an incubator for Hindu nationalism (Tunick, 2006).

In the late 1890s, a system of Aryan education was established from primary to college level, broadly inspired by the needs of the Western-influenced Hindu middle class. Western science, English literature, and social studies were combined with Sanskrit and Hindi to forge an Anglo-Vedic system of education. The social restructuring extended further through the observance of societal customs of the society, such as during marriage, birth and death, remarriage, and the creation of orphanages and the education of girls (Zinkin, 1965). Following a schism in 1893-1894, the radical Aryas initiated a print propaganda campaign against Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and traditionalist Hindus. The Arya leaders were generally supported by and associated with the Indian National Congress to promote and safeguard the interests of Punjabi Hindus. In the aftermath of the 1907 agitation, when the colonial administration took a harsh stance on such movements, the Aryas revised their position and labeled their movement as non-political. Meanwhile, the Hindu Sabhas emerged in the province of Punjab, and the Hindu Conference was

consecutively held from 1909 to 1914, and helped transform Arya Samaj perceptions into Hindu nationalism and consciousness.

Since the British policy of neutrality towards the belief and indigenous religious communities promoted shared achievements, leaders from various political segments viewed themselves as the sole representatives of their entire community. The British strategy of maintaining equilibrium among diverse groups further fueled competition between them. Consequently, communal consciousness was not limited to the Aryas or Hindus. Muslim associations, such as Anjuman-i-Islamia and Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, also operated across Punjab and chose to adopt modern education and social reform. Schools were established based on Western-style education. The middle class gained access to these educational institutions and subsequently began to demand their share of jobs and government services. Previously, only the landed elite and wealthy could send their children abroad, a practice that guaranteed increased prestige and a greater role in local socio-political matters.

Fazl-i-Husain and Inter-Communal Politics

Sir Mian Fazl-i-Husain was one of the most influential political figures in Punjab during colonial rule. Along with Chhotu Ram (Chawla, 2018), he founded the Punjab Unionist Party in 1923, which primarily focused on defending the interests of landlords. The Unionist group consisted of 24 Muslim landlords and 6 Hindu Jats, with its agenda centered on inter-communal politics. Punjab's status was largely that of an agricultural province, significantly influenced by the politics of the landed elite, while the majority of the Muslim population felt marginalized (Robinson, 1979). Forming any government in Punjab required at least 54% of the seats, and no single political entity could establish a stable government on a communal basis. Fazl-i-Husain's foresight in this scenario aimed at creating a coalition of members from various communities to work towards forming a government. Based on the idea of cooperation among the Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh landed elite of Punjab, the Party was open to all communities without any discrimination of caste and creed (Talbot, 1998). Fazl-i-Husain advocated for a united Punjab and opposed Muslim separatism. He fought for communal harmony as a champion of shared interests (Khilnani, Raghavan, and Thiruvengadam, 2013). Fazl-i-Husain also contributed to the cause of Muslim landlords and sought to establish an employment quota for educated Muslims in civil service. As a significant historical milestone, his efforts successfully raised the quota for Muslims in civil service from 40% to 50%. In local politics, the Unionists also expanded separate electorates to municipal bodies and nearly all educational institutions. The Muslim representation in governmental services was very low, leading to a general perception of deprivation.

However, by 1932, the Unionist Party's skilled approach notably improved the ratio of Muslims in governmental services.

Meanwhile, the operation of the transferred departments under the Unionists primarily influenced the stance of the Sikhs in Punjab towards constitutional reforms. The Central Sikh League demanded the elimination of communal representation or criteria for Sikhs. Subsequently, the Akalis and leaders of the Central Sikh League adopted a hardline position to boycott the Simon Commission and engage in demonstrations alongside the Congress (Griffiths, 1965). The Chief Khalsa Diwan also made reservations and called for the Commission to protect the constitutional rights of Sikhs. Additionally, Sikh leaders formed the Central Sikh Association to advocate for the Sikh case to the Commission, demanding a 30 percent share for Sikhs and Hindus. The Unionists supported the majority view, calling for the maintenance of communal electorates and greater power and autonomy for Punjab. As an alternative to the Simon Commission's proceedings, Akali and Central Sikh League leaders participated in the All-Parties Conference in February 1928 in Delhi. Mangal Singh Gill was appointed as a member of the Moti Lal Nehru Committee to develop a constitution for India. During the All-Parties meeting in August 1928, Sikh leaders expressed concerns about their status in Punjab. However, the popularity of the Unionist Party declined during the 1936 elections, securing over 98 seats out of 175, while the Muslim League barely obtained 2 seats. This achievement represented a victory for inter-communal politics in Punjab. Furthermore, the Unionist Party's successful initiatives included agricultural legislation in Punjab, popularly known as the 'Golden Bills,' which protected the interests of peasants, farmers, and landlords from the influence of moneylenders.

Establishment of the Unionist Party

From 1920 to 1937, the Punjab Legislative Council was predominantly controlled by the Punjab Unionist Party. The Unionist Party was initially established by Fazl-i-Husain as a coalition of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh politicians from the Rural Party who were elected to the Council in 1920. Subsequently, during the second elections, it significantly influenced constitutional politics and gained popularity as the Unionist Party. For a quarter-century, the Unionist Party enjoyed widespread popularity in Punjab's local politics until its defeat in the 1946 elections. Additionally, the circumstances that facilitated the consolidation and popularity of the Unionist Party resulted of the boycott of the 1930 elections by the Indian National Congress, the Central Sikh League, and the Akali Dal, which left the field open for Fazl-i-Husain. During the elections, a few independent Sikh legislators and leaders from the Chief Khalsa Movement also collaborated

with the Unionist Party. This uncontested success consequently secured ministries without regard to the political parties (Dutton, 1981).

The Unionist Party promoted itself as the sole representative of the rural class, striving to safeguard the interests of all landowners regardless of their religious beliefs and faith. Furthermore, the specific functions and priorities of the Muslim leaders of the Unionist Party kept Muslim interests at the forefront of their agenda. Following the observations of the Reform Enquiry Committee in 1924, the Ministry of Education, under the leadership of Fazl-i-Husain, actively aligned its departments with the communal interests of Muslims (Ramey, 2014). The Unionist Party's notable popularity contributed to its unwavering stance on the agrarian agenda, which emphasized the rights and welfare of the rural class while opposing the dominance of communalists and the hegemony of the urban mercantile elite. The Unionist leaders worked to promote awareness among agriculturalists regarding their rights in the political arena, seeking greater representation in the bureaucracy (Chowdhury, 1991). The Indian National Congress viewed the Unionist Party as having a soft spot for the colonial rulers and considered itself the true representative of India's masses. The Unionist Party of Punjab, which discouraged communal politics and protected landowner interests without regard to caste and creed, could have repressed Congress (Baxter and Rashid, 1990). However, Congress's downfall regarding partition, its alliance with wealthy interests, and its Hindu Gandhian symbolism did not sit well with the Unionists. The striking success of the Unionist Party in the 1936 election for the Punjab Legislative Assembly, where it contested against over 12 political and communal parties but secured 95 out of 175 seats, marked a turning point in the politics of India in general and in Punjab in particular (Singh, 2014 and Chawla, 2018).

Conclusion

The story of political development in Colonial Punjab is a unique and captivating episode in the political history of united India. Punjab was not oblivious to the political and geographical changes occurring under Company Raj. The British initiated their occupation of India from the eastern side, culminating with the annexation of Punjab, the western region of India. They lacked the courage to assert their dominance over Punjab during the rule of Raja Ranjit Singh, from 1801 to 1939. The weak and politically shortsighted successors of Ranjit Singh could not resist the British and ultimately fell into their grasp. Sikhs lost the chance to reclaim Punjab from their oppressors in 1857 because they fought against Muslims instead of uniting against the British during the War of Independence. The British developed infrastructure according to their interests and to maintain law and order in the region. They

exploited Punjab's resources to support efforts in World War I and II. The grain basket of Hindustan provided them food and supplied their resources to make Britain 'great.' In the early 20th century, Punjab was also influenced by the political changes in Indian society, particularly with the introduction of the Minto-Morley Reform of 1901 and the Montague-Chelmsford Reform of 1919. These reforms effectively raised awareness among Indians and Muslims as they gained the right to vote and separate electorates. Sir Fazl-i-Hussain played a significant role in uniting nationalists under the banner of the Unionist Party, established in 1923. This led to a transformation of consciousness and awareness among all communities. Non-communal politics was embraced, and even Sir Fazl's successor, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, continued his non-communal policy to unite the communities of Punjab. However, the Sikhs again erred by demanding a separate state in Punjab. The Muslim League took advantage of the political platform in Punjab after the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact of 1938 and made Pakistan a reality. The division of Punjab held great significance in the context of the division of the Indian subcontinent. H. V. Hudson said, 'If Punjab remained united, India would be united, and if Punjab were divided, then there is no force to make the partition of India impossible.' This proved to be true, and India was divided with the partition of Punjab. Although Punjab could have spared millions of people from killings and displacements, this did not happen with its division, resulting in the establishment of a liberal and secular Pakistan.

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Original Article

Decontextualizing Buddha: Western Appropriations of Eastern Spirituality in Hesse's *Siddhartha*

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Rasib Mahmood¹ Iram Saeed² Shabnam Amin³ Noreen Shah⁴

Abstract

Most postcolonial writers agree that colonizers have historically mistreated the colonized and often distort facts to favor themselves. However, some writers, like Herman Hesse in his novel *Siddhartha*, view the colonized differently. Published a decade after Hesse's visit to India, the book depicts Indians as audiences of blind faith, with *Siddhartha*—representing Buddha—criticizing unquestioning adherence to religion. Hesse suggests many Indians follow faiths without reason, stuck in superstition, though critics argue his portrayal decontextualizes Buddha's life, emphasizing spiritual over cultural aspects. The novel's subtitle, "Ein Indische Dichtung," underscores its poetic, Indian inspiration, but its Western interpretation remains debated.

Keywords: post-colonialism, spirituality and east, modernity and west

¹ Department of English, at Islamia College University, Peshawar

² MPhil scholar, Qurtuba University, Peshawar, IrumSaeed2016@gmail.com

³ MPhil scholar, Qurtuba University Peshawar, Shabk6599@gmail.com

⁴ Department of Humanities & Sciences, FAST National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences, Peshawar, Pakistan Noreen.Shah@nu.edu.pk

Introduction

Hesse seems to greatly admire Gautama Buddha's wisdom, intellect, and rebellious spirit. Buddha's mind was enlightened with modern thinking, which sharply contrasts with the medieval period to which Gautama Buddha belonged. A striking fact that has always fascinated the West about Buddha (Hesse, 1922) is that Buddha himself did not seek any tribute from his followers or others for his ideals and enlightenment (Queen, 1996). The plot of the novel *Siddhartha* (1922) is significant because it illustrates the discovery of reality through a search of nature (Roberts, 1982). This quest enhances human knowledge and experience, fundamental to the development of society (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the author's view, reality has nothing to do with miracles, predictions, revelations, or supernatural forces (Berger, 1969). Belief in the supernatural or paranormal does not benefit nations, communities, or civilizations (Freud, 2005). Perhaps this is why Western theorists and intellectuals are reconstructing Eastern characters and discourses (Mandaville, 2003). For example, India and the Indians have become central topics in Western academic discourse. Given these facts, one might ask if Hesse uses the title character, Siddhartha, to express his own vision, share his perspective, and critique Indian ways of thinking (*Siddhartha*, 1922). The plot could also serve as a wake-up call for the world to abandon outdated ways of thinking and to act wisely. It might also help explain why India appears medieval to Western travelers and intellectuals.

This medieval view of Indian natives is not limited to the novel *Siddhartha* (1922); many other biographical and non-fictional writings also attest to this projection. Hesse depicts a very dark picture of the land, which, in his view, is soaked in blind faith. Magic appears to be the core of Eastern knowledge, or more specifically, Indian philosophy on life (Hesse, 2003). Faith in paranormal forces overrides logic and reason. This is the core idea that underpins the plot of the novel *Siddhartha* (1922), which carries deep meaning.

The foundation of Hesse's interest in Indian culture and religion is based upon his protestant vision. He was a follower of mystical Christianity and disliked the preaching of the Catholic school of thought (Hesse, 1974). His characters show no interest in religion or the supernatural world of spirits (Hesse, 1963). They seem to have no bearing in this sense. *Siddhartha's* journey through self-discovery metaphorically represents Hesse's journey to the east. Whether Gautama Buddha's vision has influenced the native Indian's view of life is a question Hesse appears eager to find out. He is keen on uncovering if native Indians construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct realities as Gautama Buddha did centuries ago.

This study is qualitative, based on the data derived from literary writings that bear on the novel in question. The interpretation of various texts and discourses collected from different sources is employed as a research method to understand the connotations underlying the title character, Siddhartha (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). An analysis of various situations, incidents, and characters has also been carried out to achieve the main purpose (Martin & Rose, 2003).

Theoretically, Hesse is in concordance with the anti-postcolonial notion that asserts colonization is a result of the backwardness of the natives and their beliefs in supernatural things (1922). He negates the postcolonial phenomenon that colonization was evil in the name of good and that the colonizers were nothing more than butchers (Fanon & Farrington, 1969). They have not only destroyed the culture of the natives but also generated identity crises (Achebe, 2010).

Hesse's Views on India

Hesse seemed well aware of his western self, where Indians are others for him. Edward Said has discussed the concept of self and othering in his book, *Orientalism* (Said, 1995). He is of the view that self and othering give different meanings to the same cultural context. The character Gautama remains unsuccessful in hiding anything from Siddhartha, who is a symbol of logic and reason. Reason is portrayed to have an upper hand over revelation, on one hand (Russell, 2013), and a sense of othering for Indians, on the other hand. The illustration of the latter is toned up with many scattered references in his writings, laying bare Hesse's sense of othering in the Indian environment. Siddhartha's attitude to Samanas is also significant in this regard. He rejects the life of Samanas with disgust. This rejection symbolizes the rejection of the medieval thinking of the natives.

In the place from which I escaped, there was always an atmosphere of pomade, spice, excess, and inertia. How I hated the world of riches, carousing and playing! How I hated myself, thwarted, poisoned and tortured myself, made myself old and ugly. ... but one thing I have done well, which pleases me, which I must praise – I have put an end to that self-detestation, to that foolish empty life (Hesse, 1922, pp. 97-98).

Asceticism vs Colonization

It seems surprising that he rejects asceticism and associates it with “inertia, spice, and excess” (Banerji, 2008). Such remarks about the periphery are highly significant. There is a tinge of disgust. It shows that the Indian way of

thinking and their attitude towards life are not realistic. That remark embedded on the periphery of discourse is highly significant. They have a hermit's way of life. Hesse is unaware of the fact that Siddhartha does not need to create a link among spices, excess, and inertia. It is purely a colonizer's way of thinking and interpretation of an oriental culture. Even the Western Siddhartha does not need to interpret things in such a way. Asceticism has nothing to do with *spices*. It will be difficult to say that those who renounce the universe do so just because of *inertia* and *excess*. These are the judgments of the colonizers/imperialists about the colored races, negating the postcolonial theory and authenticating that colonization was beneficial for the natives. It not only transformed the natives but also gave them basic necessities. The colonial writers are of the view that the natives of the colonized lands have been responsible for their subjugation by the foreign powers because they never thought in a realistic way (Hesse, 1965).

The relationship between Siddhartha and Govinda signifies that of the colonizer with the colonial Indian. The writer critiques Indian culture and thought through a portrayal of the relationship between the two characters. Siddhartha is an independent mind that constructs, deconstructs, and reconstructs realities with the passage of time, whereas Govinda always follows the teachers, preachers, and Gurus. Govinda is a follower by birth. First, he follows Siddhartha like a shadow. Then he gets inclined toward monks. Later on, a stage comes when he decides to live with Gotama. The former wants to enlighten himself by following the enlightened ones. This attitude of Govinda's seems childish to Siddhartha. The latter asserts that anyone can achieve enlightenment by sheer keen observation of life, as well as *self*, an entity in the broad, unforgiving world (Hesse, 1922).

Govinda is a seeker of a spiritual and intellectual personality. In the end, Govinda again becomes a follower of Siddhartha after his enlightenment. It is not wrong to say that Govinda remains stagnant in time, with no progress or prosperity. Through his mouthpiece, Siddhartha, the writer conveys that the universe is undergoing an evolutionary process where everything changes over time, and the realities conveyed through language are one-sided. He believes that truth is a relative concept, which is why everyone is Buddha (Enlightened) in their own sense. The writer aims to show that the element of enlightenment exists even in robbers, sinners, and pious individuals. A pious person can become a sinner, and a sinner can become pious. Buddha expresses that we live in illusions. Siddhartha narrates that Gotama divided teachings into three categories: Nirvana and Samsara-illusion and truth, suffering and salvation. The writer describes the binary oppositions (Hesse, 1922, P.143).

Materialism vs. Development

Paradoxical teaching cannot be understood by everyone. These teachings are nothing more than words to people who will not try to search for the truth through struggle and experience for their own enlightenment.

The entire story of the novel *Siddhartha* is metaphorical. Siddhartha, the main protagonist, symbolizes a divergent mind and soul similar to Gautama Buddha's. Govinda, Siddhartha's best friend, represents a common person's everyday mentality toward the essence of enlightenment. Besides these characters, Hesse uses other characters and objects to symbolize hard truths of life. Kamala, Siddhartha's lover and companion, signifies the alluring ways and pleasures of the world. The ferryman symbolizes a guide to self-enlightenment. The river represents the very source of enlightenment. Siddhartha learns from the ferryman that everything comes back. The ferryman states, "Certainly. I have learned that from the river too; everything comes back" (Hesse, 1922, p. 49).

The friendliness of the ferryman resembles the friendship of Govinda with Siddhartha. Siddhartha believes that people who prefer to live submissively are enemies of their own selves. They do not dare to think beyond the usual boundaries of knowledge. He thinks these people are like children. "*All are grateful, although they themselves deserve thanks. All are subservient; all wish to be my friend, to obey and to think little. People are children*" (Hesse, 1922, p. 49). Undoubtedly, this reflects the opinion of the author, a lay Indian or possibly a lay Asian, expressed through his character Siddhartha. Through his protagonist, Hesse suggests that the people of the East are often submissive and naive.

They think little, independently, and tend to follow. It also seems that, for Hesse, this attitude largely contributes to the stagnation of many Eastern nations, as subservience creates a significant obstacle to progress and enlightenment. To become Buddha, one must think beyond the limits of common knowledge. Buddha and the ferryman fascinate Siddhartha because each, in their own way, analyzes the realities of life and the world around them. He constructs, deconstructs, and reconstructs these realities through his own experience and vision. Conversely, Govinda is a blind follower of spiritualism—a subtle critique by the author of ancient India and Indian culture in the novel *Siddhartha*.

However, Hesse directly criticizes the East in his other novel, *The Journey to the East* (1956), where he portrays the East as a reflection of the Europeans' past. He compares the Europe of his senseless childhood with the East. He declares that the East is the union of all the ages, where one can capture

medievalism even in the postmodern age. The people are not willing to think divergently as they are too afraid to venture into the undiscovered realms of knowledge. Hesse comments: "*We not only wandered through space, but also through Time. We moved toward the East, but we also traveled into the Middle Ages and the Golden Age*" (The Journey to the East; 1956).

Most of the Indian philosophers and thinkers will not agree to this concept. However, East as the "union" of all times signifies the broad vision of the intellectual person whom the West considers modern on the basis of their scientific truths (Hesse, 1956). But on the other hand, East associates realistic thinking with the spiritual ones. Hesse seems very interested in Indian's spirituality. Modern Europe considers spiritualism a waste of time because both the idealist and realist schools of thought have their own problems. Directly or indirectly, the writer wants to convey that over-inclination of the East toward religion makes it medieval. The writer's concern with Indian religions and medievalism aims to draw a line between the East and the West. He thinks that religious quest is something of a secular and rational sort (Hesse, 1922).

The novel, *Siddhartha* (1922), primarily explains the spiritual reality which the writer has developed because of his protestant beliefs and background, but on the basis of his own thinking and experiences (Hesse, 1976). He has chosen *Siddhartha* because he saw some parallels between his own experiences and the experiences of Gautama Buddha. It will not be wrong to say that he has found his reflection in Gautama Buddha, who validated the knowledge through his own experience. What seems more common between Gautama and Hesse is the thirst for knowledge and the search for reality. Hesse was dissatisfied with traditional customs and religions, which became the reason for war and political conflicts. The sufferings of humanity intensified Hesse's quest. Like Buddha, Hesse was also keen about the sufferings of others.

Still, Buddha's search for truth was impersonal from the very beginning of his journey compared to Herman's. Gautama's quest started with very basic questions about sickness, old age, and death. He wondered if people could eliminate all three of these sources of suffering (Kumar, 2002). Why and where do these three forms of suffering originate? It is also true that Hesse's perspective became more impersonal over time. Why does a civilization become a refuge for evil and also the cause of its own downfall? European civilization nurtured the same evil, which led to two great world wars. This truth deeply affected and obsessed the writer's mind, just as it did Buddha, as he observed the suffering around him. Over time, Hesse concluded that European civilization is much better than Asian civilization, and that these two

civilizations are quite opposite. He saw the East as the 'Others' surrounding the European self.

There are many contradictions about Buddhism, and among these contradictions, Hesse found that a natural religion is created by a person through his own thinking (Hesse, 1974). The secularity of Buddhism was the main attraction for Hesse (Schober, J., 2011). Gautama Buddha did not claim any “revelation,” unlike Christianity and other monolithic religions where angels and supernatural beings play a vital role. Christianity emphasizes monastic life, but Gautama places equal importance on material life. Buddha not only experienced a hermit’s life but also lived as a man of the world. On the other hand, Hesse also came from a religious family that believed the living reality was much beyond worldly realities. His view of the worldly spirit, good, and evil seems untraditional, political, and religious, raising many questions in his mind.

Hesse believes that the East has not dealt with evil as aggressively as the West has (Hesse, 2003). The East is caught between Idealism and Realism. They are not willing to separate the ancient religious and cultural boundaries that the West deconstructed during the Renaissance (East & West, 1966). Gautama Buddha discusses the search for the self, which is also a concept in the West. Buddha's life story reflects the developmental process of the West, a fact that the East is not ready to accept. Buddha developed the idea, over a thousand years ago, through his experiences, that a person has many selves instead of just one. This teacher guided ancient India and the East.

The underlying meanings of Hesse’s writings suggest that the West has overcome medieval thinking through cultural and scientific advancements, while the East has not. The spiritual inclination of the East and its inspiration from Western science and technology have hybridized the Indian mindset, leading to confusion about what is right and wrong. This may reflect a shortcoming of Eastern societies in not progressing as the West has, even though there was a time when Asian civilizations were considered among the most modern in the world. Historically, the East produced visionary figures, such as Gautama Buddha. Buddha demonstrated that a person has more than one self, a discovery made thousands of years ago, while the West only recently uncovered this truth. Though this discovery guided medieval India, its people failed to understand it. The concept of multiple selves is often seen as Western, but history shows that Gautama Buddha understood it centuries ago. The story of Siddhartha shows that even an evil person has the potential for salvation and redemption. Life can transform a sinner into a saint and vice versa. Through the ups and downs of time, new systems emerge in the universe as a result of human experiences.

The interpretation of Hesse's writings illustrates many possibilities—Siddhartha and Hesse share common thinking. They talk about many selves and possibilities—rebelliousness or contradiction is one of these possibilities. It is also true that the concept of ONENESS can be better understood through questioning, reasoning, logic, will, and experiences. The person who pursues all these traits is known as a leader. Eastern people tend to follow instead of trying to become like distinguished individuals. Every rational thing seems spiritual to them.

Conclusion

Hesse has established the idea that the natives blindly believe in supernatural things, which is the main reason behind their backwardness and colonization. In the beginning, most Eastern countries resisted Western advancements in science and technology and tried to oppose them through supernatural powers, but remained unsuccessful. The writer wants to convey that Indians should follow reason and logic instead of becoming blind followers. He attempts to present an anti-postcolonial theory where he directly and/or indirectly rejects the claims of postcolonial writers that colonizers destroyed the culture and religion of colonized people. He argues that colonized people are victims of colonization because they have not developed their culture and wisdom on logical and rational foundations.

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Original Article

Representation of Pre-Traumatic Disorder in *Don't Look Up*: A Textual Analysis

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Sonia Salam¹ Muhammad Shoaib²

Abstract

Humans and the environment are closely interconnected; however, colonization, urbanization, industrialization, and technological advancement have significantly damaged the environment. Global environmental and climate change affect people mentally due to their looming consequences. *Don't Look Up* is a movie about a comet about to hit Earth within six months. The comet is used as a metaphor for climate change in the film. The researcher applies Ann Kaplan's theory of pre-traumatic stress to analyze the movie, which she discusses in her book *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the Future in Dystopian Films*. To examine the film, the research article employs Catherine Belsey's textual analysis method. The analysis focuses on the dialogues to uncover their hidden meanings and decipher the metaphors. The film analysis offers insights into the manifestation and effects of pre-traumatic stress within a literary context. The paper emphasizes how the capitalist class exploits nature for their benefit, a theme that plays a vital role in the movie.

Keywords: urbanization, technology, pre-traumatic stress disorder

¹ Department of English Literature, Foundation University, New Lalazar, Rawalpindi 44000.

² Department of English Literature, Foundation University, New Lalazar, Rawalpindi 44000
imsoniasalam@gmail.com

Introduction

In recent years, global environmental changes have affected both the physical world and people's mental health due to their consequences. This is an issue that requires immediate attention. In a series of fifteen tweets, 'rebel meteorologist' Eric Holthaus shared his struggle with feelings of hopelessness in the face of climate change. His tweets served as a powerful reminder of the growing body of studies showing that climate change has become a mental health concern, impacting an increasing number of people with what one researcher has called pre-traumatic stress disorder (Oberhaus, 2017). Moreover, it seems that Holthaus was right, judging by the very positive response to his tweets. After receiving thousands of likes and retweets for each post, Holthaus quickly gained popularity on Twitter. He claimed to have received hundreds of messages over the following week from people who said they experienced the same feelings he described.

Environment and human beings are interdependent (Ives et al., 2017). People can only survive with environmental resources, and it becomes difficult to exist without natural resources. The environment provides humans with clean water, pure air, soil fertility, organic and inorganic food, and climate regulation, which means the environment supports humanity in many ways. Human activities after industrialization, urbanization, and colonialism have degraded the environment in several ways. The prime example is climate change, which has caused habitat loss, insufficient rainfall, and pollution. Activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and excessive use of chemicals have increased the global temperature, leading to climate change.

Various international conferences and debates are held around the world to protect the environment. Environmental issues that need solving have become critical due to their impact on the planet and human society. Literature also discusses environmental problems and promotes awareness because it reflects societal values and norms. Climate change and environmental degradation require attention, so literature addresses nature-related concerns. Writers explain the complexity of environmental degradation to inspire responsible actions for ecological crises. This paper focuses on a popular genre to examine how environmental degradation affects people's mental health. The theoretical framework used in this research is a critical analysis of Ann Kaplan's concept of pre-traumatic stress applied to the movie *"Don't Look Up"* to explore the

relationship between humans and nature. Ann Kaplan states that in pre-traumatic stress disorder, people cannot escape stress and remain worried about future disasters.

The connection between environmental degradation and pre-traumatic stress is fundamentally linked through people's worries about ecological disasters. Environmental degradation involves not only physical damage but also psychological harm. According to Kaplan, pre-traumatic stress disorder occurs in individuals due to exposure and awareness of climate change. In this context, people become anxious and stressed about the consequences of environmental changes. Environmental degradation presents serious threats to ecological sustainability and human well-being, worsened by pollution, deforestation, climate change, and natural disasters. The chosen theory for the study is an emerging area that warrants extensive discussion because humans are directly affected by climate change. Understanding how nature is depicted in literature is important because literature shapes our worldview. The study emphasizes the reckless exploitation of natural resources, which has resulted in environmental issues such as habitat destruction, food shortages, and a lack of clean drinking water. Therefore, contributing to the ongoing conversation is crucial to protect both people and the environment.

The present study aims to analyze the movie *Don't Look Up*, using Ann Kaplan's theory of pre-traumatic stress, to explore how capitalism, for its own benefit, neglects environmental degradation. The research paper focuses on how ecological deterioration leads to pre-traumatic stress for characters in the movie and how the capitalist class exploits nature for their own gain. The objectives of the study are to examine the connection between environmental degradation and pre-traumatic stress disorder and to analyze how the capitalist class exploits nature for their benefit. The study is limited to the movie *Don't Look Up*, focusing on pre-traumatic stress and the role of capitalism.

Literature Review

This section of the paper discusses the literature on the movie *Don't Look Up* and Ann Kaplan's pre-traumatic stress theory. Simply put, a literature review examines previous studies on a specific research area. The first part focuses on the movie, while the second part covers articles related to the theory. Clear communication requires sentences that express complete ideas. One study

analyzes declarative and interrogative sentences used in *Don't Look Up*. According to this study, the characters in the movie use two types of declarative sentences and three types of interrogative sentences. There are positive declarative sentences, which account for 79 or 67.6%, and 38 or 31.5% of negative declarative sentences. In this way, Fransiskus's research examines the declarative and interrogative sentences used in *Don't Look Up* (Fransiskus 111-121).

In the movie, postmodern concepts are also present. The study was conducted on different postmodern themes used in the film *Don't Look Up*. The paper focuses on themes of movies, including greed, ignorance, and the role of media. It discusses a postmodern analysis of the film from the perspectives of Baudrillard's hyperreality and satire. The study also addresses the theory of post-truth. It is based on the belief that truth no longer matters as much as feelings and beliefs in shaping public opinion and political discourse (Jovitta, 2023).

People have mixed reviews of the movie *Don't Look Up*, which shows a clear picture of what humans have done to nature in recent years. In one review, Kevin Burke calls the film a star-studded dud. Burke compares the conflict to COVID-19 since the movie reflects current events and offers no escape for viewers. It highlights how society is falling apart and how heavily we depend on social media. He compares the film to classic satirical movies like *Dr. Strangelove* and *Catch-22*, and claims it doesn't achieve the same level of success as those classics (Burke, 2022).

As a major influencer, Hollywood is responsible for raising awareness about the environmental damage caused by humans. In *The Hollywood Reporter*, chief film critic David Rooney offers a detailed critique, saying the film addresses serious issues but relies too much on satire. Rooney states that the film accurately portrays the media and government's response to the impending disaster, but lacks the facts to deepen the plot. Because of this, the film fails to fully engage its audience. Rooney praises the film for its comedic elements and witty dialogue, which add to its entertainment value. He also notes the support the film received from climate scientists, which helped draw attention to the crucial issue of environmental change.

In *Don't Look Up*, combat serves as a metaphor for climate change and humanity's inability to respond effectively. Cara Buckley's article highlights

the urgent need to protect the environment from climate change, viewed through the lens of the movie *Don't Look Up*. Buckley (2022) writes, “sniping between reviewers who did not like the film and scientists who did.” She also quotes director Adam McKay, “who wants this movie to be kicked in the pants,” which underscores the pressing environmental issues caused by climate change that require serious attention. Genevieve Guenther, founder and director of End Climate Silence, an organization advocating for increased media coverage of climate change, stated, “The goal of the movie was to raise awareness about the terrifying urgency of the climate crisis, and in that, it succeeded spectacularly.” In this way, the film uses metaphor to illustrate environmental degradation resulting from human activities.

People and critics have different opinions about the movie. Some praise it, while others criticize it. Daniel W. Drezner wrote in *The Washington Post* that the movie received mixed reactions from the public and critics. Some scientists appreciated its message to the audience, but others were unhappy with its tone, which they felt was not serious enough given that climate change is a serious issue. Some film critics even called the movie exhausting and inconsistent. A few critics also compared it to the movie *Dr. Strangelove* (Drezner, 2022).

Pre-traumatic stress syndrome, as discussed by Kaplan in her book, refers to a mental condition disturbed by environmental degradation and climate change. A person worries about future conditions and experiences stress. Kaplan and Wang (2024) argue that pre-traumatic stress disorder differs from post-traumatic and other traumatic disorders because, instead of focusing on past and present, it centers on future situations that cause mental distress. Kaplan has written extensively about pre-traumatic stress and trauma, particularly after 9/11, analyzing post-colonial and post-modernist perspectives. Around 2007, as climate change debates intensified, Kaplan developed an interest in dystopian fiction and films depicting future societies where human actions led to the collapse of the natural world and urban infrastructure. She critically examines symptoms of pre-traumatic stress disorder, where individuals feel intense worry about the future due to climate change caused by human activities. Theoretically, symptoms may include nightmares, fear-induced dissociation, and flash-forwards, now triggered by references to future events rather than past ones.

People suffer from trauma in their lives because they face different negative experiences in their past, which have a significant impact on them. Literature writers explain traumatic disorders based on different fictional characters. Alicia Berenson's novel *The Silent Patient* is analyzed from the perspective of post-traumatic stress disorder by Pratiwi and Pramesti (2022). Alicia's character experiences traumatic events such as sexual abuse, childhood abuse, verbal abuse, a car accident at a young age, and her husband's behavior, which causes her mental disorder. She begins to live in isolation and becomes aggressive toward others. Complications increase in her relationships, and she starts to develop negative views about herself and others. The paper uses Carlson and Ruzek's theory of post-traumatic stress disorder to critically analyze Alicia's character in the novel. Alicia's traumatic experiences can also be understood through her flashbacks, in which she does not want to see the color yellow because it reminds her of a car accident she and her mother had. These experiences affected her mental health and contributed to her post-traumatic stress disorder.

Traumatic disorders affect a person's mental health. Filmmakers depict how individuals suffer from traumatic disorders and how these affect their well-being and lives. The movie *Wild*, directed by Jean-Marc Vallée, is analyzed from a perspective of traumatic disorder based on the main character, Cheryl's, traumatic experiences. Cheryl faced traumatic events after her mother's death, which impacted her mental health because, in childhood, her mother provided excellent care. Even after her mother divorced her husband, she treated her children well despite poverty. Her mother consistently loved Cheryl and her brother. Due to cancer, at age forty-five, Cheryl loses her mother's affection, and her mental health becomes disturbed. Sutrisno (2019) analyzes the character of Cheryl from different types of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Hannibal Lecter's character in *Hannibal Rising* and *The Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris suffers from psychopathic traits and post-traumatic stress disorder, as Kirana analyzes. His early psychopathic behavior eventually developed into a severe mental disorder, yet he refused to see a psychiatrist to discuss his trauma and seek treatment. His PTSD symptoms become evident through his nightmares. Hannibal Lecter's traumatic experiences contributed to his becoming a serial killer. The fact that Hannibal kills individuals without hesitation, even when they should be held accountable, indicates he is a psychopath. He initially killed out of revenge, but killing then became

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ingrained in his soul and transformed him into a psychopath (Kirana, 2018). Kirana employs descriptive qualitative methodology to analyze Hannibal Lecter's traumatic experiences.

Writers also experience pre-traumatic stress disorder at some point in their lives, which affects them. Virginia Woolf, a prominent writer of her era, suffered from trauma, and she incorporated her traumatic experiences into her writing. To cope with her trauma, she created an imaginative character, Mrs. Ramsay, who exemplifies qualities she desires. The fictional character Mrs. Ramsay represents what Woolf hopes for in her life, and although Mrs. Ramsay faces difficulties, she maintains harmony despite these challenges (Salam et al., 2022; Silvestrin, 2023). For Woolf, life becomes complicated when one encounters negative experiences, and in efforts to overcome suffering, she built an imaginative world through her writing that helped her cope. Virginia Woolf's personal life was marked by anxiety, fear, and trauma, as evidenced by her suicide attempts, since she endured post-traumatic stress disorder throughout her life. Woolf depicts Mrs. Ramsay as a figure full of harmony and love to compensate for her own traumatic experiences.

The literature review shows that a research gap still exists. The psychological effects of prolonged exposure to environmental deterioration are not yet fully understood. This gap significantly hampers efforts to address the comprehensive impacts of environmental crises on human health and well-being.

Theoretical Framework

The study explores the theory of pre-traumatic stress, which Ann Kaplan discusses in her book *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the Future in Dystopian Films*. Pre-traumatic stress relates to anxiety about climate events that have not yet happened but are imminent. Kaplan mentions such events in her book by referencing movies like *Take Shelter*, *The Happening*, *The Book of Eli*, and *The Road*. In these films, humanity faces environmental disaster, or the natural system has broken down, leaving no future for humanity. In *Take Shelter*, the main character is traumatized by a storm that has not yet occurred. Curtis, the protagonist, experiences future events directly and suffers from nightmares and hallucinations. Kaplan describes this phenomenon as pre-traumatic stress.

Trauma does not only happen when something occurs; it can also happen when someone thinks about a future event because it can cause destruction, and a person can become traumatized just by imagining that event. According to Kaplan, “future catastrophic events could also be traumatic” (Kaplan, 2015). Kaplan argues that the fear a person may have due to environmental degradation caused by human activities can, over time, turn into trauma because degradation can have serious consequences for humans. This stress related to potential outcomes is called pre-traumatic stress. Environmentalists and concerned individuals believe that if environmental degradation continues at the same pace, it will lead to complete natural destruction. The fear of total collapse causes people to think about what they would do if natural and human infrastructure were to fail, leading to pre-traumatic stress (Kaplan, 2015). Kaplan also claims that humans often do not realize what they are doing to nature, but over time, they come to understand that they have caused significant damage. The destruction of nature can, eventually, harm humans, creating anxiety about what the future holds. This anxiety impacts mental health and is known as pre-traumatic stress disorder.

Kaplan suggests in her book that the government in the future will be based on capitalism. She discusses the movie **Blindness**, where people are unable to see and are completely blind. These individuals are kept in an asylum under such conditions, yet capitalism persists. When the people in the asylum have no money to buy food, women start selling their jewelry and, eventually, their bodies to get sustenance. Kaplan explains it this way: capitalism continually recreates itself (Kaplan, 2015). It doesn’t matter how much human suffering there is—capitalism will keep going. Kaplan believes everything goes wrong with capitalism: “If the films and novels offer a somewhat predictable picture of what is wrong with capitalism” (Kaplan, 2015).

Kaplan argues that the problems with the environment stem from corporate capitalist culture. She describes this situation as “capitalism directly related to environmental degeneration” (Kaplan, 2015). In a capitalist society, the country’s leaders pay little attention to environmental issues.

Research Methodology

Different methods can be applied to the movie *Don’t Look Up*, such as visual, discourse, and critical discourse analysis. This paper uses textual analysis by

Catherine Belsey to critically examine the movie's characters through their dialogues. The researcher will employ the textual method for this study. The textual approach helps readers view the text from different perspectives, enabling a deeper analysis and revealing multiple interpretations. Textual analysis is used to uncover hidden meanings within the text. In literature, it primarily involves exploring themes, structure, literary devices, and the cultural context of the writing. Plot development, character analysis, and narrative style aid in uncovering hidden messages and signs. Word choice, figurative language, and tone can reveal various layers of meaning, including subversive nuances. Catherine Belsey states, "On the country, meanings are always ultimately undecidable" (Belsey, 2013). In this way, an author cannot definitively decide the meaning of a text. It depends on the readers' interpretation and their knowledge. Belsey emphasizes deconstructing traditional ideas of meaning and language presentation. Fixed interpretations are questioned. Her concept of textual analysis mainly focuses on the reader's perspective to evaluate and challenge established ideas within the text, encouraging critical engagement with hidden meanings. Literary criticism cannot be neutral; the perspectives of both writer and reader must be considered to understand the context in real time.

Analysis and Discussion

The study aims to analyze the movie *Don't Look Up* through the lens of pre-traumatic stress and capitalism critique as discussed by Ann Kaplan in her book *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the Future in Dystopian Films*. The first section will cover the theory of pre-traumatic stress, while the second part will explore the role of capitalism.

The opening scene of the movie *Don't Look Up* sets the tone for the rest of the film, and the stress related to humans' extension in the characters is also present. Kate Dibiasky discovers the comet about to hit the Earth, and Dr. Randall Mindy calculates when it will strike. As the camera shifts to Dr. Mindy's face, we see unmistakable signs of panic as he realizes that the comet will hit Earth within six months. He calls off the party and tells Kate to stay. "You stay" (5:19). Both characters display clear signs of stress and panic as they learn that humans have only six months to live on Earth. They inform Dr. Teddy Oglethorpe (Planetary Defense Coordination Office) about the comet. There is evident stress and anxiety in his voice regarding the impending

impact. The camera slowly zooms in from his shoulders to his face. The tense background music adds to the scene's anxiety. In this way, the opening scene sets the tone for the movie and highlights the stress because, after impact, life on Earth will end.

The stress and frustration caused by traumatic events in the movie are shown through the characters Kate and Professor Mindy. They experience stress throughout the film due to the effects of climate change. The scene where Dr. Randall Mindy and Kate meet President Orlean to explain the dangerous situation adds to the characters' stress and frustration (18:13). She gives them 20 minutes. "You got 20 minutes." The president ignores them. She tells them to call it 70% and move on instead of 99.78, as Dr. Randall and Kate tell her. This also creates fear in the characters' minds as the government does nothing about a hazardous event that Dr. Randall Mindy calls "An Apocalyptic event" (23:36). There is clear anxiety and stress in his voice as he emphasizes the word apocalyptic.

The pre-traumatic stress causes fear in the characters of the movie because they worry that the comet will hit Earth within six months, destroying human infrastructure and causing humanity's end. *Don't Look Up* shows fear through the character of Kate. Her fear grows when President Orlean tells them, "Sit tight and assess" (21:46). She shows her anger in front of the president and tells her that everything regarding the consequences of the comet hitting Earth has already been explained. The president dismisses their concerns by telling them to sit tight and assess. This statement makes Kate angry and increases her fear. Dr. Randall Mindy also explains the seriousness of the situation to the president, calling this decision extremely dangerous. Dr. Randall Mindy and Kate suffer from the burden of knowing about this planet killer, which is about to hit the Earth.

The fear and anxiety about the extinction of plants in Dr. Randall Mindy and Kate escalate when they appear on a morning show to leak news about the conflict. The show, called *The Rip*, keeps things light and fun. The host makes fun of the conflict, and Kate asks, "I am sorry, are we not being clear?" (39:29). She says this with anger and sadness because they are not taken seriously. She continues, "That the entire planet is about to be destroyed" (39:36). There is fear in her eyes about a future event that has not yet happened, but it troubles her. She leaves the show, telling everyone that we

are all going to die, which clearly indicates that the conflict will soon hit Earth. At the end of the show, Dr. Randall Mindy shows signs of depression and helplessness as he asks desperately, “The show is over” (41:21). Afterward, they find out that people are not paying much attention to what they say. A flood of social memes about Kate’s behavior appears. Both characters suffer from fears of future events that haven't happened yet, and they also suffer because nobody is listening to them.

As the movie approaches its conclusion, Dr. Randall Mindy appears on the morning show, *The Rip*. The host asks him if the comet exists or if it’s just a rumor about a potential impact on Earth. In this scene, Dr. Randall Mindy’s anxiety and fear are evident as he almost shouts at the hosts, telling them that there is indeed a comet and they have seen it through a telescope. What more proof do you need? Dr. Mindy responds that he and his student have observed the comet with a telescope and have estimated its impact time on Earth. He completely loses his composure due to anxiety about the future, expressing his points in anger and helplessness. He states, “We are all going to die” (50:27). This reveals Dr. Randall’s fear about the comet because when it hits the Earth, it will wipe out the entire planet.

The second part of the analysis will examine the movie through the lens of capitalism, as discussed in Kaplan's book *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the Future in Dystopian Films*. When Kate and Dr. Randall discuss on the online show the impending conflict that will strike Earth in six months, the President of America learns about it. After hearing the news about the conflict, President Orlean’s first question is, “What is this going to cost me?” (21:10). In the face of imminent danger, she is more concerned about herself than what the people need. This reflects the hallmark of capitalism, which Kaplan describes as “what is wrong with capitalism” (Kaplan, 2015). In capitalism, the government thinks in terms of “I” rather than “we” as a collective, as seen in President Orlean's behavior. All she cares about is winning the midterm elections and maintaining her power.

Capitalism sees money in everything, and as humans, it is believed that they can solve every problem through modern technology. In the movie, the character Peter believes that he can not only destroy the comet in midair but also extract the most critical minerals from it. He wants to use these for his smartphone and computers. These are rare minerals. Peter states, “Actually

contains \$32 trillion of these critical materials” (1:09:59). In this way, capitalism values profit over the well-being of people.

In capitalism, political leaders often prioritize the interests of corporations over the well-being of people and nature. President Orlean calls Dr. Randall and tells him that she has a ship: “There is a ship... it holds 2000 people... it sets to find the nearest earth-like planet” (1:59:52). She offers Dr. Randall seats, but he refuses because he prefers to stay with his family. This scene highlights the inequality of capitalism. In capitalism, one class suffers while the elites enjoy the wealth of people with low incomes. They can even survive the world’s end, as shown in the movies. President Orlean uses money and power to save herself while the rest of the world suffers. This illustrates the inequality of capitalism and how leaders often disregard the well-being of the people and the environment.

In a capitalist society, a clear divide exists between the rich and the poor. The wealthy exploit the poor using their money. In the movie's final scene, the audience sees that the rich have traveled to another planet. Peter then tells them that “oxygen is higher than Earth” (2:09:38). Although the oxygen level is higher than on Earth, deadly birds are on the planet, as evidenced by the fact that they kill President Orlean first and then everything else. Humans believe they can use their wealth and technology to save themselves, but this movie delivers a message that climate change is a serious problem, and money cannot save us from it.

The analysis shows that the movie *Don't Look Up* depicts a clear view of capitalism and how it operates. President Orlean doesn't care about the people; she only cares about staying in power. Meanwhile, Peter symbolizes capitalism and how the system seeks profit from everything. Peter aims to use Combat for his own benefit. In this way, the movie highlights the inequality between the poor and the rich, where the wealthy can get away with anything, even as everything around them falls apart, as shown in the film.

Conclusion

This study examines the selected movie from an ecocriticism perspective, using Ann Kaplan’s theory of pre-traumatic stress. The characters in the movie *Don't Look Up* experience pre-traumatic stress. They suffer from an event that has not yet happened, but they are convinced it will occur in the future. This

pre-traumatic stress causes anxiety, fear, and tension, which lead to human suffering. The analysis shows that Ann Kaplan regards natural degradation as a cause of pre-traumatic stress. The movie *Don't Look Up* also illustrates how characters suffer from pre-traumatic stress due to environmental change. The analysis suggests that capitalism is a major factor in natural degradation because, to make money, humans destroy nature regardless of the consequences, and when destruction occurs, pre-traumatic stress ensues. In the film, President Orlean represents the self-serving nature of capitalist and political systems. Capitalist culture further exacerbates inequality between the poor and the rich, which also reveals that injustice is inflicted upon nature, and this injustice to nature is linked to injustice toward humans, as both are interconnected. This study is important because it offers a new perspective on the movie *Don't Look Up*. With limited existing literature on the specific intersection of character development and thematic elements in the film, this research aims to uncover new insights into how pre-traumatic stress manifests and impacts within a literary and cinematic context.

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