

## Impact of Cultural Globalization on the Upper Class Youth in Dhaka City: A Sample Study

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### Abstract:

*The most important effect of cultural globalization is the commercialization of culture. Production and consumption of cultural goods and services have become commodities, along with the essentials of social life (marriage and family life, religion work and leisure). What once was an element of the way of life becomes a product, rather than something unique men had made to suit their own needs and circumstances. In urban Bangladesh, technology of multi- channels TV began in 1991 and hence satellite broadcasting has been delivering 'lots of channels to viewers'. Cultural domination by electronic media within the society thus has eventually become a major concern of sociological inquiry. The present study is one of such effort to look at how the urban youth has accepted and responded to their access to global culture*

### Introduction

"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the million whom we govern –a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect" (Macaulay, cited in, Ramgopal, 1963)

The process of globalization today is nothing but a new version of the speech of Macaulay in the nineteenth century. Starting in the sixteenth century, Western adventures made a conscious effort to undermine the cultural heritage of various people around the world. This was accomplished by imposing Western religion and cultural practices on those with a different way of life. While today the same is true of the march of globalization. According to Martin Albrow (1992), globalization is a process to bring all the human beings of the world in a comprehensive community. The process involves various types of efforts. There are, thus, various types of globalization, such as economic globalization, political globalization, cultural globalization, etc., although they are all interconnected and interrelated. However, it is cultural globalization that is our main field of interest here.

The most important far-reaching effect of cultural globalization is the commercialization of culture. Production and consumption of cultural goods and services have become commodities, along with the essentials of social life (marriage and family life, religion, work and leisure) that are the crucibles of cultural creations. Culture whether it is music, food, clothes, art, sports, images of age, youth, masculinity or femininity has become a product, sold in the market place. As the former chairman of Coca-Cola, Robert Goizueta said: "People around the world are today connected by brand name consumer products as much as by anything else." (Akande, 2002)

The commercialization of culture has a disturbing impact on people. What once was an element of their way of life becomes a product, rather than something unique they had made to suit their own specific needs and circumstances. At the same time people are continuously bombarded with new images, new music, new clothes and new values. Global media is increasingly in the hands of a few, large, powerful organizations as is the production of music and films. For example, by 1997 the MTV channel was available to 280 million households in over 70 countries and it is increasing day by day.

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The common characteristic of the globalized culture is that it pursues the same “one size fits all” idea: the archetypical middle class family according to the American model in which consumerism is the norm. The result of this cultural process of homogenization is that a large section of the world's population dreams of living like *Cosby & Co* or like the characters in any other stereotype American soap opera. Traditional values have been overtaken by Coca Cola culture. The Michael Jackson style of music and culture is taking over and we don't have the values to cope with it.

Bangladesh is no exception. She is also a member of this 'Electronic Media Society' where most of the urban people are accustomed to almost every form of media like the satellite television and Internet. In urban Bangladesh, technology of multi-channel TV began in 1991 and satellite broadcasting has been delivering 'lots of channels to viewers'. Cultural domination by electronic media whitening the society thus has eventually been a major concern of sociological inquiry. Young generation was the field of interest in this study, because the major responsibility of preserving the culture goes to the young generation as they are the representatives of the future.

### **Global Media and Youth in Dhaka**

This study was carried out in the metropolitan city of Dhaka and data were collected from three upper class residential areas - Gulshan, Uttara and Dhanmondi. These areas were initially selected to have respondents with an “upper class” social, educational and economic background. The data presented in this paper were collected during field work in June-September 2003.

#### **Method of data collection:**

The samples were selected purposively and in some cases by snowball sampling method. The individuals who could serve our purpose by providing required data were taken as sample; such as the boy or girl who watches cable TV regularly or uses internet. A standardized questionnaire was filled up through in-depth interview.

#### **Socio-economic Background of the Respondents**

This survey included 125 respondents; among them 52% were male and 48% female. All the respondents were selected from both Bangali and English medium schools, colleges and universities, like the North South University, Bangladesh Medical College, American International University - Bangladesh, East West University, Viqarunnisa Noon School And College and Scholastica. However, most of them were of English medium schooling (78.4%). The family income of the respondents clearly shows their upper class position in society. It has been observed that 73% of the respondents' families have a gross monthly income between Tk 50,000 to Tk 200,000 and the rest have higher than that (per capita income in Bangladesh is about Tk.2200 per month).

#### **Access to Electronic Media of the Respondents:**

As most of the respondents had come from well-off families, they were habituated with the modern electronic media like satellite television, internet and personal computer.

Exposure to foreign media programs happens mainly in two ways -

- 1) By watching the foreign programs on Bangladesh Television (BTV) or other domestic channels.

2) Through foreign satellite networks beaming foreign programs.

As BTV shows a very insignificant number of foreign programs the major exposure to foreign programs come through foreign satellite channels. The study has revealed that most of the respondents spend 20 to 40 hours per week in media consumption. Table- 1 shows the real figures:

**Table 1: Media Consumption per Week (in Hour) of the Respondents**

Time (in hour)	Number	Percent
1-5	4	3.2
6-10	7	5.6
11-15	9	7.2
16-20	23	18.4
21-25	26	20.8
26-30	19	15.2
31-35	13	10.4
36-40	24	19.2
Total	125	100.0

The study has found that the respondents allow too little time to use media for academic purposes compared to entertainment. Most respondents reported that they used to allocate less than 7 hours per week for this purpose (Table. 2). Therefore, it can be argued that most of the respondents use media as a means of entertainment rather than gathering knowledge.

**Table 2: Academic Use of Personal Computer of The Respondents.**

Per Week (hours)	Number	Percent
Less than 7 hour	76	60.8
7 hour	35	28.0
14 hours and above	14	11.2
Total	125	100.0

From the Table 3 we see that 27.2 percent young people use computer for 2 hours, 30.4 percent respondents use for 3 hours, 23.2 percent youth use for 4 hours and 11.2 percent youth use 7 hours and above. They use their personal computer only for playing game, chatting, listening to songs or mailing. Therefore, the young generation uses their computer mainly for recreation.

**Table 3: Computer Use as Recreation by the Respondents Like Playing, Chatting, Enjoy Song or Movie & Mailing.**

Daily ( in hour)	Number	Percent
Less than 1 hour	----	----
1 hour	---	----
2 hours	34	27.2
3 hours	38	30.4
4 hours	29	23.2
5 hours	7	5.6
6 hours	3	2.4
7 hours and above	14	11.2
Total	125	100.00

The study also reveals the types of program the respondents prefer to get for entertainment. It has been found that romance and sex are the most preferred programs (44.8%). Then come adventures, action, drama, and comedy, etc (Table 4).

**Table 4: The Preference for Programs**

Topic	Number	Percent
Romance and Sex	56	44.8
Adventure and Action	22	17.6
Family and Social drama	18	14.4
Comedy	14	11.2
Horror	11	8.8
Information and Knowledge	4	3.2
Total	125	100.0

### Personal tastes, preferences and habits of the respondents

The effect of satellite TV on the youth is first expressed through their tastes and likings. The influence of satellite programs on the respondents had been categorized under the general and broad headings of food habit, dress and style, linguistic ability, thinking, values, choosing role model etc. In terms of dress, immense consciousness towards its visual effect was highly affirmed and the respondents believed to have been influenced to dress attractively in up-to-date fashion trends and in numerous styles.

It has been observed that the respondents are habituated to taking 'fast food' like burger, sandwich, pizza, fried chicken, French fries, hotdog, pastries etc, which are not really Bangladeshi foods rather are Western foods.

Among the respondents, 69.6 percent are used to eating Western 'fast - food' when only 30.4 percent wanted to eat pure traditional food (Table 5).

**Table 5: Food Habit of the Respondents**

Type of Food	Number	Percent
Fast Food	87	69.6
Traditional meal	38	30.4
Total	125	100.0

Table 6 shows that 76.8 percent respondents reported that Western outfit such as trousers, shirts, or jeans to be comfortable in workplace and at home. On the other hand only 23.2 percent respondents thought that Western dresses were not suitable to our culture.

**Table 6: Preference for Western Dress**

Attitude	Number	Percent
Comfortable	96	76.8
Not Comfortable	29	23.2
Total	125	100.0

Table 7 indicates that the electronic media created fascination for beauty parlors. Among the women respondents 88.3 percent had the habit of going to beauty parlors regularly. About 6.7 percent female respondents went to the parlor occasionally and only 5.0 percent did not go to the parlor.

**Table 7: Habit of Going to Beauty Parlors among the Female Respondents**

Nature of Going	Number	Percent
Regularly	53	88.3
Occasionally	4	6.7
Never	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 8 shows that most of the respondents (72.8%) performed religious activities occasionally, meaning the males only offer *Jumma* prayer on Friday or said their prayer on *EID* Day, girls said their prayer on occasions like *Shab-e barat*. Only 6.4 percent respondents were regular in their prayers.

**Table 8: Performing Religious Activities of the Respondents**

Frequency of performance	Number	Percent
Always	8	6.4
Occasionally	91	72.8
Some times	26	20.8
Total	125	100.0

Table 9 shows that as the youth of this generation has become figure conscious. About 41.6 percent of the respondents regularly went to the swimming pool or gymnasium to maintain figure. Also, 36.8 percent respondents said that as they were too busy they went sometimes.

**Table-9: Habit of Going Swimming Pool or Gymnasium among the Respondents**

Frequency of visit	Number	Percent
Regularly	52	41.6
Some times	46	36.8
Never	27	21.6
Total	125	100.0

As satellite channels mostly broadcast in English, it has been found that 48.8 percent of the respondents were influenced to a great extent to use English (Table 10) in their conversation.

**Table10: Tendency of Talking in English among the Respondents**

Extent of influence	Number	Percent
To a great extent	61	48.8
To Some extent	48	38.4
Not influenced at all	16	12.8
Total	125	100.0

### Relationships with parents, siblings and peer groups of the respondents

As the youths tend to be busy with media entertainment, they pass less time with their families compared to the peers. However, the boys and girls are becoming more "easy" in their relations with parents as compared to the past. Table-11 shows that 44.8 percent respondents considered their relation with parents to be easy and 34.4 percent very close. Only 20.8 percent said that they were not at all easy with their parents.

**Table 11: Relationship with Parents of the Respondents**

Type of Relation	Number	Percent
Easy	56	44.8
Very Easy	43	34.4

Not so Easy	26	20.8
Total	125	100.0

It has been found that more than half of the respondents did not obey all the orders of their parents. Table 12 shows that only 17.6 percent of the respondents were always obedient to their parents whereas 25.6 percent respondents listened to their parents sometimes and 56.8 percent respondents were rarely obedient to their parents.

**Table 12: Obedience to Parents of the Respondents**

Type of Obedience	Number	Percent
Always Obedient	22	17.6
Sometimes Obedient	32	25.6
Rarely Obedient	71	56.8
Total	125	100.0

The youth are very close to their friends and peer groups compared to the family. When they face any crisis or problem, 60.8 percent of the respondents said that they consult their friends first. Only 24.8 percent shared with their parents and 14.4 percent with their siblings such as brother or sister (Table 13).

**Table-13: Mental Dependency on Family and Friends the Respondents**

Dependency	Number	Percent
Depends on parents	31	24.8
Depends on friends	76	60.8
Depends on siblings	18	14.4
Total	125	100.0

Table-14 indicates that having a love affair is the fashion of the day. 61.6 percent of the respondents confessed that they had love affair with someone and 38.4 percent said they didn't have.

**Table-14: Number of Respondents Having Love Affair**

	Number	Percent
Having Affair	77	61.6
Having No Affair	48	38.4
Total	125	100.0

Table 15 shows that media encourages free mixing between men and women very much. As many as 78.4 percent respondents said their family allowed free mixing while only 21.6 percent respondents thought that their family took it negatively.

**Table 15: Family Attitudes towards Free Mixing Of The Respondents**

Attitude	Number	Percent
Positive	98	78.4
Negative	27	21.6
Total	125	100.0

Table 16 reveals that in our society family ties are shrinking day by day. On occasions like birthday or 31s' night the main enjoyment partners of the respondents were friends in 73.6 percent cases and family in only 26.4 percent cases.

**Table 16: With Whom the Respondents Like to Enjoy Their Occasions**

Enjoyment	Number	Percent
Mostly with friends	92	73.6
Mostly with family	33	26.4
Total	125	100.0

### Views and life style preferences of the Respondents

The study has found a preference for nuclear family among the upper class youths. It is reported that 67.2 percent preferred nuclear family compared to 32.8 percent for extended family (Table 17). This means that most individuals of this generation are interested to form a nuclear family.

**Table-17: Preferred Family Structure of The Respondents**

Preferred Family Structure	Number	Percent
Extended family	41	32.8
Nuclear family	84	67.2
Total	125	100.0

It is also revealed that this generation mostly prefers "love affair" marriage to form their family (70.40), while the rest preferred arranged marriage (Table 18).

**Table-18: Preference for Marriage System of the Respondents**

Preferred Marriage system	Number	Percent
Affair marriage	88	70.4
Arranged marriage	37	29.6
Total	125	100.0

The study has found the respondents more liberal on the issue of divorce and remarriage. Among them, 74.40% was positive in their attitude and only 25.60% respondents expressed negative attitude (Table 19).

**Table 19: Attitudes of the Respondents towards Divorce and Remarriage**

Attitude	Number	Percent
Always wrong	32	25.6
If required, not wrong	93	74.4
Total	125	100.0

Table 20 reveals that 43.2 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that extramarital relationship (live-together) was acceptable while 56.8 percent did not approve it.

**Table20: Attitude towards Live-Together**

Attitude	Number	Percent
Positive	54	43.2
Negative	71	56.8
Total	125	100.0

The respondents were found to be more serious about observing Western festive occasions like the "Valentine's Day" than "Pohela Falgun" (spring festival), which is our traditional festival (Table 21).

**Table-21: Choice of Cultural Festival of The Respondents**

Preferences	Number	Percent
Pohela Falgun	51	40.8
Valentine Day	74	59.2
Total	125	100.0

The study reveals that most respondents are interested to settle down in the West in the future (Table 22).

**Table-22: Future Planning of the Respondents.**

Future Destination	Number	Percent
To settle in West	81	64.8
To settled in own country	44	35.2
Total	125	100.0

### **Sexual Behavior and Attitudes of the Respondents**

One of the major concerns regarding foreign programs shown on satellite TV is that, today's teenagers are becoming immoral and their notion of purity and pollution have been changed. They are getting involved in socially designated immoral activities. Therefore it is very important to understand the permissiveness among the younger generation.

The study reveals that the respondents gathered sexual knowledge from various sources including Western movies and music videos, gossiping with friends, internet pornography, female magazines, collecting adult C.D. or X - rated sex video, etc.

It is observed that the youths enjoy sex under the pretext of love. About 24.0 percent of the respondents said that "Love is a policy to fulfill sexual requirement" and they "always" engaged in sexual contacts while 35.2 percent said that it happened sometimes. (table 23).

**Table-23: Opinion of the Respondents on "Love is a Policy to Fulfill Sexual Requirement"**

Opinion	Number	Percent
Always	30	24.0
Sometimes	44	35.2
Never	51	40.8
Total	125	100.0

Table 24 reveals the current picture of sexual behavior of the youth of in the sample. The Table shows that extramarital relations are highly acceptable among them. Therefore, after an



oral commitment or without any commitment, they engage in a physical relationship within a very short time. More than half of the respondents reported to engage in physical relationship with someone of the opposite sex within a week. Others also expected to enter into such relations within a very short time (Table 24).

**Table24: The Tendency of Getting Sexual Experience.**

Period	Number	Percent
Within a Day	31	24.8
Within a Week	32	25.6
Within a Month	24	19.2
Within 3 Months	16	12.8
Within 6 Months	13	10.4
Within 1 Year	9	7.2
Total	125	100.0

The study also reveals that the usual places of making physical contact are own home, friend's home, at campus, restaurant, park, coaching center or any solitary place far from the city, etc. Table 25 shows that in spite of being the citizen of a highly traditional country like Bangladesh the youth are creating access for premarital sex easily.

**Table 25: Creating Access for Premarital Relationship:**

Place	Some times ( % )	Never ( % )	Total ( % )
At own home	68.8	31.2	100
At friend's home	68.0	32.0	100
At Campus	59.2	40.8	100
At Restaurants	55.2	44.8	100
At Hotel	36.8	63.2	100
Park or any solitary place	78.4	21.6	100
At Coaching centre	58.4	41.4	100

It had been reported (Table-26) that the respondents gathered sexual knowledge from various sources. As many as 84.0 percent respondents knew about sex from Western movies and music videos, because it was the easiest source reached and which reached every home. As many as 91.2 percent respondents said that they learnt about sex from friends. About 71.2 percent respondents confessed that time-to-time they visited internet pornography section and by thus they came to know about sex. And 68.0 percent respondents said they read female magazines out of curiosity and learnt about sex. Collecting adult C.D. or X - Rated sex video was very popular among the respondents and 74.4 percent respondents confessed to gather knowledge about sex from this source.

**Table-26: Sources of Sexual Knowledge of the Respondents.**

Source of knowledge	Sometimes (%)	Never	Total (%)
Western Movie & Music Video	84	16	100
From Friends	91	09	100
Porn Websites through Internet	71	29	100
Books & Magazines	68	32	100
C.D. & X-rated Video Movies	74.4	25.6	100

## Conclusions

The study, thus, reveals that most of the respondents are more used to having Western 'Fast Food' compared traditional foods. The respondents prefer trendy clothes, Western movies and music. Watching TV is mostly the way in which the respondents pass their leisure time. A large number of respondents said that they are very close to their school and college friends, compared to their family members, and they discuss mostly about sex, fashion and show-biz world.

Again, almost half of the respondents wish to practice events shown in the foreign programs in their real lives. They want to be as romantic towards their beloved ones as the lovers are in films or drama; they sometimes want to revolt against their parents' restrictions as they see in films or serials. In the report we have seen that 43.2% young people support "live-together", around 70% like Western food, music or dress, 67.2% support nuclear family and 64.8% are highly interested to settle down in the West in the future. These are all signs of the influence Western culture.

Hillary Rodham Clinton says in her autobiography, "Living History", that the status of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lady of the United States of America had provided her chance to visit 78 countries which opened her eyes and mind. She always thought that America is anxious for the whole world. But her travels suggested that actually the whole world is anxious of America on the question of global peace and security. Cultural domination through the concept of globalization is a prime way of that.

Sociology says that, cultural change is a reality. Nevertheless it should be kept under surveillance. Due to the introduction of cable TV and Internet the young generation of our country has become reckless.

Globalization has resulted in the extinction of 22,000 indigenous cultures in the past decade and optimistic estimates suggests that as many as 90% of the world's languages will disappear in the next century (Akande, 2002). So we should resist Westernization in the name of globalization because it is easy to loose our culture but would be difficult to regain it.

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