



CULTURE, RELIGION, AND LANGUAGE AS PREDICTORS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY MAINTENANCE AMONG PAKISTANIS DIASPORA IN ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

How Pakistani nationals residing in English-speaking host nations perceive and preserve their national identity amid competing cultural influences remains an underexplored empirical question. Anchored in Tajfel's (1981) Social Identity Theory and Norton's (1997, 2013) framework linking language to identity construction, this study quantitatively investigates the degree to which culture, language, religion, lived experience, social environment, and professional conditions shape national identity perceptions among Pakistani diaspora communities. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to fifty purposively selected Pakistani nationals ($n=50$) with direct experience of residing in English-speaking countries. The resulting dataset was subjected to a comprehensive battery of statistical procedures in IBM SPSS, encompassing Pearson correlation, multiple regression, one-way ANOVA, Principal Component Analysis ($KMO=0.674$, $\chi^2=330.476$, $p=.000$), and internal reliability assessment (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.745$). Statistical modelling revealed that cultural affiliation ($\beta=0.362$, $p=.011$) and religious practice ($\beta=0.457$, $p=.004$) constitute significant positive predictors of national identity maintenance, whereas language did not independently reach statistical significance ($\beta=0.116$, $p=.133$). A complementary regression model demonstrated that positive lived experiences ($\beta=0.427$, $p=.001$) and favourable host-country environments ($\beta=0.465$, $p=.000$) meaningfully enhance diaspora self-perceptions, while security and professional integration pressures exerted a significant adverse effect ($\beta=-0.559$, $p=.000$). These findings collectively suggest that Pakistani diaspora communities sustain their national identities primarily through the twin pillars of cultural practice and religious observance, with host-country experiences and environmental conditions playing a decisive secondary role. The study advances empirical understanding of diaspora identity dynamics and offers evidence-based guidance for multicultural policy development.

Keywords: *English-Speaking Countries, Language and Identity, Multiculturalism, National Identity, Pakistani Diaspora, Quantitative Survey Research, Religion.*

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1. Introduction

Few questions in contemporary sociolinguistics and migration studies carry greater practical weight than how individuals construct, negotiate, and sustain a coherent sense of national identity when transplanted into foreign cultural environments. As international migration continues to accelerate and host societies become increasingly diverse, the mechanisms through which diaspora communities maintain their original cultural and national identities have attracted growing scholarly interest (Norton, 1997; Tajfel, 1981). Pakistani nationals living in English-speaking countries occupy a particularly instructive position within this broader inquiry: they represent one of the world's most sizeable and culturally distinctive diaspora populations, navigating a profound intersection of Islamic identity, South Asian cultural heritage, and the predominantly secular, English-speaking norms of their host nations.

The concept of national identity extends well beyond administrative or legal notions of citizenship. It encompasses an emotionally charged sense of collective belonging, sustained through shared cultural practices, linguistic heritage, religious observance, and historical memory (Anderson, 1991; Brubaker, 1992). For those who have relocated to foreign countries, preserving this sense of belonging presents a distinct challenge: assimilation into the host culture may gradually dilute ties to the homeland, while rigid adherence to homeland identity may obstruct meaningful social integration in the new environment (Berry et al., 2006). Navigating this tension constitutes a defining experience of diaspora life.

Pakistani communities settled in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia represent one of the most studied yet empirically underserved diaspora populations in the applied linguistics and migration literatures. Despite their numerical significance and cultural distinctiveness, few quantitative studies have attempted to measure the relative contributions of multiple identity-shaping variables, i.e., culture, language, religion, personal experience, social environment, and professional conditions, within a single integrated analytical framework. This gap limits both theoretical understanding and practical policymaking.

The present study addresses this deficit by deploying a quantitative survey design to measure how Pakistani diaspora respondents perceive their national identity in relation to their English Native Countries Exposure (ENCE). By modelling the predictive relationships between key sociolinguistic and sociocultural variables and national identity

outcomes, the study aims to generate actionable empirical evidence for researchers, educators, and multicultural policymakers alike.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

A fundamental gap persists in the empirical literature concerning the specific mechanisms through which Pakistani diaspora communities sustain their national identity within English-speaking multicultural environments. While theoretical frameworks for understanding diaspora identity are well developed (Norton, 2001; Duff, 2002), empirical quantitative studies that simultaneously measure and compare the predictive power of cultural, linguistic, religious, experiential, and environmental variables for this population remain conspicuously absent. Without such evidence, both scholarly understanding and policy responses to Pakistani diaspora identity challenges remain largely speculative.

1.2. Research Objectives

The present study pursues three interconnected objectives:

1. To assess the nature and strength of the relationship between cultural variables and national identity maintenance among Pakistani nationals in English-speaking host countries.
2. To determine the extent to which language and religion independently predict national identity perceptions within this diaspora population.
3. To evaluate how lived experience, host-country environment, and security and professional conditions collectively shape Pakistani diaspora self-perceptions.

1.3. Research Questions

RQ1. What relationship exists between cultural dimensions and national identity maintenance among the Pakistani diaspora residing in English-speaking countries?

RQ2. To what extent do language and religion serve as independent predictors of national identity perception among the Pakistani diaspora?

RQ3. In what ways do lived experience, host-country environment, and professional conditions influence how the Pakistani diaspora perceive their national identity?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizing National Identity

Scholarly engagement with national identity has produced diverse and sometimes competing conceptual frameworks. Early contributions tended to ground national identity in either the political architecture of the state or the ethnocultural composition of its population, a distinction Brubaker (1992) and Kohn (1944) captured through their influential contrast between civic and ethnic nationalism. Civic models tie identity to territorial membership and legal citizenship, while ethnic models locate it in shared ancestry, heritage, and cultural tradition. Smith (1991) drew on both strands to argue that

most national identities combine civic and ethnic elements in varying proportions, shaped by particular historical circumstances.

At the individual level, Tajfel's (1981, p. 25) formulation remains foundational: social identity derives from an individual's awareness of belonging to a particular group, together with the emotional and evaluative significance that this membership carries. Applied to national identity, this framework suggests that Pakistanis abroad actively draw on their national group membership as a psychological resource, one that provides both self-worth and a sense of orientation in unfamiliar environments. Anderson's (1991) complementary notion of the nation as an 'imagined community' further illuminates why national identity can persist and even intensify at a geographic remove from the homeland: shared symbols, narratives, and rituals sustain the sense of collective belonging regardless of physical co-presence.

2.2. Language, Culture, and Identity Construction

The relationship between language and cultural identity has been a persistent preoccupation of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Language is not merely a vehicle for communication but a constitutive element of culture, simultaneously reflecting and reproducing the values, norms, and worldviews of its speakers (Trueba & Zou, 1994). Norton (1997) advanced this understanding by framing language as a site of identity investment: every act of speaking or writing simultaneously communicates meaning and positions the speaker within a web of social relations and power dynamics. Identity, on this account, is not a fixed attribute that individuals carry into linguistic interactions but an ongoing accomplishment, produced and reproduced through language use.

For Pakistani nationals in English-speaking host countries, this theoretical insight carries immediate practical relevance. English proficiency is a prerequisite for professional and social participation in the host society, yet Urdu and regional Pakistani languages remain vital markers of cultural solidarity and homeland belonging. The linguistic demands of integration thus place diaspora members in a structural double bind: acquiring the dominant language of the host country may be experienced as a cultural concession, while limitations in English proficiency can generate exclusion and marginalization (Duff, 2002). Duff's ethnographic research in a Canadian multilingual secondary school documented how non-native English speaking students frequently retreated into silence as a strategy of self-protection — a pattern she characterized as using silence to guard against embarrassment in linguistically asymmetric interactions.

Culture, conceived broadly as the system of beliefs, values, practices, and symbolic meanings through which communities organize and interpret their collective life, provides a further dimension of identity anchoring (Tylor, 1958; Banks, 1988). Goodenough's characterization of culture as socially shared norms and conventions that unambiguously distinguish one community from another captures the boundary-marking function that

cultural practices perform for diaspora populations. For Pakistanis abroad, maintaining distinctive cultural practices — including dress, cuisine, celebration of religious festivals, and family structures — serves as a continuous affirmation of communal distinctiveness and homeland connection.

2.3. Religion and National Identity

The entanglement of religious affiliation and national identity is particularly pronounced in the Pakistani context, where Islam occupies a constitutionally enshrined and socially pervasive role in national life (Stopler, 2013). For Pakistani diaspora communities, Islamic practice functions simultaneously as a spiritual commitment and a primary identity marker that remains conspicuously visible in the predominantly secular environments of Western host countries. McCullough and Willoughby (2009) identified several mechanisms through which religious commitment shapes identity-relevant behaviour: religion prioritizes individual goals, sanctifies certain objectives, reduces internal goal conflicts, and fosters a sense of accountability to God, community, and self, which reinforces consistent, identity-aligned conduct.

Empirical research on Pakistani and broader Muslim diaspora populations consistently confirms that religious observance — encompassing regular prayer, fasting during Ramadan, adherence to halal dietary requirements, and mosque participation — remains among the most durable identity practices, persisting through generational transitions and cross-cultural contact (Henley, 2017; Ramasamy et al., 2010). A recurring and theoretically significant finding in this literature is that experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination in host countries — particularly intensified in the aftermath of the September 2001 attacks in the United States — tend to strengthen rather than weaken religious identification among affected communities, as shared victimization reinforces ingroup solidarity and heightens the salience of religious group membership.

2.4. Multiculturalism, Social Environment, and Diaspora Identity

The social and institutional environment of the host country constitutes a powerful mediating force in diaspora identity dynamics. Parekh (1995) conceptualized multiculturalism as a dialogical encounter between majority and minority cultures in which genuine accommodation requires more than passive tolerance; it demands active recognition and institutional support for minority cultural practices. Where such recognition is absent or inconsistent, diaspora communities may experience what Norelius (2018) described as the ethnocentric undercurrents of formally inclusive multicultural societies: despite liberal rhetoric, the cultural logic of the majority group frequently exerts assimilative pressure that minorities are ill-equipped to resist.

Berry et al. (2006) proposed a widely applied framework of acculturation strategies, distinguishing between integration (maintaining heritage culture while engaging with the host culture), assimilation (abandoning heritage culture in favour of host

culture), separation (maintaining heritage culture while avoiding host culture contact), and marginalization (losing connection to both). Their research demonstrated that integration, characterized by dual identity maintenance, is associated with the most positive psychological and social outcomes for diaspora individuals, a finding that underscores the importance of host environments that genuinely facilitate rather than merely tolerate cultural retention. Said (2018) reinforced this point, arguing that diaspora communities denied adequate linguistic and cultural space in the host society are structurally prevented from experiencing genuine belonging, regardless of the formal multicultural commitments of the host state.

2.5. Professional Integration and Identity

The professional domain represents a frequently overlooked yet consequential arena of diaspora identity negotiation. The gap between the theoretical meritocracy promised by Western liberal societies and the structural barriers many highly educated migrants encounter in professional settings generates a distinctive form of identity strain. Non-recognition of foreign qualifications, the elevated cost of international student pathways, competitive labor markets, and residual nepotism and discrimination collectively undermine the professional aspirations that motivate many Pakistani diaspora members to relocate (Manan et al., 2017). When professional ambitions go unrealized, the resulting frustration can compound broader experiences of marginalization and negatively affect how migrants perceive both themselves and their decision to emigrate.

Greve and Salaff (2003) highlighted the importance of social networks in professional success for diaspora entrepreneurs, while Henley (2017) demonstrated that religiously motivated social capital can partially offset structural professional disadvantages. Nevertheless, the structural inequities facing Pakistani diaspora professionals in Western labour markets remain a significant and under-addressed challenge, with direct implications for how members of this community perceive their standing and identity within the host society.

2.6. Identified Research Gap

A review of the relevant literature reveals a consistent pattern: while theoretical and qualitative scholarship on Pakistani diaspora identity is relatively well developed, empirical quantitative studies that simultaneously measure the predictive contributions of cultural, linguistic, religious, experiential, environmental, and professional variables to national identity maintenance within a single integrated model remain scarce. The present study directly addresses this gap, offering a quantitative evidence base that complements existing qualitative accounts and provides a foundation for future comparative and longitudinal research.

3. Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks, applied in combination, guide the conceptual architecture of this study. The first is Tajfel's (1981) Social Identity Theory (SIT), which holds that individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from membership in valued social groups. SIT predicts that when group identity is threatened, whether by assimilative pressure, discrimination, or cultural marginalization, members respond by intensifying their identification with the group rather than abandoning it. For the Pakistani diaspora, this dynamic helps explain why cultural and religious identity often strengthens rather than diminishes under the pressures of life in English-speaking host countries.

The second framework is Norton's (1997, 2013) post-structuralist account of Language and Identity, which reconceptualizes language learning and use as practices through which speakers continuously negotiate their sense of self and their relationships to social power. Norton argued that identity is multiple, contested, and subject to change across time and social context, a perspective that accommodates the complexity of diaspora identity without reducing it to a simple binary of assimilation versus preservation. Together, these frameworks inform the study's variable selection, culture (C-NI), language (L-NI), religion (R-NI), experience (Ex-PP), environment (En-PP), and security and professional growth (SPG-PP), and its analytical logic of testing the relative predictive power of these variables for national identity outcomes.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This investigation adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, selected for its capacity to capture standardized measurements across a defined sample at a single point in time and to subject those measurements to systematic statistical analysis (Zohrabi, 2013). A quantitative approach was judged most appropriate given the study's objective of simultaneously modelling the predictive relationships between multiple independent variables and a dependent national identity outcome, an analytical task requiring statistical rather than interpretive methods. The study is appropriately characterized as exploratory, given both the sample parameters and the relative scarcity of prior quantitative work targeting this specific population and set of variables.

4.2. Sampling and Participants

The intended population for this study comprised Pakistani nationals who had accumulated direct lived experience in at least one Western English-speaking country. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that every participant possessed the experiential reference points necessary to respond meaningfully to questions comparing Pakistani and host-country cultural contexts. Fifty individuals meeting these criteria constituted the final analytical sample (n=50). Of these, forty (80%) identified as male and ten (20%) as female — a gender distribution that broadly reflects the demographic composition of Pakistani labour migration streams to Western countries, though one that

the authors acknowledge as a limitation requiring attention in subsequent research. Participants were located primarily across the United States, Canada, and Australia. Data collection took place during 2020 under COVID-19 pandemic conditions, which necessitated fully remote survey administration.

4.3. Survey Instrument

The questionnaire comprised two distinct sections. The first section (coded PI: Personal

Information) gathered demographic and contextual data, including gender, motivations for residing abroad, difficulties encountered, and perceived elements of national identity. The second section contained eighteen items scored on a five-point Likert scale anchored at 'Strongly Disagree' (1) and 'Strongly Agree' (5), measuring the study's principal variables. Table 1 presents the variable coding framework.

Code	Variable	Items
C-NI (C1–C4)	Culture and National Identity	4
L-NI	Language and National Identity	1
R-NI	Religion and National Identity	1
NI (NI1, NI2)	National Identity — Dependent Variable	2
Ex-PP	Experience and Perceptions of Pakistanis	1
En-PP	Environment and Perceptions of Pakistanis	1
SPG-PP	Security, Professional Growth and Perceptions	1
PP	Overall Perceptions about Pakistanis	1

Table 1. Survey instrument variable coding

4.4. Data Collection

Given the geographical dispersion of potential respondents and the public health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, data were gathered exclusively through digital channels, primarily electronic mail and the WhatsApp messaging platform. Before questionnaire distribution, each prospective participant received a formal invitation letter and an informed consent document, clearly explaining the voluntary and anonymous

nature of their participation. No personally identifiable data was retained beyond the completion of data collection.

4.5. Analytical Strategy

All collected data were encoded and processed using IBM SPSS. The analytical sequence proceeded as follows:

- Descriptive frequency analysis to characterize response distributions across all Likert items
- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to assess dataset suitability for factor analysis
- Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to establish construct validity
- Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to verify internal consistency reliability
- Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis to examine bivariate associations between variables
- Multiple linear regression analysis, conducted across two separate models, to identify significant predictors of national identity and diaspora perceptions
- One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to assess overall model significance

4.6. Validity and Reliability

Construct validity was evaluated through Principal Component Analysis. The KMO sampling adequacy statistics registered 0.674, comfortably surpassing the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.6 recommended by Kaiser (1974), thereby confirming that the intercorrelation structure of the data was appropriate for factor extraction. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a statistically significant result ($\chi^2=330.476$, $df=120$, $p=.000$), indicating that the correlation matrix differed meaningfully from an identity matrix. Communality values for all items exceeded the 0.400 minimum specified by conventional PCA guidelines.

Internal reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a coefficient of $\alpha=0.745$ — above the widely accepted minimum of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), confirming that the scale items exhibited satisfactory internal consistency. The Intra-Class Correlation Coefficient of 0.745 provided a corroborating reliability estimate. Together, these statistics establish that the instrument measured its intended constructs with adequate precision and consistency.

5. Results

5.1. Sample Characteristics

The analytical sample comprised forty male (80%) and ten female (20%) respondents.

When asked to identify the primary factors that had drawn them to reside in an English-speaking country, participants most frequently cited high remuneration ($n=15$,

30%) and attraction to the host country's cultural environment (n=15, 30%), followed by professional advancement opportunities (n=10, 20%), recognition of professional contributions (n=5, 10%), and employment security (n=5, 10%). The principal difficulties reported in the host country context were language-related challenges (n=15, 30%), cultural unfamiliarity (n=10, 20%), ethnicity-related experiences (n=10, 20%), and religious discrimination (n=5, 10%). Respondents identified the following as the primary anchors of their Pakistani national identity: family and friendship networks (n=20, 40%), religious affiliation (n=15, 30%), and cultural heritage (n=10, 20%). Notably, 70% of respondents (n=35) affirmed the importance of culture, while 80% (n=40) affirmed the importance of national identity — establishing a strong baseline of identity salience across the sample.

5.2. Descriptive Frequency Analysis

Table 2 summarizes the response distributions across all principal study variables, illustrating the degree of endorsement for each identity dimension.

Variable	Agree / Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree
C1-NI: Culture affects identity	80%	20%	—
C2-NI: Culture promotes national identity	90%	10%	—
C3-NI: Culture shapes personality	100%	—	—
C4-NI: Importance of learning other cultures	80%	20%	—
Mean C-NI: Overall cultural impact on NI	100%	—	—
L-NI: Language as a reflection of culture	60%	20%	20%
R-NI: Religion's effect on national identity	80%	20%	—

Ex-PP: Quality of experience living abroad	70%	—	30%
En-PP: Environmental influence on perceptions	60%	20%	20%
Variable	Agree / Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree
SPG-PP: Security and professional growth	30%	30%	40%

Table 2. Frequency distributions across study variables (n=50)

The data presented in Table 2 reveal a striking gradient of endorsement across identity dimensions. Cultural variables consistently attracted the strongest agreement across the entire dataset, with 80–100% of respondents affirming that culture shapes identity, promotes national belonging, influences personality development, and exerts an overall significant impact on national identity. Religious identity (R-NI) similarly attracted high agreement at 80%. The security and professional growth variable (SPG-PP) stood in sharp contrast, recording the highest disagreement rate in the survey (40%), indicating that professional integration in English-speaking host environments constitutes the most contested and challenging dimension of the diaspora experience.

5.3. Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were computed for all variable pairs. Table 3 presents the subset of relationships most directly relevant to national identity and diaspora perceptions.

Variable Pair	r	p (2-tailed)	Strength
C1-NI & L-NI (Language)	.802**	.000	Strong positive
C1-NI & R-NI (Religion)	.725**	.000	Strong positive
C2-NI & Mean NI	.592**	.000	Moderate positive
R-NI & Mean NI	.530**	.000	Moderate positive
En-PP & Mean NI	.674**	.000	Strong positive

En-PP & R-NI	.688**	.000	Strong positive
Ex-PP & C3-NI	-.639**	.000	Strong negative
Ex-PP & Mean NI	-.604**	.000	Moderate negative
SPG-PP & Mean NI	-.315*	.026	Weak negative

Table 3. Selected Pearson correlation coefficients (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$)

Three principal patterns warrant attention. First, culture demonstrates strong positive associations with both language ($r = .802$, $p < .01$) and religion ($r = .725$, $p < .01$), suggesting that these three dimensions function as an integrated identity cluster rather than as discrete, separable constructs. Second, the host-country environment exhibits strong positive correlations with both national identity ($r = .674$) and religious identity ($r = .688$), indicating that environmental conditions directly mediate the salience of religious affiliation as an identity resource. Third, and most theoretically consequential, lived experience abroad (Ex-PP) registers significant negative correlations with cultural shaping of personality ($r = -.639$) and national identity ($r = -.604$), a pattern explored further in the Discussion.

5.4. Regression Model 1: Cultural and Religious Predictors of National Identity

The first regression model positioned Mean National Identity (NI) as the dependent variable, with Mean C-NI (culture), L-NI (language), and R-NI (religion) as predictors.

	Statistic	Value
R		.628
R ²		.394
Adjusted R ²		.354
Std. Error		.744
F		9.961
Sig.		.000

Table 4. Model 1 Summary

Predictor	B	β	t	p
(Constant)	.441	—	1.058	.296
Mean C-NI (Culture)	.724	.362	2.655	.011*
L-NI (Language)	-.178	.116	-1.530	.133
R-NI (Religion)	.199	.457	3.005	.004**

Table 5. Model 1 Regression Coefficients (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$)

Model 1 accounted for 39.4% of the total variance in national identity scores ($R^2 = .394$, $F(3,46) = 9.961$, $p = .000$), confirming that the combined cultural, linguistic, and religious variables constitute a statistically significant and substantively meaningful predictor set. Within the model, religion emerged as the single strongest predictor ($\beta = .457$, $p = .004$), with culture producing a significant though somewhat smaller effect ($\beta = .362$, $p = .011$). Language failed to achieve statistical significance as an independent predictor ($\beta = .116$, $p = .133$), a finding suggesting that its effect on national identity is channeled primarily through its associations with culture and religion rather than operating through a distinct pathway.

5.5. Regression Model 2: Experiential and Environmental Predictors of Diaspora Perceptions

The second regression model designated overall perceptions about Pakistanis (PP) as the dependent variable, with lived experience (Ex-PP), host-country environment (En-PP), and security and professional growth (SPG-PP) as predictors.

	Statistic	Value
R		.754
R^2		.568
Adjusted R^2		.540
Std. Error		.617
F		20.161

Sig.		.000
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Table 6. Model 2 Summary

Predictor	B	β	t	p
(Constant)	1.963	—	3.300	.002
Ex-PP (Experience)	.462	.427	3.528	.001**
En-PP (Environment)	.380	.465	3.888	.000**
SPG-PP (Security & Prof. Growth)	-.606	-.559	-4.118	.000**

Table 7. Model 2 Regression Coefficients ($p < .01$)**

Model 2 explained a substantially greater proportion of variance in diaspora perceptions ($R^2 = .568$, $F(3,46) = 20.161$, $p = .000$), confirming that experiential and environmental factors are collectively more powerful predictors of how Pakistani diaspora perceive themselves than cultural and religious variables alone. Positive lived experience ($\beta = .427$, $p = .001$) and a supportive host country environment ($\beta = .465$, $p = .000$) both produced significant positive effects on self-perceptions. Security and professional growth, however, exerted a significant and sizeable negative effect ($\beta = -.559$, $p = .000$), indicating that difficulties encountered in achieving professional integration and a sense of security within the host country substantially undermine the positivity of diaspora self-perception.

6. Discussion

The findings yielded by this study advance understanding of Pakistani diaspora national identity in several significant directions.

6.1. Cultural Practice as the Bedrock of National Identity

The near-universal endorsement of cultural identity variables across the sample, with 80 to 100 percent of respondents affirming that culture shapes identity, promotes national belonging, and influences personality, positions cultural practice as the most pervasive and unconditional dimension of national identity maintenance in this diaspora population. This finding resonates with Tajfel's (1981) Social Identity Theory in a specific and illuminating way: cultural practices function as visible, repeated enactments of group membership that continuously reaffirm the individual's location within the Pakistani national community. In the context of life abroad, where Pakistani cultural markers

become more conspicuous by contrast with surrounding norms, this enactment takes on heightened significance.

The finding also substantiates Goodenough's characterization of culture as a boundary-marking system that distinguishes one sociocultural community from another. For the Pakistani diaspora, maintaining culturally distinctive practices, from cuisine and dress to language use and festival observance, serves simultaneously as an internal affirmation of identity and an external signal of communal belonging. Rather than eroding under the pressures of multicultural host environments, cultural identity appears to be actively reinforced through the experience of cultural contrast.

6.2. Religion as the Single Strongest Identity Predictor

Religion's emergence as the strongest independent predictor of national identity ($\beta=.457$, $p=.004$) is among the most theoretically significant findings of this study, particularly given the multicultural and predominantly secular context in which the sampled population resides. This result extends McCullough and Willoughby's (2009) framework in an applied diaspora context: Islamic religious practice, with its daily prayer obligations, dietary requirements, communal worship, and fasting observance, provides a structured and pervasive system of identity-aligned behavior that is difficult to abandon, even or perhaps especially in environments where its visibility marks the practitioner as culturally different.

The substantial positive correlation between environment and religious identity ($r=.688$, $p<.01$) adds a further layer of theoretical interest: it suggests that the multicultural environments inhabited by Pakistani diaspora members amplify rather than attenuate the salience of religious identity. This is consistent with research documenting that experiences of religious discrimination, rather than prompting identity retreat, tend to consolidate ingroup solidarity and intensify religious commitment. The policy implication is significant: multicultural frameworks that assume religious identities will naturally soften through prolonged contact with secular host cultures misread the dynamics at work in Pakistani diaspora communities.

6.3. Language as a Mediated Rather Than Independent Identity Force

The absence of a statistically significant independent effect for language on national identity ($\beta=.116$, $p=.133$) despite strong bivariate correlations with both culture ($r=.802$) and religion ($r=.725$) constitutes a nuanced and theoretically important result. Rather than disconfirming language's relevance to identity, this finding reframes it: language appears to operate as a conduit through which cultural and religious identity are expressed and reinforced, rather than as an autonomous identity-generating mechanism.

This interpretation aligns closely with Norton's (1997) post-structuralist position that language is a site of identity negotiation shaped by surrounding power relations, not a self-sufficient cause of identity formation. In the diaspora context, maintaining Urdu or

regional Pakistani languages serves to reinforce cultural solidarity and signal group membership, but it is the cultural and religious content that those languages carry — rather than the linguistic medium itself — that does the primary identity work. For applied linguistics, this suggests that language maintenance programs for diaspora communities may be most effective when embedded within broader cultural and religious community structures, rather than pursued as standalone linguistic interventions.

6.4. The Mediating Effect of Positive Experience on Identity Perceptions

The negative correlations between lived experience (Ex-PP) and both cultural identity (C3NI: $r=-.639$) and national identity ($r=-.604$) initially appear counterintuitive but admit of a theoretically coherent interpretation. Respondents who reported more positive overall experiences in their host country appear to experience a reduced sense that culture actively determines their personality and identity — not because their cultural identity has eroded, but because it has become sufficiently secure and integrated that it no longer requires active, effortful maintenance. In other words, positive multicultural experiences may produce a more flexible and settled cultural identity, one that operates as a stable background resource rather than as a foreground preoccupation.

This interpretation is consistent with Berry et al.'s (2006) acculturation research, which identifies integration, the simultaneous maintenance of heritage cultural identity and meaningful engagement with host culture, as the strategy associated with the most positive psychological outcomes. Diaspora members who have successfully achieved integration may experience their Pakistani identity as less contingent and embattled, reducing the perceived salience of culture as an identity determinant without diminishing the depth of that identity.

6.5. Professional Integration as the Unresolved Challenge

The strong negative effect of security and professional growth on diaspora perceptions ($\beta=-.559$, $p=.000$) identifies professional integration as the most acute unresolved challenge facing Pakistani diaspora communities in English-speaking host countries. This finding cannot be attributed simply to individual shortcomings; it reflects structural inequities that are well documented in the broader migration literature. Credential non-recognition, the prohibitive cost of re-qualifying through host-country institutional pathways, discrimination in professional recruitment, and the competitive dynamics of knowledge-economy labour markets collectively create barriers that disproportionately affect highly educated Pakistani migrants.

The implications extend beyond professional satisfaction to identity itself. When the professional aspirations that motivate migration go unrealized, the resulting frustration undermines not only well-being but the positive self-perception that sustains cultural integration. Norelius' (2018) critique of multiculturalism's failure to translate inclusive principles into equitable institutional outcomes is directly supported by this finding.

Effective multicultural policy must therefore extend its remit from cultural accommodation to structural professional equity if it is to produce genuinely positive outcomes for Pakistani diaspora communities.

7. Conclusion

This study has generated empirical evidence that Pakistani diaspora communities residing in English-speaking countries sustain their national identities primarily through the dual mechanisms of cultural practice and religious observance, with host-country environment and lived experience serving as significant secondary shaping forces. Religion emerged as the single strongest quantitative predictor of national identity, with culture producing a substantial and complementary effect. Language, though strongly correlated with both culture and religion, did not independently predict national identity, suggesting a mediating rather than causal role. Professional integration emerged as the most significant source of negative identity-relevant pressure within the diaspora experience.

These findings carry clear implications for multicultural policy. Host governments committed to meaningful cultural inclusion must move beyond rhetorical accommodation to address the structural professional barriers that generate the most damaging identity consequences for Pakistani diaspora members. Credential recognition reform, professionally targeted anti-discrimination measures, and diaspora employment support initiatives represent concrete policy responses demanded by these findings. For applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, the results reaffirm the centrality of religion and culture, and the mediating rather than underlying status of language in diaspora identity dynamics, and call for theoretical frameworks that can adequately represent the integrated, mutually reinforcing character of these identity dimensions.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The exploratory sample (n=50) limits the generalizability of the findings and necessitates replication on a larger scale. The pronounced gender imbalance (80% male) means that the experiences of female Pakistani diaspora members, who may navigate identity pressures in meaningfully different ways, are substantially underrepresented. Country-level data were not systematically captured, precluding the host country comparative analysis that would constitute a valuable extension of this work. Future research employing larger, gender-balanced, nationally stratified samples, mixed methodological designs, and longitudinal tracking of identity change over time would substantially advance understanding in this area.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, this study makes a genuine empirical contribution by providing quantitative evidence of the mechanisms underpinning the maintenance of Pakistani diaspora national identity, evidence that enriches theoretical frameworks, informs policy development, and lays the groundwork for the more ambitious research designs this important topic warrants.

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