

Fostering National Identity in Children through the Creation of a 2D Protagonist Cartoon Character Incorporating National Symbols of Pakistan

Qurat Ul Ain Farooq¹, Muhammad Riaz²

¹Lecturer, Riphah Institute of Media Sciences, Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

²Assistant Professor, Riphah Institute of Media Sciences, Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Correspondence: quratulain.2015@gmail.com¹

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Cartoons are widely recognized as an effective medium of communication, serving not only to entertain but also to influence children's mentality, language, and behavior. In Pakistan, children are predominantly exposed to foreign cartoons, which often attract them to foreign values and culture in contrast to their prevailing values, norms, and culture. These characters, appreciated by Pakistani children, significantly impact their character development and personality. Given this influence, there is a pressing need for a cartoon character rooted in Pakistani themes and content to counterbalance external cultural dominance. The field of cartoon animation in Pakistan is still emerging, with designers often incorporating national elements, although foreign influences remain apparent in visual designs. This study aims to design a new 2D protagonist cartoon character for Pakistani children to promote national identity by integrating national symbols.

Methodology: The character was developed using key symbols such as the national dress (Shalwar Kameez and Peshawari Chappal), national colors (white and green), the national flower (Jasmine), and other significant national emblems like the Crescent and Star, Markhor, and Chukar. The entire character development process adhered to the Character Design Pipeline.

Findings: The designed character incorporates strong national elements, ensuring that it effectively represents Pakistani culture and identity while counterbalancing external cultural influences.

Conclusion: The character has the potential to be utilized in future Pakistani cartoon shows, animated films, games, and merchandise to represent and promote Pakistan's national identity effectively.

Keywords: 2D Cartoon Character, Character Design, 2D National Character of Pakistan, National Symbols of Pakistan, Animated Character, Game Character.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cartoons have been accepted as a successful means of communication and operate as a communication tool not merely to humor but to play a significant role in reforming the child's thinking, arguments, and routines. In modern times, foreign content, particularly Western cartoon characters, is incredibly loved by children in Pakistan and greatly impacts their lives. Due to their developmental immaturity, young children may begin to admire cartoon characters that exhibit behaviors such as aggression, offensiveness, and vulgarity. This admiration can lead to adopting attitudes and actions contrary to their society's cultural norms and values (Akbar, 2017).

In Pakistan, children are watching foreign content, mostly Western cartoons, and tilting towards Western values and culture, which are mostly based on individualism. The cause behind this familiarity and awareness with various cultures is the influential distribution, mass construction, and promotion of the artistries utilizing their cartoon characters, backgrounds, icons, colors, ideas, secret codes, symbols, and similes to describe the visuals within a tale like their personal, social and cultural premises. Furthermore, cartoons are relatively a new field in Pakistan; designers or cartoonists try to integrate the national components; however, western inspiration can still be seen in their visual design. The intention after so much inspiration is possible because of internal traditional clashes between Punjabis, Sindhis, Baloch, and similar identities, which is a bit complicated to call just Pakistani. This cultural complication needs to be addressed so that our style, like the Middle East, Japan, and Iran, can be defined (Jamil, 2017). To mitigate the influence of foreign content and to promote regional identities within a national framework, it is essential to develop a national cartoon character rooted in the Pakistani context, featuring themes and content that reflect Pakistani culture and values.

Likewise, national symbols are very important for the representation of national identity. Symbols, however, are easily recognizable and are used to “*direct and coordinate, record, and communicate.*” They are easily identifiable traits that are used as a way to tell the history and culture of a given country. These symbols can be used to promote pride and solidarity in a country's population. The purpose of national symbols is to represent the history and culture of a nation. National symbols not only reflect the general definition of the country but also summarize awareness, beliefs, history, and memories associated with the culture and can reflect that deep emotional attachment towards a country. Displaying the national symbols of a country can influence people's attitudes and actions. Because they are used to unite people, to inspire sectarian action, to attract public attention, to build relationships between people, and to strengthen the goals of citizens (Chala, 2016).

In this context, this research paper explores the potential of fostering national identity in children through the creation of a 2D protagonist cartoon character that incorporates the national symbols of Pakistan. By embedding elements such as the national flag, cultural attire, historical landmarks, and other emblematic symbols into the character's design and narrative, the study aims to provide a culturally resonant alternative to foreign media influences. The objective is to create content that not only entertains but also educates young audiences about their national heritage, instilling a sense of pride and belonging in the cultural and historical identity of Pakistan (Anderson, 2020; Jones, 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 National Identity and Cartoons

The existing literature says that throughout World War II, the demand of leaders of government, military & navy, and Golden Age cartoon studios such as Walt Disney Studios, Warner Brothers, Terry-Toons, Walter Lantz, and Rest of the Story Studio played a vital task in the production of animations and cartoon characters and utilized various national symbols, emotions, and subjects to hold & influence nationalism amongst nations to bring them close (Ívansson, 2011). Symbols are utilized to generate influential sentiments between the people and connect them beneath the ordinary ground. Within logic, the Studio of Walt Disney directed to accomplish so as soon as they created cartoons clearly in support of the conflict

endeavor that cartoons were packed with American national symbols like independence and democracy. These animated cartoons mean that citizens must bond mutually, maintain their serenity, and have the potential to work jointly for an ordinary reason that is to conquer the opponent. As declared before, an ordinary cause for nationalism is to flourish and to play on the strong sentiment that liberty is significant to all free individuals (Ívansson, 2011).

Previous research says that symbols know how to increase pleasing belongings or communication that cartoon characters express. Various symbols are recognizable from further resources of amusement and can be easily utilized because the public has learned to connect definite themes through in-depth meanings, typically based on their learning, background, and society. For example, a cartoon character that unexpectedly grows horns on its forehead can look evil plus immoral because, in Christianity and various religious convictions, the horned devil symbolizes wickedness actions (Hirvikoski, 2018).

The Kung Fu Panda cartoon represents an inclusive compilation of characteristics of Chinese conventional culture and lots of exactly right cultural allusions covering Kanfu's appearance, outfits, buildings, martial arts, signposts, prehistoric & present customs, words, melody, philosophy, religious conviction, & principles. By packaging Chinese national tradition, the superstar, a universal Kung Fu Panda, symbolizes Western standards & values, bringing towards the Valley of Serenity & China Western bravery, distinctiveness, and broadmindedness (Wang, 2017). However, research titled 'Becoming Japanese: Manga, Youngsters' Drawing, and the Building of National Character' (Wilson, 2007) claimed that almost the majority of cartoonists in Japan have created drawings and characters based on their identity. The visual features of anime and manga, particularly the facial expressions, often include heart-shaped faces, wide eyes, and unique hairstyles. Interestingly, it had beneficial possessions ever since anime moved into the marketplace of Indonesia in the nineteen-nineties. Not only did the cartoon characters become popular, but the young groups also became so involved with it that they began to imitate the visual style of anime (Ahmed, 2012). Therefore, nowadays anime is used as a descriptive word to describe the animations of Japan.

A significant aspect of Japan's culture is animation, which originates from manga (super comics), computer games, and TV series. Japan is famous for its iconic characters like Doraemon, Naruto, and various Spy-Conan cartoon characters (Denison, 2015). Certain scholars articulate that anime characters did not use their particular body shape and personality. In the artwork titled Princess-Knight and Astro-Boy, Osamu Tezuka, one of the founders of Japanese animation, was influenced by the early works of the Disney Company. He incorporated visual elements, such as exaggerated eyes, into his designs, which became a hallmark of his characters' expressive style (Lu, 2017). As per the earlier research, big eyes, stylized characters, clean hair, and light-skinned and blonde characters were adorned in a Western style, which was aptly named anime style (K. Dallacosta, 2019).

Captain America, Batman, and Superman are well-known superheroes whose humor was taken from comic shows. In comics or magazines, a superhero is presented with an amazingly beautiful, extraordinarily strong, rare, excellent personality (McSweeney, 2020). The magnetism of the characters is key to gaining the trust of the audience and following the show. In addition to the pleasant appearance of the costumes, like the Caucasians, the majority of the cartoon characters have beautiful skin. For instance, the perfect body of the character Barbie with various hairstyles looks a lot like the Europeans. Research says that the similar drives for masculine cartoon characters are that they are constantly muscular and brave with inspiring body shapes. The Western-style has a realistic stroke and paint technique when making animated character designs, unlike the Japanese style, which features clean and even colors (Mustaffa, 2016). Due to different ethnic groups such as Chinese, Malays, and Indians, Malaysia's physical characteristics cannot be considered as one. Their skin color is also different. However, since this research did not focus on the superiority of character coloring, it will not be supplementary improved. Throughout this analysis of the five general characters of the cartoon in Malaysia, it has been revealed that the native physical features are typically round or oval face, middle eyes, no special hairstyle, and

occasionally with its skinhead, the nose with number three shape, gap between teeth or missing teeth, large head with the small body, small feet with casual footwear (Khalis, 2016).

As said by Jamil (2017), animation is a relatively new field in Pakistan; the artists or designers try to incorporate as many cultural elements as possible, but still, Western influence can be seen in the visual style of Pakistani cartoon characters like Teen Bahadur and Burkha-Avengers. All these cartoon characters are attractive but designed in Western outfits (pent/trouser-shirt) instead of the traditional dress Shalwar-Kameez, and Western influences are seen in their visual appearances. The intention after so much inspiration is possible because of internal traditional clashes between Punjabis, Sindhis, Balochis, and similar identities, which is a bit complicated to call just Pakistani. This cultural complication needs to be addressed so that our style, like the Middle East, Japan, and Iran, can be defined (Jamil, 2017).

2.2 Objectives and Scope

This study will not prove the effects of Western cartoons on Pakistani children nor even identify the popularity of Western cartoons among Pakistani children because the previous research has already shown results, such as a study by Kamal (2015) found that exposure to Western cartoons has a significant impact on the behavior and cultural values of Pakistani children. The research showed that children who regularly watched Western cartoons tended to adopt Western cultural practices and behaviors, often diminishing their connection to traditional Pakistani values (Kamal, 2015). This study will only focus on developing a new 2D protagonist cartoon character on the identity of Pakistan. In the end, a new cartoon character will be developed to identify Pakistan and can be used in upcoming cartoon shows, animated movies, for merchandising purposes, and games. The cartoon character will be developed so that it will be transferred to 3D in the future.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Semiotic theory is a powerful tool for creating culturally relevant media because it provides a framework for comprehending how signs and symbols convey meaning. Semiotics is used to analyze the relationship between the visual components (signifiers) and the deeper cultural meanings they evoke (signified) in the design of a 2D protagonist cartoon character rooted in the culture of Pakistan. This strategy ensures that the character goes beyond mere amusement and serves as an instrument for fostering togetherness and patriotism among the youth of Pakistan. By including recognizable national symbols such as the Shalwar-kameez, Peshawari-chappal, Crescent, and Star, and green and white colors, the 2D figure conveys Pakistan's ideals, customs, and patriotism.

2.3.1 Connotation of Design Elements

Character design operates in two stages: connotation and denotation. Connotation refers to the emotional and cultural meaning attached to the visual elements, and denotation is the exact demonstration of visual features. Like the Shalwar-kameez, it represents traditional costume, but its meaning is embedded in its connection to cultural legitimacy and national identity. The crescent and star in the flag of Pakistan stand for Islamic heritage and unification. The crescent and star molded in the phrase La-Ilaha-Ilallah-Muhamamdadur-Rasulullah (meaning "There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah") are not directly related to the crescent and star; however, in Pakistan, these symbols are strappingly connected to religious and national approaches. Characters can become powerful representations of Pakistani identity and values by incorporating these symbols into their designs, which allows designers to draw on common cultural beliefs and memories. Similarly, the national flower of Pakistan, jasmine, represents pride and purity. When combined these components create a character that captures the spirit of the culture and history of Pakistan and strikes a chord with viewers.

2.3.2 Symbolism and Myth-Making

Incorporating national symbols into a character's design supports establishing a cultural myth, a description that identifies the standards and values of a nation. The myth positions a character as a heroic

personality, demonstrating individualities such as resilience, kindness, and courage. Relating these traits to the heritage of Pakistan, the character turns out to be an exemplar for young kids, proposing an alternative to the tales frequently presented in the global media. Rather than focusing solely on intercontinental themes, this character highlights values such as cultural pride, community, and collectivism, which foster a sense of belonging to the rich traditions and identity of Pakistan.

2.3.3 Semiotic Codes and Cultural Representation

Additionally, character design uses cultural codes to ensure legitimacy while reflecting Pakistan's social values, history, and regional diversity. To reinforce these rules, the national animal of Pakistan, the Markhor, and the Chukar, a partridge associated with Pakistani folklore, are depicted.

These symbols support the character in striking a balance between conventional and contemporary perceptions, which makes it suitable for use in animated shows, video games, and merchandising. The character maintains its Pakistani identity while tempting the worldwide audience because of this balance of history and contemporary flair. It demonstrates by what means the character might uniquely represent Pakistan on the global stage.

2.3.4 Countering Western Influences

This character is poles apart from the international cartoon characters that are frequently seen in Pakistani media. Those characters generally display themes and values that are suitable to their own culture. In contrast, this character is founded on the traditions and culture of Pakistan, suggesting something slightly more familiar and meaningful to native audiences. By concentrating on native traditions, the character helps young ones feel gratified by Pakistan's heritage. Unlike global fictional superheroes who may seem distant and unrealistic, this character reflects the everyday life of Pakistani children, making it easy for them to relate to and be inspired by it.

2.3.5 Fostering National Identity

The application of semiotic theory reveals that the character is not just an animated figure; it turns out to be a cultural ambassador. By introducing national symbols and narratives, the character promotes pride in Pakistan's heritage, educates children about their cultural identity, and unites diverse ethnicities under a shared national framework. This thoughtful integration of semiotics ensures that the character is not only a source of entertainment but also a medium for cultural reinforcement and identity building.

3. METHODOLOGY (DEVELOPING A CARTOON CHARACTER)

A well-designed cartoon character is memorable, believable, and appropriately aligned with the narrative. While there is no single formula or method for creating a successful cartoon character, different artists employ various approaches based on their experiences, cultural contexts, design traditions, current trends, and personal inclinations (Tiainen, 2020).

In this study, the researcher(s) developed a character design pipeline after reviewing the methodologies and frameworks employed by other artists and scholars in the field, including (Anderson, 2016), (Tiainen, 2020), (Lundwall, 2017), (Lioi, 2009), (Ekström, 2013), (Guerrero, 2015). The resulting design pipeline, utilized in this project, is divided into two distinct phases:

1. The Preparative-Phase
2. The Generative-Phase.

3.1 Preparative Phase

In the preparation phase, character descriptions and background stories of cartoon characters are prepared. In this step, the proper knowledge of what the cartoon character is going to be, his style, his story, goals, superpowers, genre, dress, and personality are explained. Later, vital information is compiled in a set of

parameters that direct the design process. Then influences and inspirations are taken from appropriate things and characters that help in the further designing of character.

3.1.1 Character Profile and Background

The protagonist, Shaheer—affectionately known as Shairu—is a ten-year-old male of Pakistani nationality belonging to a middle-class background. Designed as a relatable and inspiring figure for children, Shaheer is characterized by his bravery, energy, confidence, and deep sense of patriotism. His character is developed with the specific goal of addressing social issues in Pakistan, fostering nationalistic understanding, and promoting the values of unity, faith, and discipline. To achieve these objectives, Shaheer is depicted wearing the national dress of Pakistan, Shalwar-Kameez, and is designed with a strong emphasis on national symbols. The design process for this character was meticulously carried out using Adobe Illustrator, leveraging digital image manipulation techniques to create a visually appealing and culturally resonant 2D character.

Shaheer’s backstory is steeped in personal tragedy, which shapes his resolve to combat social injustices and protect his community. After losing his father—a soldier—in a military operation and witnessing the abduction and subsequent death of his sister, Shaheer is thrust into a position of premature responsibility. His experiences of child labor and abuse at a mechanic’s workshop, coupled with his encounter with the "Magical Flag of Pakistan," instilled in him a determination to eradicate such issues from society. The magical flag, inherited from his father, bestows upon Shaheer an array of powers, including superhuman abilities and a heightened sense of justice. These powers are symbolically tied to Pakistan's national identity, such as the strength of the Markhor (the national animal) and the wings of the Chukar partridge (the national bird). Despite his powers, Shaheer faces challenges, including the limitations of the flag and his inexperience, which he gradually overcomes as he grows into his role as a protector of his nation. The design and development of Shaheer as a character were guided by a set of parameters derived from his biography, storyline, and cultural context, ensuring that his visual and narrative attributes align with the overarching goals of the project.

Table 1: *Parameter of Cartoon Character*

	Story	Requirements	Character Briefing
Shapes	Circle with basic shapes	Flexible body	The protagonist, cute, brave, confident 10-year-old Pakistani boy wearing a shalwar-kameez with a Peshawari chappal. National symbols will be shown in his Physical appearance.
Proportions	Overall Stylized, Big head as compared to the body.	A humanoid figure with a flexible body, arms, legs, and feet.	
Physical Attributes	Exaggerated eyes, simple nose, lips in simple lines, mango-shaped ears.	A Flexible body with moveable hands, arms, legs, and feet.	
Color	Skin color medium tan, eye, and hair color dark brown		

This step is especially about accumulating ideas and reference material, approximately in the form of sketches, photographs, and keywords. For the character of a brave cartoon character, the inspirations are collected in three parts (see Figure 1), (see Figure 2), (see Figure 3), (see Figure 4), (see Figure 5), and (see Figure 6). First, the references are taken from the male characters to figure out what the characteristic features of the children are. This part consisted of reviewing some cartoon characters’s features and

collecting pictures to illustrate the appropriate designs. Another part of the inspiration involves discovering how the character of the brave and confident was represented in the past, what makes them unique from the others, and what their costumes were. In the third step, since this cartoon character is on the identity of Pakistan and the national symbols will be shown in their visual style, references have also been taken from the appropriate national symbols of Pakistan for this purpose, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 1: *Character Captain America, source: (Chisholm, 2023)*



Figure 2: *Character Ben 10 Source: (IMDb, 2018)*



Figure 3: *Character Jan Source: (JanCartoon, 2016)*



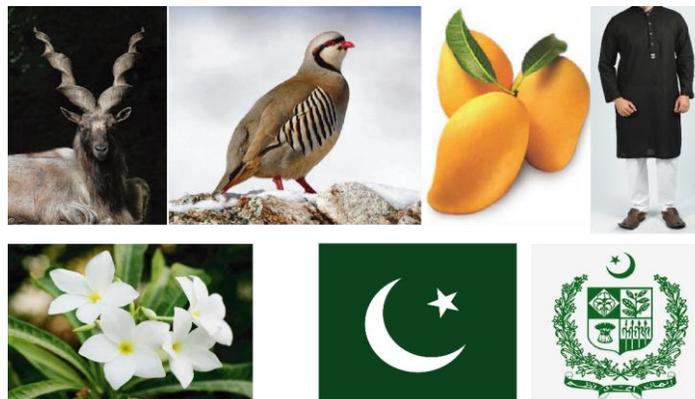
Figure 4: *Character Allahyar Source: (Aijaz, 2018)*



Figure 5: *Character Kamil and Saadi Source: (Jamil, 2017)*



Figure 6: *National Symbols of Pakistan Source: (Zahid, 2016)*



3.2 Generative Phase

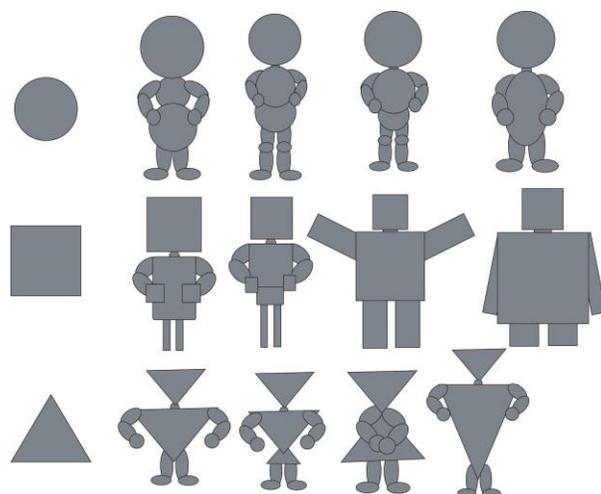
In the ideation stage, all the information gathered from different sources and different forms is converted into concepts and ideas. It is significant to create as many different shapes of ideas as possible (as well as use the opportunity to explore different styles) as they combine, expand, and improve in the later stages to create the final design. Designers need to know the cartoon character, its background, personality traits, flaws, strengths, etc. when converting these characteristics into visual features in the design.

In this study, the interdependent relationships of the design elements influenced the methodology applied to the construction of the idea of the character. The elements that are followed are formed in sequence, from shapes ranging from more general and broader, while the physical attribute to more specific and higher levels of detail. As it proceeded through more detailed steps of exploration of the character. Each element of the design served as an initial study or as a starting point for the following one. The researcher started looking for the most common manifestation of the design, which is a silhouette. Starting with silhouette allowed the researcher to abstract the details and focus only on the overall shapes of the character's body and their relationship. A key component of the strategy involved beginning with basic geometric shapes—such as circles, squares, and triangles. This approach provided a foundational framework, enabling a straightforward comparison and evaluation of the design concepts.

In terms of shape, it was crucial to communicate specific traits through the character's design. The primary goal was to ensure that the shapes contributed to a distinct and recognizable silhouette, effectively conveying the character's personality. Additionally, the design needed to incorporate flexibility in shapes, proportions, and physical features to reflect a broad range of emotions and expressions. This flexibility was essential for capturing the character's dynamic range and overall versatility.

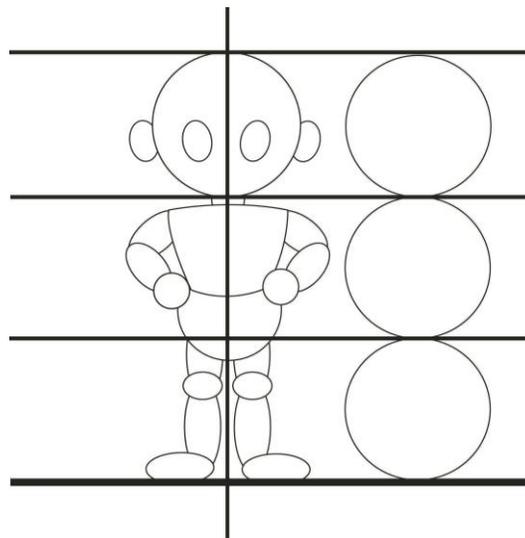
Starting from the basic shapes, like a circle, a square, or a triangle, they all looked very stable and solid. However, by changing body proportions and exploring the drawn-out style of these basic shapes, they got less stable and started to give the idea of versatility. For instance, as shown in Figure 7, the stretched square seems more unstable than flexible. Solutions that included square stacked needed to represent a sufficiently easy or natural silhouette. The triangle with the base makes the character funky and uncomfortable, and pointing down makes him too masculine or dangerous. Stimulatingly, a feminine figure is represented by using the stack of the opposite triangle. However, it was the circles that provided more attractive characteristics according to the desired personality traits of the character. It provided a very simple silhouette and childlike look.

Figure 7: *Shapes and Proportions Study of Character*



In terms of body proportion, it was typically determined by the relationship between the character's body size and the size of their head. Combining these relationships affects the style, making the character stylized or realistic and also informing about the character's age, gender, or even a character in the story. This character is a ten-year-old cute, brave, and confident boy. Although the body of this character needed to resemble a child in the end. At this phase of the project, the researcher made a choice about style that would influence the rest of the character design. Later, the researcher selected a stylized style for this cartoon character. One reason was that there is much creative freedom in stylization, and to make cartoon characters interesting and attractive for kids, this style would be best. As it is specified in the character's description, the character is a ten-year-old brave, confident, cute boy; consequently, all the options that had adult-like proportions were discarded. So, the chosen final proportion for the character is stylized (see Figure 8). The head is bigger than the body, and a child usually has a larger head than the rest of the body measurements. The overall body is three heads tall. With moveable normal-size arms and legs as compared to the body. The ears are big and are the same size as the eyes. The mouth and nose are small compared to the eyes and ears. Hands and feet are balanced according to arms and legs. To show the clear personality traits of the character, along with circles, a square shape is used in the chest part of the character's proportion to make him look bolder and more confident, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: *The Proportion of a Cartoon Character*

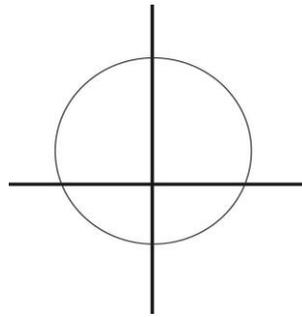


3.2.1 Physical Attributes

In general, physical attributes relate to the character and physicality of a character. This visual attribute involves the process of adding appropriate details to force a character. From facial features to outfits the character will wear. It also includes all sorts of visual treatments to convey these details, such as textures, patterns, etc.

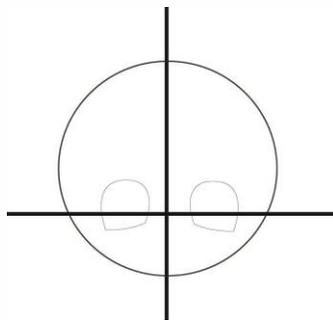
There was a struggle to determine how the face of the character would look. The parameter stated that the character was a ten-year-old brave, confident, energetic Pakistani child, which would indirectly affect the facial design. However, starting with the face, the circle is the basic shape of the cartoon character, and the circle determines the basic proportions of the character's head. However, once the circle is formed, the axis of the face is traced, and the vertical and horizontal lines are drawn in the middle of the circle (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: *Circle with Vertical and Horizontal Line*



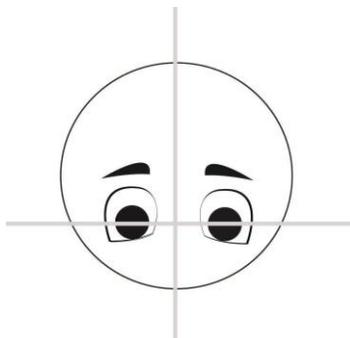
To design the eyes, the semi-oval shape is drawn on lines, with a slight tilt to the side at the top; however, the same is repeated on the opposite side, while leaving a gap between them of approximately the size of an eye for balance and measurement (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: *Process of Designing Eyes*



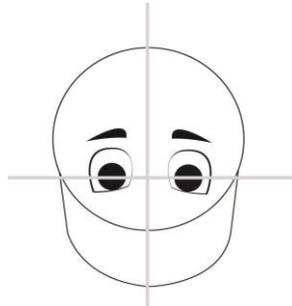
Additionally, as shown in Figure 11, eyeballs are designed inside the semi-circles, and at the top of the semicircle shape, a thick feature was designed that is the eyelashes of the character. The eyebrows are placed a little above the eyelashes; the eyebrow form is free, and with practice, it will be adjusted according to the required style.

Figure 11: *Feature Exploration of Character*



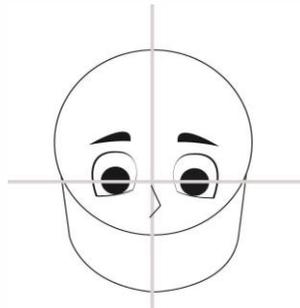
The skull and the eyes of the character are the principal structures of a face in cartoon character designs. However, this character is going to be a young boy; therefore, the appropriate jaw has been developed for him (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: *Designed the Jaw of Character*



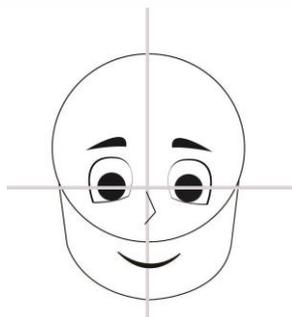
Furthermore, while designing a nose from the front, it is common not to use many details. Drawing only its tip already achieves a convincing effect, so the simple nose line has been pulled. (See Figure 13), usually, only one side of the nose is attracted to the idea that it is the opposite side of the light.

Figure 13: *Nose Designing Process*



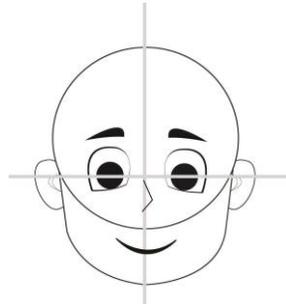
As the cartoon character is a kid, a simple line is used while designing his mouth just to reflect an expression (see Figure 14). When designing a little child's mouth, the lips are not drawn. Children, regardless of gender, have very simple mouths in the cartoon style.

Figure 14: *Character with Mouth Line*



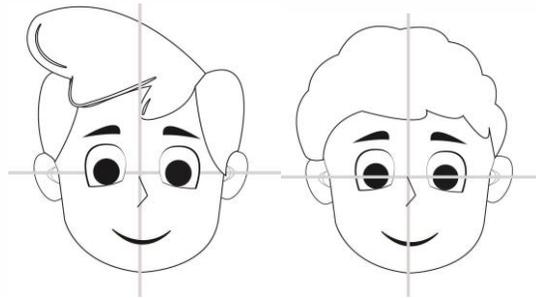
The ears are seen from the front view (because our character is facing the camera) so that the inner cavity is not visible. While using some basic perspective, the ears are designed with a simple shape and are eyesized (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: *Character with Face with Ears*



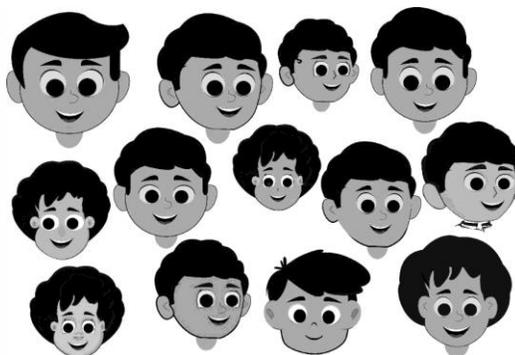
The shape of the skull has already been described by the circle, so just a very simple haircut is designed to give the boy life as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: *Character with Hairstyles*



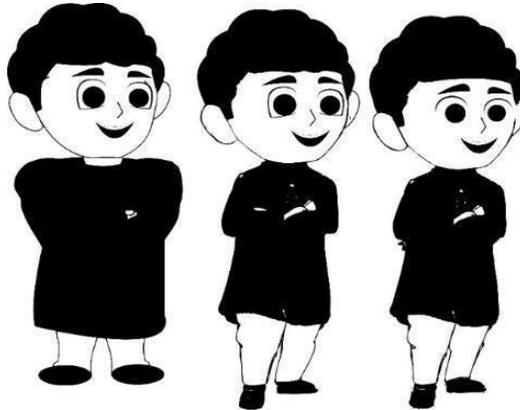
After designing the face according to the appropriate steps, the face was examined according to the parameters. As shown in Figure 17, the variations of facial features were explored; the mouth of the character is designed simple, and the nose and the ears are not designed to be large but flexible enough to express the child's emotions. Then the researcher decided to focus on the character's eyes and the region around him. The character was given the required ability to express emotions through large eyes, appropriate eye sockets, eyebrows, and forehead, and both eyeballs are directed to the center of the oval, as this is the very effective tactic used by the major cartoonists, whose main purpose is to make the character look cuter (see Figure 17). The decision was finalized based on the contradiction of ideas as to how often the eyes, ears, and nose are examined by each. The best correlation between these facial features was chosen.

Figure 17: *Facial Feature Exploration*



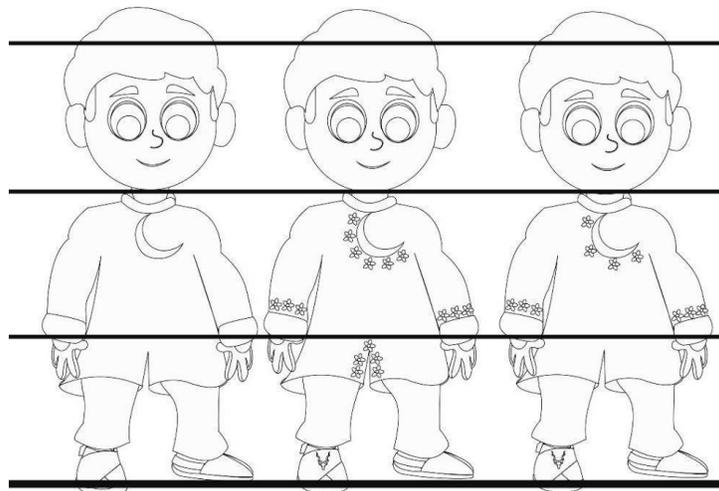
Additionally, during the evolution of the ideas that came after considering the above characteristics for the character, a new concept for the character's physical appearance emerged. Interestingly, the researcher started looking for very resonant arms just to show his power and strength and again designed a head larger than his body with small legs and feet to make him look elegant. However, the effect was different; character members of his body started to look like unnatural extensions, as shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18: *New Concept of Character's Physical Appearance*



In addition, as shown in Figure 19, the clothing was designed according to the parameter; he must have worn the national dress of Pakistan, which is the Shalwar-Kameez, and will show the national symbols of Pakistan in his appearance. However, the references were taken from the national dress, and the finalized proportions of the cartoon character Shalwar-Kameez were designed with variations of the jasmine flower, and the crescent was designed on the shirt as a design element; the Peshawari Chapel was also designed as the footwear of a character. The Markhor symbol was also applied. Again, some of the parameters were the same as those used for the previous design elements. The character needs an exaggerated head and eyes with a flexible nose and mango-shaped ears, which is why the rest of the body will need to look flexible to perform the tasks. He will need to jump, move his arms, climb, fall, and lie on the floor. In addition, the fingers and hands were designed to hold things.

Figure 19: *Physical Attributes and Details Exploration of Character*



Finally, once the researcher has figured out what the theme is going to be, they need to go into more detail. The way these concepts have been developed recommends a level of style while still maintaining a reasonable number of details. These factors influenced the use of flame-retardant materials for the dressing of a character, to add more detail to the eyes, and to design different hairstyles and national symbols. This will help to design the desired layout. So as seen in Figure 21, details are added to the crescent and molded into La-Ilaha-Ilallah-Muhammadur-Rasulullah, while highlights are added to the pupils of the eyes. Details are added in the hair and chin. The symbol of Markhor is also designed and will choose the most suitable variation. The reference was also taken from the black-winged stripes of the Chukar partridge and was added as a design element in the Shalwar of the cartoon character; variations of the character's hairstyle were also created (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: *Variations of Character's Hairstyle*

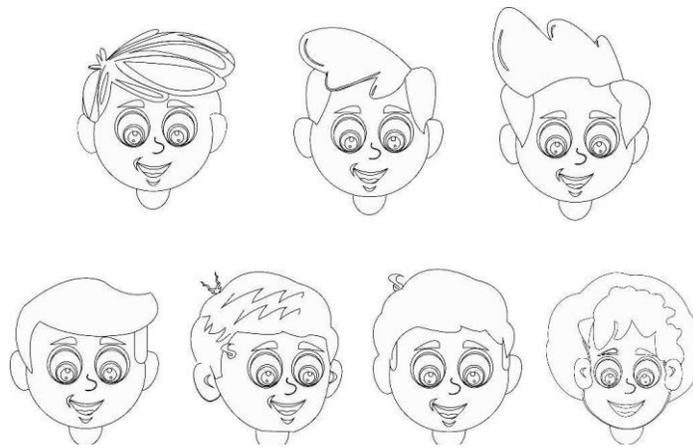
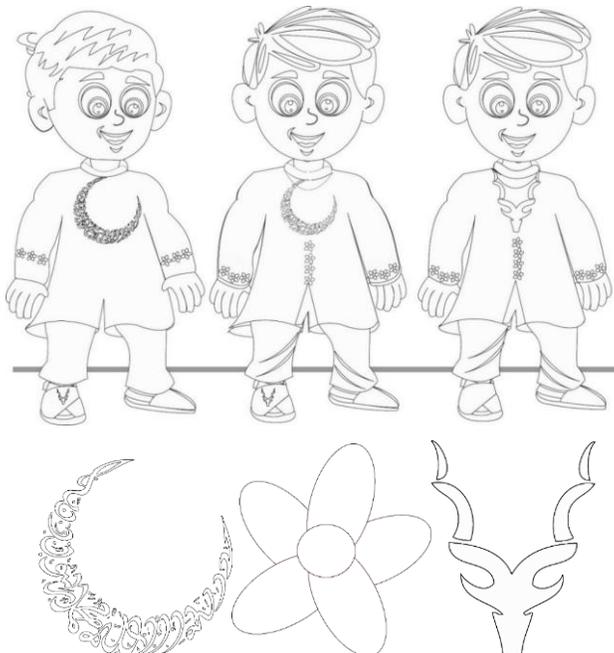


Figure 21: *Character with Details*



Later, additional design details are added to the costume of a cartoon character (see Figure 22). Furthermore (see Figure 23), all previously used design elements (crescent, symbol of Markhor, flower of Jasmine, black-winged stripes of the choker partridge) were designed in a variety of variations.

Figure 22: *Character with Design Variations*

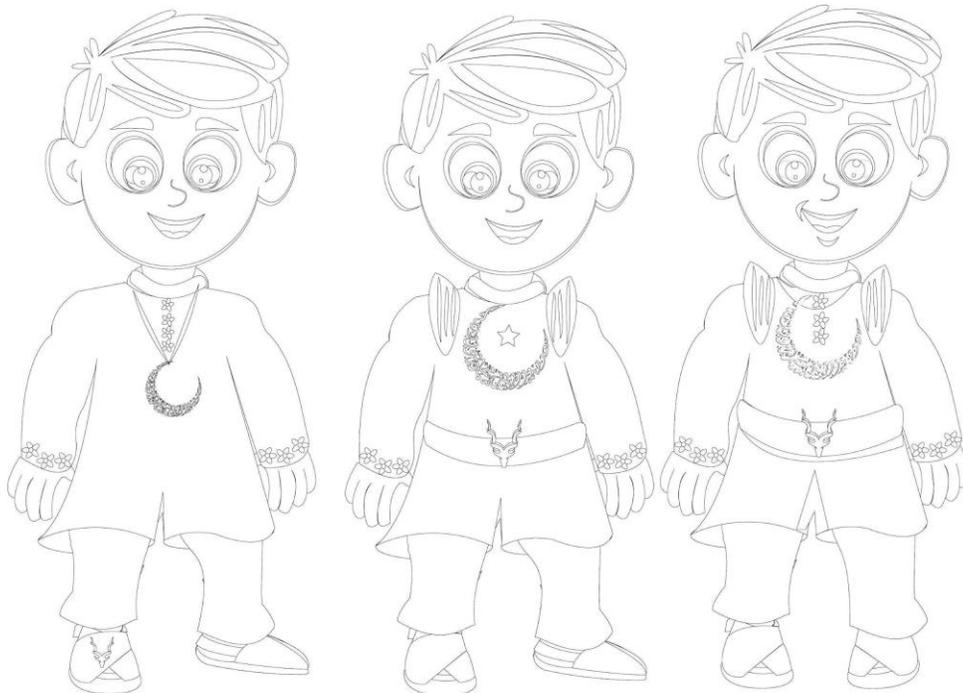
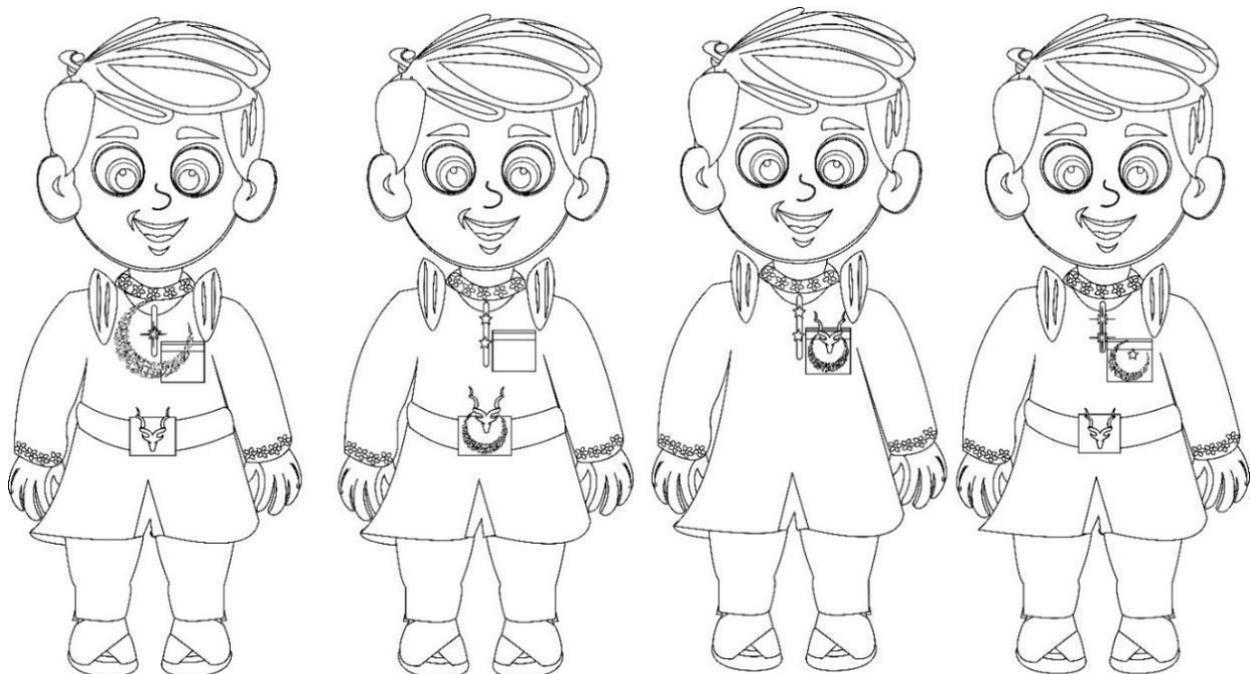


Figure 23: *Character with Further Design Variations*



3.3 Color

As shown in Figure 24, this is the initial process of color selection for clothing and national symbols; dark green, white, and golden colors were chosen.

Figure 24: *Initial Color Selection Process*



According to the parameter, he is a ten-year-old stylized Pakistani cartoon character, so his skin color should be similar to that of Pakistanis. As experts suggested, his skin color should be normal tan with dark brown hair, eyes, eyelashes, and eyebrows so that his look becomes Pakistani and attractive. Eye highlight tones are also added, and tan skin tone variations are displayed, as shown in Figure 25. A medium-tan tone with code #D38F60 and a brown color with code #231208 is selected for a character with an outline (see Figure 26).

According to the expert's suggestions, the color of the dress is used as per the national colors of Pakistan, which are green and white; then, by taking references from the jasmine flower, the true colors of jasmine are used in the national flowers on a shirt. The shoes are brown, and some are designed in black; to add more contrasting details, golden gradients are used in design elements (see Figure 27) and (see Figure 28).

Figure 25: Variations of Tan Skin Color Tone



Figure 26: Variations of Tan Skin Color Tone with Outline



Figure 27: Character with Color Variations



Figure 28: *Further Colors and Design Variations of Character*



After adding colors to the eyes, the sclera of the eyes seems a little bit big. So the sclera has been adjusted accordingly (see Figure 29).

Figure 29: *Selected Face with Adjusted Sclera*



According to the expert's suggestions, the color of the dress is used as per the national colors of Pakistan, which are green and white; the selected color scheme of green is #00401A, and white is #FFFFFF; then, by taking references from the jasmine flower, the true colors of jasmine are used in national flowers on a shirt. The footwear is designed in brown. To add more contrasting details, yellow gradients are used in design elements (see Figure 30).

Figure 30: *Costume and Design Variations of Character*



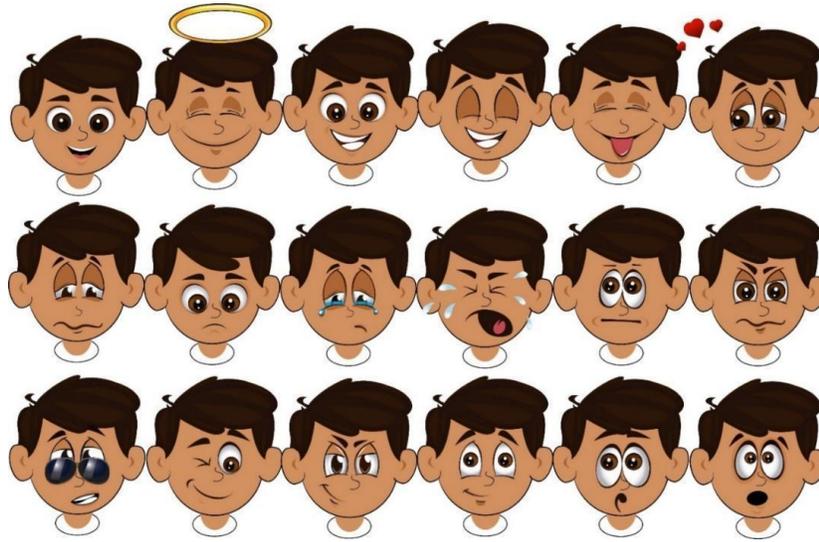
3.4 Refinement

In this step, the ideas generated in the Idea Phase are evaluated according to how they relate to the parameters, and then some of them will be refined together. The refinement phase involved the process of creating different poses and stances of character, as well as generating different facial expressions of character, and refining the character design by exploring different views.

3.4.1 Refined Facial Expressions

The facial expressions are intended to evaluate and integrate the facial components, ensuring that in all the appropriate and required circumstances, the elements propose work. However, facial expressions of character are designed. While for future purposes, the child would demonstrate a broad spectrum of emotions, the most popular feelings and emotions were designed, and to achieve a broad variety of feelings, the design was set more neutral (see Figure 31).

Figure 31: *Designed Facial Expressions of Character*



3.4.2 Refined Body Posture

The appearance of the cartoon character is used to enhance their personality and emotional state, and what they are feeling will reduce the need for extensive negotiations about it. However, the mood of the cartoon character is easily readable from the way the pose is presented, and providing a message or emotion depends heavily on the silhouette and posture.

According to the parameters, the cartoon character is a ten-year-old brave, confident, energetic boy, and he needs to look like a Pakistani child. So, one difference between humans and animals is the position of the pelvis concerning the spinal cord and legs. In humans, the angle between the spine and the alignment of the legs is about one hundred and eighty degrees; consequently, the back follows this alignment to provide natural and comfortable support in the standing position.

On the other hand, a drooping shoulder, limbs closer to the body, and head downward are some general characteristics of a sad or mellow posture. Using these kinds of characteristics and drooping downward forms and lines can make the character seem frail. However, this character is brave and confident, and the mood of the character should represent some kind of happiness, lightness, or self-confidence, so he is essentially designed contrary to the characteristics of sadness. Therefore, the researcher tried to reflect these characteristics while determining the posture of the cartoon character. Hence, he is designed with upward facing and pointing lines, limbs presented more spread, and head facing outward to its environment (see Figure 32). This will make him more confident and braver. The process also involved creating different poses and stances of character, as shown in Figures 33 and 34. The same goes for the colors; bright, vivid, and more stimulating colors are typically used.

Figure 32: *Refined Posture of Character by Using Various Views*

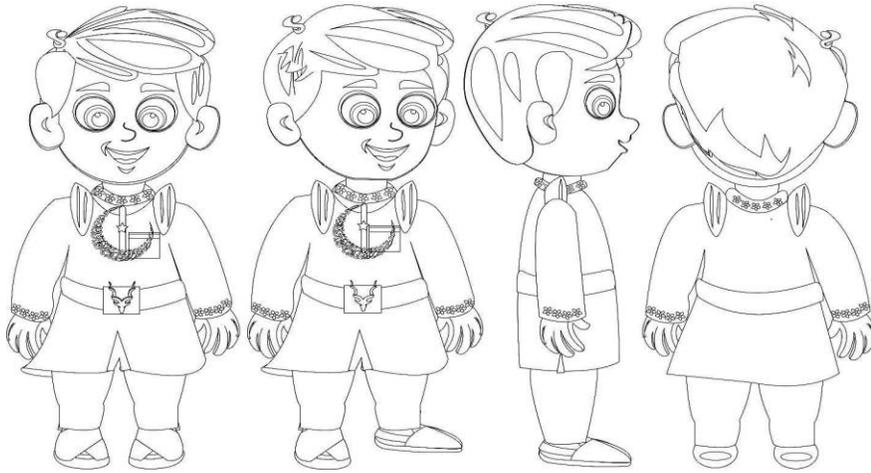


Figure 33: *Refined Hand Postures of Cartoon Character*

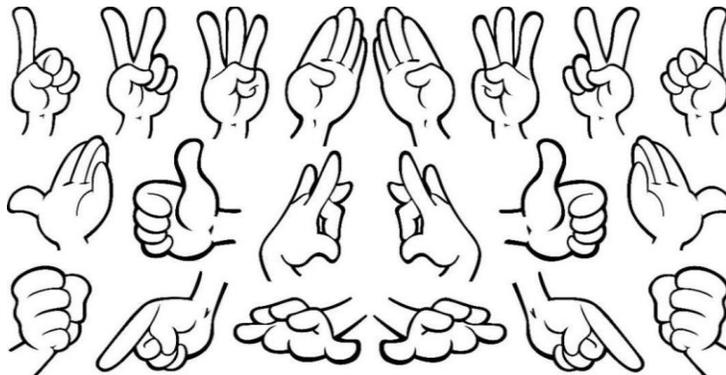


Figure 34: *Character in different Poses and Stances*



3.5 Final Design

The final design concept came from a combination of all the above observations (see Figure 35). The concept is presented in a character model sheet, which outlines key orthographic projections that will easily serve as the basis for creating 3D models.

The final phase of the refinement process is the implementation stage, where the finalized character design is transferred to the 3D world. However, since this study focuses on developing a 2D cartoon character, the researcher has limited the work to creating only the 2D version.

Figure 35: *Orthographic Projection of a New Cartoon Character*



Figure 36: *New Cartoon Character*



4. CONCLUSION

Foreign content for children, particularly Western cartoon characters, is widely popular among children in Pakistan and has a significant impact on their lives, influencing their behaviors and values. The prevalence of Western cartoons has led Pakistani children to increasingly adopt Western cultural norms and values. This shift is driven by the extensive distribution, mass production, and promotion of Western cartoons, which utilize distinct visual elements such as character designs, icons, colors, and symbols to convey socio-cultural themes.

Despite attempts by Pakistani designers to integrate national elements, many local cartoons, such as Teen Bahadur and Burkha-Avengers, still exhibit Western influences in their visual design, including the use of Western attire instead of traditional dress like Shalwar-Kameez. This prevalence of Western design may reflect underlying cultural divisions among different ethnic groups in Pakistan, which complicates the creation of a unified national style. However, cartoons like Jan Cartoon, which offers moral stories, and Harris and Friends, with their various social messages, also show Western influences in their design despite their local production.

In response to this cultural gap, this study has focused on developing a new 2D protagonist cartoon character that embodies Pakistani national identity. The character incorporates key national symbols, including the Shalwar-Kameez, Peshawari Chappal, national colors (white and green), the jasmine flower, and national symbols such as the Crescent and Star shaped into La-Ilaha-Ilallah-Muhammadur-Rasulullah, the Markhor and the Chukar partridge. This Character design aligns with Pakistan's national identity and aims to be featured in future Pakistani cartoons, animated films, games, comic books, and merchandising. Additionally, the character is designed with future adaptations in mind, including potential 3D transformations for use in 3D games and animated movies. The development process adhered to the Character Design Pipeline, ensuring a comprehensive and structured approach.

4.1 Limitations

For future research, it is recommended that the final concept of the cartoon character representing the identity of Pakistan is presented in a character model sheet, which outlines key orthographic projections. This will facilitate the development of 3D models and further adaptations of the character, solidifying its role in representing Pakistani identity in various media formats.

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Conflict of Interest

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ORCID iDs

Qurat Ul Ain Farooq ¹  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0592-0485>

Muhammad Riaz ²  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5303-0738>

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