

# Exploring Public Perception about Film Industry Downfall in Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** This study is intended to explore the perception of the general public relating to the decline of the Pakistani film industry. It aims to identify the various socio-cultural, economic, and technical factors contributing to the decline of the industry and study the contemporary audience preferences and attitudes toward local cinema against international productions.

**Methodology:** The study adopted mixed-method research design that combined a comprehensive literature review with quantitative data collection. Structured survey research was employed with 214 respondents. The survey gathered demographic data and film consumption behaviour along with critical opinions concerning various aspects around the Pakistani film industry such as production quality, story-telling, political influences and technological impact.

**Findings:** The results of the survey indicated that the audience blamed the decline of the industry on repetitive story-telling; no quality writers; poor infrastructure in terms of technology; and low-grade direction and acting. Other factors include socio-political instability, an Indian celluloid exhibition, and weak policies of government. Although the advancement in technology is recognized, many still prefer watching foreign movies for their quality and exciting storylines. Many were neutral or pessimistic about the future of Pakistani cinema.

**Conclusion:** Study concluded that, potential exists for upgrading multipronged challenges. Thus, the very revitalization of the industry should be about enhancing storytelling and the development of technical capabilities, bringing further diversity into content and promotion of cultural authenticity. Massive government support and synergy in industry practice would go a long way towards restoring public confidence and re-establishing the industry upon which it potentially could be developed into a significant cultural and economic engine for Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Film Industry, Downfall, Public Perception, Key Factors.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is believed that cinema is one of the most dominating art forms in modern society, having a deep and long-lasting effect on audiences around the world. The numerous multi-sensory elements—visuals, music, narrative, dialogue, and performance—in combination make film a very powerful means of luring a viewer's attention and engagement emotionally as well as intellectually (Klinger, 2022). The evolution of

## Article History

Received:  
July 27, 2024

Revised:  
November 27, 2024

Accepted:  
December 16, 2024

Published:  
December 30, 2024

cinema was very tremendous through the years, going side by side with rapid technological and structural transformations in the global entertainment industry. Like all the societal aspects, cinema is a product and a reflection of the society and it thus becomes a dynamic mirror for culture, politics, history, economics, and humanism in the social world (Safdar & Abbasi, 2023; Niazi et al., 2024; Turner, 2019).

Many societies see cinema moving from a controversial or marginal medium into the mainstream and a respected form of cultural expression. It directly reflects the social values of the day, the moral dilemmical confrontation, and the ideological strife. Usually, the story in cinema revolves around a protagonist in a struggle against some real or imagined societal evil, thus propagating notions of justice, morality, and human resilience (Mahmood 2013). So, cinema gives entertainment and good shape to the moral and ethical teaching of the audience.

In the past few decades, the landscape of Pakistan's media has gone through rapid expansion giving increased awareness to social issues, human rights, and civil duties. The media channels, including cinema, have started questioning the accepted norms and demanding that the public and government institutions alike address the more pressing issues of society (Ali & Shah, 2020). Therefore, with these issues, media has now raised public awareness and is acting as a catalyst for civics discourse, education, and social reformation (Iqbal, 2021).

It has been long recognized that cinema, like all other forms of mass communication, has educational value in it. It helps improve intercultural understanding by uniting people from a variety of backgrounds and exposing them to various social realities. Most often, films tell stories that match the norms of society regarding behavior in various social, professional, and academic contexts, thereby influencing public opinion and contributing to the building of social realities (Nascimento, 2019).

Film education in Pakistan, however, is still in an underdeveloped state. Although the discipline has a constellation of creative as well as technical fields-it ranges from history to scriptwriting, visual arts, and cinematography-it is often taught as an elective rather than a mainstream subject in academic institutions (Bilal 2015, Ansari 2015). Thus, it limits the country in training professionals who can actively participate in the growth of the film industry in a sustainable manner.

The cinema is nothing more than a myth and a culture in itself. It provides a very clear picture of the taboos that may affect a given society and can prove to be an instrument for progressive change in that society. There has been so much destruction to the field of cinema in countries like Pakistan. The factors leading to this destruction include the lack of institutional support, inadequate infrastructure, and threats from competitive international media. This study investigates the underlying causes of the deterioration of Pakistani cinema, while illuminating the pivotal role film can play in the cultural expression and national identity. The research, while shedding light on the challenges of the film industry, seeks to explore viable strategies for its revival and inclusion among its counterparts in global cinema.

### ***1.1 Problem Statement***

The film industry, if perceived in the Pakistani context, has seen a drastic devaluation over these years, leading to a decline in interest and involvement from the masses. The mass audience sentiment towards Pakistani cinema has started becoming negative, due to a variety of interrelated factors such as monotonous storytelling and narration, substandard production quality, as well as perceived lack of innovation, in thematic content as well as cinematic modes of presentation, for example camera angles, lighting, and sound effects. Therefore develops an opinion within audiences that domestic films are, in a sense, predominantly irrelevant compared to the international ones (Khan & Jamil, 2020).

Rapid growth in cinema across the world and the availability of content worldwide through digital streaming platforms has made the competition for local productions even more unfavorable (Ali, 2021). These platforms have been offering varied, quality content in tune with rapidly changing viewer preferences. As audience expectations rise, so increases the intolerance for anything mediocre in local

filmmaking. Thus, box office collections of Pakistani films are being reported as stagnating. This situation indicates the generalized apathy of the audience toward the national film narrative.

This decline in public perception not only strips Pakistani cinema of cultural significance, but threatens to render it economically unviable. The rehabilitation of public trust and the revival of the industry therefore demand a critical appraisal of the decline's causes, which, in turn, would suggest interdictions for corrective interventions targeting structural and creative shortcomings. To begin rebuilding the reputation of Pakistani cinema would call for synergies in new storytelling, technical support, institutional support, and simply getting audiences back on its side.

### ***1.2 Significance of the Study***

However, perhaps one of the most critical is the ability to determine and identify factors influencing negative public perception of the image of the industry, thus being able to point out the areas in need of reform and strategic intervention. Such an understanding is very important in drawing out an actionable solution that would restore such public trust and even revive possible interests in local cinema (Riaz & Farooq, 2020).

Having a consistent image in the public has actually proved that it was effective in the sustainable, long-term development of any national film industry. A positive publicity image could be used as bait for investment and development in the industry while giving diverse narratives and encouraging budding filmmakers to pursue careers in filmmaking. This can later upgrade production quality while diversifying narratives and innovation among different aspects of the cinematic process (Ahmed, 2019).

The other significant benefit of studying public perception is that it yields important knowledge regarding audience preferences, expectations, and cultural sensibilities. With deeper understanding, filmmakers are able to produce works that are aesthetically commendable and resonate with what their intended local audience lived through and aspired for (Nawaz & Aslam, 2021). Catering to the audience in movie output will greatly enhance viewer engagement and consolidate the relationship between filmmakers and the general public.

In fact, this study has the potential to shape the future of the film industry in Pakistan. Identifying the prevailing attitudes and major challenges will benefit the policy-making, artistic direction, and institutions to a great extent. Ultimately, it seeks to revive the film sector through closer alignment of practices and public expectations.

### ***1.3 Research Objectives***

- 1) To explore respondents' preferences and periods of viewing across multiple genres and platforms should be studied.
- 2) To investigate the public perception of the dwindling state of the Pakistani film industry with special reference to socio-political dimensions and pre-production or production-related issues.
- 3) Understand respondent perspectives on economic constraints and technological advancement in relation to the development of the Pakistani film industry.
- 4) To analyze the location selection, thematic coherence, and cast diversity are analyzed: Perceptions and preferences of the audience concerning quality of films.
- 5) To study public opinions towards censorship, government support, and the future of the Pakistani cinema in relation to global standards in cinema.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The quantitative research paper conducted by Tariq et al., (2021), grounded on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, extracted the most pertinent factors leading to the decline of the film industry in Pakistan, as well as the efforts that can be made to revive this industry. The study revealed various

systemic problems-including a lack of government aid-as one of the main reasons behind stagnation in the industry. This, along with the fact that in the study it was found weaknesses in the pre-, during, and post-production processes, poor storytelling, substandard music, and inferior technical infrastructure, severely affect the quality of the film. The lack of good writers and researchers makes the situation worse. It points out that, hence-and-the-nation-quality film-making is not made in Pakistan by the Indian culture dominating local markets; that is why audiences in the countries just aren't visible. This comes under Uses and Gratifications Theory, wherein audiences seek emotional satisfaction out of media, and if it does not come from local films, they turn to their alternatives.

Adnan, Hussain, and Tariq (2019) did a quantitative study to find out what caused the deterioration of the Pakistani film industry and how to suggest strategies towards its revival. Data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire from respondents living in four major cities of Pakistan, namely: Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, and Peshawar. The study revealed several concomitant factors, including lack of skilled writers, poor technical infrastructure, poor direction and production quality, below-standard acting, and weak lyrics in music. Moreover, external factors such as Indian films' influence, political instability, and inept governmental policies were said to be the major problems. The study argues that, according to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, audiences expect to have cultural and emotional needs satisfied through media content, which the Pakistani film industry has failed to do. For the authors, removing such barriers is vital if the industry is to be revived.

Historical development of Pakistani cinema from the perspective of Lahore's Lollywood has been divided into three eras by Rizvi (2010): silent films (1924-1934), black-and-white talkies (1932-1970), and color films (post-1961). By the 1970s, the industry had well taken root and began to decline due to political, technological, and market disruptions. Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation during the 1970s inhibited the public from attending cinemas, while policies, such as banning Indian films and instituting a barter system, restricted market growth. The development of VCRs and pirated material coupled with satellite television in the 1980s and 1990s further diverted audiences. Qualitative analysis of 122 sources produced findings, such as that poor quality films, censorship, piracy, obsolete technology, and a lack of support from the government were major causes of the decline in the industry. The migration from Urdu to the regional languages like Punjabi and Pashto also signified an alteration in audience orientation. Rizvi concludes that successive regimes devalued cinema as a cultural industry and economic asset, particularly during Zia and Musharraf.

In their work, Haqqi and Rajani (2023) explore the major challenges that the film industry in Pakistan is facing, with a special focus on how it is affecting local production houses and studios. Using a qualitative approach, they have conducted in-depth interviews with 30 professionals from the industry since applying thematic analysis to derive informed insights. Their major findings included several serious obstacles, among which include lack of governmental support, disputes on-item songs, financial instability, and poor mismanagement of talent. The study also observed high entry barriers for nascent filmmakers, while giving practical guidance on planning, casting, and procedures involved in production. Such studies, viewed from the insiders' lens, typically highlight issues often ignored within the industry and generate actionable recommendations for revitalizing it.

Butt (2020) pursues the investigation of audience perceptions regarding Pakistani cinema from the 1960s to the 1980s with regard to issues of gender and class of film consumption. In particular, the thesis examines changing ideas of "obscenity" and "family films" in relation to the socio-cultural context of Pakistan. Drawing from existing literature on film economics, media reception, and South Asia morals, the study thereby establishes that financial instability, changing moral standards, and political regimes influenced film consumption. The study is qualitative, utilizing Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model, and discovers that cinema became a form of escapism-especially for the lower middle holding class such as laborers and drivers who would see it as post-work entertainment. On the other hand, cinema engaged the middle class's fantasies and emotions. In the Bhutto and Zia eras, hostility toward Punjabi films was born, as they were said to symbolize vulgarity, thus placing the vulgarity label on what was expected of

cinema and on Urdu films in particular, which resulted in a loss of audience interest. The paper rounds off by stating that the socio-cultural definitions of vulgarity, together with changing political and economic contexts, had a significant role to play in shaping cinema audiences over generations.

Hafeez (2015) presented the historical panorama of the development of Pakistani cinema and angles that led it to flourish and wither in different phases. The study deployed a two-pronged conceptual mechanism for the research study with qualitative content analysis and literature study. The films analyzed were the top five Pakistani films with the highest box office returns over six decades, with identification of trends and themes. An online database along with literature from reviews, books, and articles pertaining to the films were consulted to complement the film analysis. The research finds that creative stagnation, repeated themes, the absence of present-day facilities, bickering within the industry, and piracy of Indian films screened on cable and satellite led significantly to the demise of the Pakistani film industry. The review therefore proposes that the revival of Lollywood would require the industry to seek out niche markets and profit from its cultural strengths.

Ali and Zulfiqar (2020) consider cinema's role in global economic development as an opportunity for value addition and business diversification. The internationalization of film content and launch of OTT (Over-the-top) platforms have made cinema truly an important market for the world economy. However, in the context of Pakistan, the concept of film as an economic and social opportunity is still somewhat underdeveloped. The study traces the history of cinema in Pakistan and evolution of the cinema's economic model, especially for films made after 2000. It talks about the dynamics of both operable and non-operable institutions in the industry. The authors put forth some policy recommendations for revitalizing the Pakistani film industry to harness its economic and social potential.

Rasheed (2022) has studied Pakistani cinema's historic shift from the time it was generally seen as "dark" to the "golden" period it is said to have experienced between 2013 and 2019. New observable cultural patterns are studied; in particular, costume trends and violence in films are investigated. Content analysis of the movies of this period revealed much difference in style of filmmaking and choice of themes. Although the Pakistani filmmaker has gone a long way in progressing the industry, yet, the perpetuation of Pakistani culture through films is still a concern. The new changes made transformations in the industry, yet they also brought challenges in the enjoyment of cultural values in reality; however, the study concludes that there exist signs of a promising future for Pakistani cinema, as filmmakers are continuing to remove all boundaries and limits from their art.

Parveen et al., (2019) sift through the historical development of the Pakistan film industry, which now stands as a struggling industry in contrast to its neighboring countries. The industry is quite over 70 years old, and in this span, the industry has suffered several setbacks-the partition of India being one of them, due to which a large number of artists got settled across the border in India and then the subsequent separation of East Pakistan, which is presently Bangladesh that further drained the talent pool. The authors stress that though the industry is gifted with available talent, many factors have acted upon its ability to sustain itself. The research work is qualitative, with an attempt to break the history of the Pakistan film industry into segments of seven decades, and the data for the study has been collected using a random sampling technique. This study identifies a plethora of factors leading to the miserable downfall of the film industry, including lack of innovations, outdated storylines and subject engaging bans on Indian films, political instability, rise of the home theatre culture, as well as piracy regarding foreign films. The recommendation is that for the industry to flourish in local markets, it will have to look at niche markets along with being driven by international standards, thereby illuminating the significance of an overall policy regarding quality and profit generation in the Pakistani cinema industry.

## ***2.1 Theoretical Framework***

With the decline of the film industry in Pakistan being much debated with a great number of opinions expressed by the masses, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) was another scholarly work that could lend credibility in the audience's perception of media and audience enlightenment concerning cinema.

UGT, as defined by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1973, emphasizes the active role that individuals play in selecting media content-based upon their arbitrary needs for entertainment, information, social interaction, and cultural representation. In so doing, this theory is also important in understanding the motivations that lead the people of Pakistan to seek local films when such foreign influences threaten to outweigh them, alongside the presence of digital platforms.

UGT posits that the individual is not a passive recipient of media, but rather an active seeker of content in the context of personal needs and wants (McQuail, 2010). Applying this perspective to the local film industry, one can delve into a larger perspective on the reasons why audiences might still be drawn toward local films when compared to newer foreign films or other forms of entertainment. For instance, an audience may watch Pakistani films for cultural representation, an escape from daily life, or even the universal aspect of social bonding and shared experiences among people. Thus, this theory emphasizes that an understanding of these motivations is vital to determining how the film industry can better position itself to the audiences' expectations.

After conducting a UGT analysis, academics may determine how the Pakistani film industry may satisfy these very needs and change public perception. If the film industry is able to provide content that resonates with these core desires—whether it is through engaging narrative, cultural authenticity, or addressing social ills—public interest and engagement may be rekindled, enhancing its stature in the eyes of the public. Further, the above allows for consideration of how changing technologies and the emergence of new media platforms may intervene in these motives and audience behavior, in turn affecting ratings of the relevance and quality of the industry (Ruggiero, 2000).

Consequently, UGT informs an understanding of why audiences are interested in cinema as a way for identifying how the Pakistani film industry can help itself confront present predicaments by individualizing its content to meet the public's ever-changing needs and taste.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### ***3.1 Research Design***

A quantitative research design was adopted in this study to assess public perception concerning the downfall of the film industry in Pakistan. The survey was the principal data collection technique and is widely regarded as a fit means to obtain standardized data from a vast population (Creswell, 2014). The research was, therefore, conducted in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the two major urban centers of Pakistan that enjoy immense socio-cultural diversity and accessibility, thereby offering good opportunities to elicit varied public opinions.

#### ***3.2 Population***

The target population included the general public, including university students, residing in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The choice of these cities was strategic because of their demographic diversity and the relatively high literacy levels of the resided people that lead to more informed opinions towards media and entertainment trends (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

#### ***3.3 Sampling Frame***

The population in the sampling frame was made up of the general population that shared the geographical boundaries of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Nowadays, the absence of a formal registry or sampling list even warrants the use of non-probability sampling methods, which are common to social research where probabilistic sampling is not feasibility (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

#### ***3.4 Sampling Technique***

The study employed a convenience sampling technique to recruit a sample of 215 participants. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probabilistic sampling, which is often used for exploratory research because of low cost and ready availability of participants from convenient locations (Taherdoost,

2016). Participants were approached at different public places like educational institutions, markets, and community areas in both cities.

### 3.5 Data Collection Instrument

An original researcher's instrument, it included a self-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire has 30 items that would touch on demographics, general knowledge about, and attitudes toward the perceived decline of the film industry. Most items were in a five-point Likert scale, a widely known measurement tool for attitudes and opinions in social sciences (Joshi et al., 2015).

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The SPSS was used for the data analysis of the collected data, namely, version 26. The data were discussed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The presentation of findings was such that tables were used for clarity and better understanding. Such analytic procedures are consistent with the acceptable norms in quantitative research for meaningful insight from survey data (Field, 2018).

### 3.7 Study Variables

#### 3.7.1 Independent Variable

The independent variables include factors such as the quality of films, innovative storytelling, marketing strategies, competition from international films, and the availability of digital platforms.

#### 3.7.2 Dependent Variable

In the context of studying the public perception of the film industry downfall in Pakistan, the dependent variable would be the public perception itself. This refers to how the general public views and perceives the Pakistani film industry.

## 4. RESULTS

**Table 1:** *Respondents' Demographics*

Demographics	Responses	<i>f</i>	%
Age	16-20	76	35.5
	21-25	128	59.8
	26-30	6	2.8
	31 or older	4	1.9
	Total	214	100.0
Marital Status	Single	204	95.3
	Married	10	4.7
	Total	214	100.0
Education Level	Matric	6	2.8
	Inter	14	6.5
	BS	182	85.0
	MPHIL	12	5.6
	Total	214	100.0

The demographic information of the respondents in the study showed the age, marital status, and education level of respondents. The majority of respondents fall within the age range of 21 to 25 that covers 59.8%, while those aged 16 to 20 cover 35.5%. There exist small proportions of respondents in the 26 to 30 (2.8%) and 31 and older (1.9%) categories. Most of the respondents are single-married (95.3%) while only a few are married (4.7%). Most of the respondents are majors in bachelors of science (BS), at 85.0%, while there are also 5.6% who are M.Phil. graduates. Secondary (Matric) education completion is shown by only a few respondents, at 2.8%, or intermediate (Inter) education completion by 6.5%. The

demographic breakdown thus gives evidence that most of the sample comprises younger single individuals with higher education backgrounds.

**Table 2:** Responses about Film viewership, types, story, place and Pakistani Films image

Questions	Responses	<i>f</i>	%
Film Viewership	Daily	34	15.9
	Weekly	58	27.1
	Monthly	26	12.1
	Occasionally	96	44.9
	Total	214	100.0
Film Types (Country point of view)	Pakistani	62	29.0
	Indian	64	29.9
	English	68	31.8
	Other	20	9.3
	Total	214	100.0
Film Types (Story point of view)	Love Story	56	26.2
	Comedy	68	31.8
	Action	50	23.4
	Horror	24	11.2
	Other	16	7.5
	Total	214	100.0
Film Viewership Place	Cinema	34	15.9
	At Home	58	27.1
	At Hotel	26	12.1
	Others	96	44.9
	Total	214	100.0
	Very Good	30	14.0
View point towards Pakistani Films	Good	108	50.5
	Neutral	50	23.4
	Bad	20	9.3
	Very Bad	6	2.8
	Total	214	100.0

The questionnaire mentions a number of questions covering film viewership, types of films, and attitudes toward Pakistani films. Concerning the respondents' frequency of viewing films, the majority of the respondents (44.9%) stated that they watch films sometimes, while 27.1% watch them weekly and 15.9% on a daily basis. The least number of respondents watch films monthly (12.1%). When it comes to seeing types of films, most of the respondents rated English films highly (31.8%), followed closely by Indian films (29.9%) and Pakistani films (29.0%). Very few (9.3%) indicated that they watch any other type of films. In terms of genre preferences, comedy films were the most favored (31.8%) followed by love stories (26.2%) and action films (23.4%). Horror movies (11.2%) and others (7.5%) were least favored. Respondents preferred to watch most films at home (27.1%), but a large number also watch in other locations (44.9%). Fewer respondents watch in cinemas (15.9%) or hotels (12.1%). Respondents rated Pakistani films, whereby 50.5% rated them good, 23.4% remained neutral, and 12.1% gave poor or very poor ratings.

**Table 3:** Respondents' opinion about downfall of Pakistan Film Industry.

Questions	Responses	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Respondents' opinions on the pre-production process about	Lack of the Good Story writers	64	29.9	2.13	.846
	Lack of technical	58	27.1		



the “decline of the Pakistani film industry”	facilities				
	Trend of same theme	92	43.0		
	Total	214	100.0		
Respondents’ opinions on the production process about the “decline of the Pakistani film industry”	Sub-Standard Production	70	32.7	2.15	1.069
	Sub-Standard Direction	80	37.4		
	Sub-Standard location	26	12.1		
	Sub-Standard Set	38	17.8		
	Total	214	100.0		
Respondent’s judgement on the production process about the “decline of the Pakistani film industry”	Sub-Standard Music	60	28.0	2.13	.823
	Sub-Standard Acting	66	30.8		
	Exhibition of Indian Films	88	41.1		
	Total	214	100.0		
Respondents’ judgments for socio-political reasons regarding the “decline of the film industry in Pakistan”	Political Instability	68	31.8	1.88	.708
	Lac of Public interest	104	48.6		
	Representation of Sub-Standard Culture	42	19.6		
	Total	214	100.0		
Division of the Respondents’ Opinion about Major Reasons of “Film Declination in Pakistan”	Substandard	62	29.0	2.44	1.140
	Govt-Policy	42	19.6		
	Film Producer	68	31.8		
	Indian films	38	17.8		
	English Films	4	1.9		
	Total	214	100.0		
Do you think advancements in technology have positively or negatively affected the Pakistani film industry?	Positive	98	45.8	1.77	.794
	Negative	68	31.8		
	No impact	48	22.4		
	Total	214	100.0		
To what extent do you believe economic challenges contribute to the financial struggles of the Pakistani film industry?	Major contributor	66	30.8	2.18	1.005
	Moderate contributor	70	32.7		
	Minor contributor	52	24.3		
	Not a contributor at all	26	12.1		
	Total	214	100.0		
How important is the cast of a film in influencing your decision to watch it?	Very important	96	44.9	1.96	.987
	Somewhat important	40	18.7		
	Neutral	70	32.7		
	Not very important	6	2.8		
	Not important at all	2	.9		
	Total	214	100.0		
How important is diversity in the cast when addressing issues related to the film industry’s downfall?	Very important	60	28.0	2.22	.972
	Important	64	29.9		
	Neutral	76	35.5		
	Not very important	10	4.7		
	Not important at all	4	1.9		
	Total	214	100.0		
Does the choice of location impact on movie?	Strongly agree	60	28.0	2.07	.874
	Agree	90	42.1		
	Neutral	54	25.2		
	Disagree	8	3.7		
	Strongly disagree	2	.9		
	Total	214	100.0		

How important is it for movie dialogues to align with the overall theme or message of the film?	Very important	94	43.9	1.93	1.046
	Important	64	29.9		
	Neutral	38	17.8		
	Not very important	12	5.6		
	Not important at all	6	2.8		
	Total	214	100.0		
How important do you think it is for films to represent diverse sexual orientations and identities?	Extremely important	58	27.1	2.95	1.497
	Very important	24	11.2		
	Moderately important	48	22.4		
	Slightly important	38	17.8		
	Not important at all	46	21.5		
	Total	214	100.0		
In your opinion, how well do movies handle the cultural sensitivity of sexual representation?	Very well	46	21.5	2.31	.934
	Moderately well	80	37.4		
	Poorly	64	29.9		
	Not applicable	24	11.2		
	Total	214	100.0		
How important is the film score (background music) in influencing your emotional connection to a movie?	Extremely important	78	36.4	2.27	1.215
	Very important	48	22.4		
	Moderately important	50	23.4		
	Slightly important	28	13.1		
	Not important at all	10	4.7		
	Total	214	100.0		
Do you believe that censorship has a significant impact on the content of Pakistani films?	Yes	110	51.4	1.82	.907
	No	32	15.0		
	Not sure	72	33.6		
	Total	214	100.0		
How important do you think audience engagement is for the success of Pakistani films?	Extremely important	62	29.0	2.23	1.110
	Somewhat important	80	37.4		
	Not very important	42	19.6		
	Not at all important	20	9.3		
	Undecided	10	4.7		
	Total	214	100.0		
How well do you think Pakistani films represent the cultural diversity of the country?	Very well	28	13.1	2.50	.881
	Somewhat well	80	37.4		
	Not very well	78	36.4		
	Not at all well	28	13.1		
	Total	214	100.0		
Are you optimistic about the future of the Pakistani film industry?	Very optimistic	34	15.9	2.68	1.031
	Somewhat optimistic	42	19.6		
	Neutral	110	51.4		
	Somewhat pessimistic	14	6.5		
	Very pessimistic	14	6.5		
	Total	214	100.0		
Do you believe the government should play a role in supporting the Pakistani film industry?	Yes	120	56.1	1.67	.831
	No	44	20.6		
	Not sure	50	23.4		
	Total	214	100.0		
How do you perceive the quality of Pakistani films compared to international	Better than international films	30	14.0	2.99	1.057
	Similar to international	30	14.0		

films?	films				
	Worse than international films	66	30.8		
	No opinion	88	41.1		
	Total	214	100.0		
In your opinion, how would you rate the overall quality of recent Pakistani films?	Excellent	30	14.0	2.50	.849
	Good	68	31.8		
	Average	96	44.9		
	Poor	20	9.3		
	Total	214	100.0		

This table presents the opinions of the respondents regarding the different factors involved in the decline and current state of the Pakistani film industry. With regard to pre-production issues, the two major contributing factors stressed by the respondents were monotony of themes (43%) and poor availability of good story writers (29.9%)--reflecting lack of variety in narratives. The production aspect, according to the respondents, was considered bad direction (37.4%) and production quality (32.7%), whereas post-production critiques said the Indian films were of problematic distribution (41.1%) and poor acting (30.8%). Among socio-political factors were lack of public interest (48.6%) and political instability (31.8%).

With regard to general causes, producers were mainly blamed (31.8%) along with bad quality (29.0%). Technological advancement is mostly seen as contributing to the industry (45.8%), whereas currency issues are treated as either moderate or major. How much cast matters (44.9% said "very important"), and how much a film needs dialogue alignment (43.9% "very important"). About sexual diversity, opinions clash, with 27.1% declaring it to be of extreme importance and 21.5% to be of no importance.

Consider also that background music is regarded as extremely important (36.4%), enhancing emotional connection. Censorship is mentioned by 51.4% as influential, and 29% consider audience engagement extremely important. However, the representation of culture in films remains debatable, with only 13.1% believing it to be very well done.

Most respondents (56.1%) support government intervention in the industry; however, only 15.9% claim to be "very optimistic" about the future of the industry. While 41.1% give no opinion on how Pakistani films compare on the world stage, a sizeable block rate the overall film quality as average (44.9%). These findings paint a picture that is both critical of the pressing issues and cautiously hopeful for reform and growth.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Film Viewership Patterns and Preferences

The survey data indicated that quite a large number, that is 44.9% of respondents, were occasional movie viewers and there were only 15.9% respondents watching movies daily. This irregular viewing behavior may signify the absence of attractive local content or accessibility problems. Film source preferences indicate that English films somewhat lead by 31.8%, followed by Indian by 29.9%, and Pakistani films by 29.0%. This similar distribution is in line with Butt (2020), who pointed toward the fact that even though divorced from the previous popularity eras, Pakistani cinema could not sustain that clout mainly due to cultural, technical, and political constraints. The audience preferences are skewed toward comedy (31.8%), love stories (26.2%), and action (23.4%). It is relatively lower responses for horror and other genres. That indicates fondness in the form of lighthearted or escapist content, as discussed previously by Butt (2020) and Rasheed (2022) famous that cinema has traditionally served as an escape during periods of political or social upheaval.

## ***5.2 Viewership Platforms and Perceptions***

In particular, one of the important findings in the study was that only 15.9% of the respondents prefer seeing films within cinema halls; leaving most of them either viewing movies at home (27.1%) or 'others' (44.9%). It is indeed an indication of dying culture with regard to going to the cinema, possibly due to technological convenience, security issues, or lack of interesting content in the theatres. Such trends also have been identified by Haqqi and Rajani (2023), who highlighted the absence of proper infrastructures and investments within local production houses. When subjected to assessing the Pakistani movies, exactly half of the respondents' classified it as "Good"(50.5%). However, a major part kept neutral (23.4%) or had a view of negative value (combining "Bad" and "Very Bad" gave a total of 12.1%). This connotation with mixed perceptions corresponds to Parveen et al. (2019), who stated that despite having a potential talent, quality in the industry fails to exist within time due to a lot of connotes structural problems.

## ***5.3 Contributors to Industry Decline***

Starting with pre-production, participants identified repetition of themes (43.0%) as one significant part of the problem, along with the absence of good storywriters (29.9%). Findings correlate with Hafeez (2015) that the industry is stagnant even though some course of action should be taken against it by omitting repeated content and mundane plays without any sort of innovation. In production (Pre-production), it was observed that there was bad direction (37.4%), poor production quality (32.7%), and substandard quality in sound regarding post-production (substandard music, 28%, and substandard acting,30.8%). Moreover, 41.1% castigated the showing of Indian movies as a detrimental factor. This supports the argument by Hafeez (2015) and Parveen and colleagues (2019) stating that foreign content, piracy, and poor local alternatives have been the death knell for the local cinema. Socio-political factors also need to play as an extreme variable. A lack of interest from the audience is the main reason for OVER 50% (48.6%). 30% viewed political instability like the main reason as two most prominent barriers for the industry. In congruence with Ali & Zulfiqar (2020), ineptitude in addressing films as a socioeconomic onus has trampled any development of the industry in Pakistan.

## ***5.4 Structural and Technological Issues***

The respondents indicated poor production quality as the leading cause of declining industry status (29.0%), followed by poor producer quality (31.8%) and government policy (19.6%). These results are consistent as evidenced by Haqqi and Rajani (2023), which established that there is public sector support along with incompetent stakeholders, which is ultimately resultant to stagnation. Curiously enough, 45.8 percent said that the impact of technological advances on the industry is positive while 31.8 percent said otherwise. Such optimism is indicative of the increasing acceptance of the advantages that the tools and platforms of modern times (e.g. OTT) open to content creation and dissemination, as supported by the observations of Ali and Zulfiqar (2020) on the changing cinematic landscape.

## ***5.5 Economic, Cultural, and Representational Challenges***

They also mentioned economic factors, with 30.8% declaring it a huge reason for the industry's plight; thereby bolstering the argument by Parveen et al. (2019) that economic instability and lack of investment are deterrents to steady growth. Also, casting was perceived as significant, with 44.9% calling it very important. This presents an additional argument to support the notion that recognizability or competence of actors majorly influences viewers, an idea underlined by Rasheed (2022), emphasizing performance in audience engagement.

Diversity in casting and representation of gender and sexual orientation were further investigated. While 28.0% found diversity very important, a substantial 35.5% remained neutral. In the same way, opinions on representation of sexual orientation were mixed: only 27.1% thought it was extremely important, while 21.5% deemed it unimportant. This ambivalence signals a culturally contentious issue within Pakistani society, mirroring Butt's (2020) analysis of how competing ideas of obscenity and decency ebb and flow,

shaping audience reception. On this theme, while 21.5% of respondents appreciated the sexual representation in cinema, 29.9% commented otherwise. This split opinion might indicate the persistent discomfort or incongruence regarding the portrayal of such themes, akin to what Butt (2020) noted in the allegations of social taboos and censorship.

### ***5.6 Cinematic Elements and National Identity***

Among these artistic elements, 'thirty-six point four percent of the respondents rated background scores as very highly vital in forging emotional bonds', while twenty-two point four percent rated it as really important. Findings of these findings are very good in identifying areas where filmmakers could improve the experience of viewing cinema. However, the question is about the cultural relevancy of the content: very few i.e. thirteen point one percent agreed that Pakistani movies are successfully presenting the country's culture diversity. This fact further aggravates the issues raised by Rasheed (2022) and Hafeez (2015), who said that the industry neglects diverse or authentic cultural narratives in favor of repetitive urban-centric plots.

### ***5.7 Policy, Governance, and Optimism***

Of the respondents, the majority, 56.1% think that there should be more of active role of government in the film industry, similar to the recommendations of policy by Ali and Zulfiqar (2020), where they advocated for more vigorous institutional support with strategic planning. Optimism for the future is lukewarm; this is found by only 15.9% being "very optimistic"; and the remaining 51.4% being neutral. It is clearly indicative of the present liminal stage of Pakistani cinema, between attempts for reform and the still-present systemic problems.

The comparisons of Pakistan movies to international films result in 41.1% expressing no opinion while 30.8% think that Pakistan films are worse, signaling interpretation of a production value, narrative quality, and technical proficiency gap. This would put a hefty 44.9% of viewers within the recent average rating range of local films, signifying that the disillusion is not complete.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Study found that the downfall of the industry is a complicated melange of factors, such as weak storyline and script, bad quality productions, no governmental support and inadequate cultural representation. However, the data shows that people still watch cinema and are known to those audiences since they drew their majority preference by about 2:1 over international content, largely due to what they see as the shortcomings of local productions.

Repetitive patterns in the anticipated levels coupled with several defining and definitive technical limitations brought to the fore and, in the case of forming the production phase, also by direction failures. Socio-political constraints such as political instability, economic constraints, and a lack of public interest further seem to erode the foundation of the industry. Most depressingly, foreign films of which the Indian and English films prominently feature have inundated local attention making it hard to compete with them and hence causing a reduction in the market share of Pakistani productions.

Despite being thrown challenges in the recent past, some signs of tepid optimism can still be discerned. Most respondents acknowledge the scales of influence that have moved in favor of many aspects of technology. They stress further improvement in casting, music, and storytelling to reconnect with diversified audiences. On top of all this, they blatantly call for intervention from the government, making strategic policy to revive the industry.

In the end, the Pakistani film industry stands at a crossroads. Age-old problems that are very entrenched have been thwarting the progress of this industry. Yet, innovation, inclusiveness in narratives, and development of infrastructure do leave little hope for revival. This study establishes collaboration among filmmakers, policymakers, and audiences as the stride towards reclaiming cinema as a vital cultural and economic pillar in the country.

## Acknowledgments

None.

## Conflict of Interest

Author declared NO conflict of interest.

## Funding Source

The author received NO funding to conduct this study.

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