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## The Role of Popular Culture in Shaping National Identity

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The given research investigates the role of popular culture in shaping national identity in terms of the interaction between media and entertainment, the issues of collective memory, and cultural narratives in different societies. The findings indicate that popular culture can be seen as a mirror and as an accelerator of the national identity reinforcing shared traditions and at the same time challenging established norms. The results, which are based on case studies in movies, music, sports, and digital media show that popular culture provides an easy access to symbols of belonging and togetherness across lines of class, ethnicity and region differences. The research also shows that cultural commodities such as popular music and movies serve as strategies to propagate national ideals although the globalised digital networks at the same time end up producing global subjects with hybrid identity leading to a combination of local and foreign cultures. One major observation is that as much as popular culture fosters national pride and solidarity, it can trigger tensions in terms of cultures, where the imported cultures do not meet the indigenous systems of beliefs. The results also reveal the greatness of the involvement of the state and institutions in moulding popular culture as a tactic tool in forming identity particularly during political shifts or international competitions. Finally, the study concludes that popular culture is both dynamic and controversial in giving a national identity. It is somewhere, where we can see the need of continuity and change at the same time, and cultures can remain strong and moody in a world, which is getting more and more integrated together.*

**KEYWORDS:** Popular Culture, National Identity, Cultural Narratives, Globalization, Media, Collective Memory

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of modernity, identity as a nation is increasingly disseminated through the lens of popular culture—an elusive expression of mass media, entertainment and the digital sites that reflects and shapes national self-image. Common traditions and the use of the language remain significant to the way individuals think in regards to being a citizen of a country. As recent survey data indicate almost 91 percent of the citizens in more than 20 countries believe being able to speak the dominant language is important and 81 percent say shared traditions are important markers of true national identity. These are some of the old anchors, yet powerful cultural tides move through social movements, popular music, television and film and online media. Globalization expands the power and reach of popular culture, and also promotes convergence and identity maintenance. P. Li (2025) argues that popular culture has now become part and parcel in the definition of the nationality as well as the perception of nations in the global arena. However, there are dangers in this global spread: there is a risk of a further appropriation or degradation of indigenous cultural representations that threaten to obliterate elements of truth and to silence minority voices (Marzal et al., 2025). Television plays an important role in making people feel a sense of national identity by an appeal of representing rituals. Li et al. (2024) demonstrate that television broadcast of cultural rituals in China serves to cement a sense of identity and solidarity and focuses attention on ancient practices that act as a medium of national identity. Critical discourse analyses of popular culture in economic or political crises—example of how modern national identity was developed through narratives in Greek popular culture—show that the media is a site of identity production even in a state of distress. Theoretical framework, e.g. glocalization, helps with grasping local-global aspect of such processes. Glocalization implies not only acceptance of international cultural flows, but also insistence on local adaptation, an important concept to understanding movement and change of cultural products. The hegemony of global often Western media over local cultures, that is the cultural homogeneity, can be observed as both a challenge and as a stimulus to redefine or renew national identity. Besides structural and theoretical analysis, empirical studies are conducted to present the weaker side of the formation of identity based on cultural preferences. The article by Kim and Park (2025) reveals that the national cultural tastes measured with cross country YouTube data and World Value Survey comparisons have a strong correlation with the national cultural values which suggest that music could act as an important proxy to understand the national cultural differences. Popular culture also makes way to produce political identity and protest. The case of the so-called Monsoon Uprising in Bangladesh in July 2024 is an illustration that Facebook emerged as a powerful tool of uniting people based on a common identity. Memes, chants, and

images helped unify people on the basis of common symbols and created the identity of a national protest. Similarly, transnational decolonial rhetoric among Bengali YouTubers projects a new reality in which digital innovators reconceptualize national identity challenging the colonial tropes by narrating culture. Moreover, the contemporary cultural renaissances indicate the impact of popular culture on the transnational senses of belonging. UK has its Cool Britannia 25 culture of revival of British cultural pride and mixed representation. It has led to global interest in the way of music, fashion, slang and media, and it has altered the manner in which individuals view their country in a youthful, inclusive fashion. In another sense, the impact of celebrities, particularly on young people around the world, depicts that American tradition pop culture icons are replacing traditional mentors. Parasocial bonds assist them to produce values, worldviews, and identities in the digital world. Politics has a role to play in terms of influences of popular culture on people, as well Taylor Swift endorsing Kamala Harris demonstrates that celebrities have moral authority beyond being famous and able to be utilized to allow people to feel connected to their civic identity and motivate them to participate. Popular culture is not a mere reflector of national identity when you look at the literature, and the new findings of 2024. Rather it is a dynamic, conflictual and creative space at which identity is asserted and bargained at and recreated. This study makes further contributions to the emerging body of knowledge by combining theories and practical examples-involving media, protest movements, music consumption, and online celebrity-in order to understand how national identity is constructed, maintained, and even altered across nations and continents.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The mixed-method approach used a combination of the qualitative and quantitative approaches to procure the complex workings of how the popular culture builds a national identity. The combination of approaches was designed to ensure that both deep introspection and breadth were ensured, since national identity was simultaneously engrained within stories, symbols, and dispositions, as well as measurable in terms of media consumption habits and attitudinal measures. The qualitative portion was textual, visual and discourse analysis of popular culture artifacts such as films, music, digital sites, and broadcast cultural performances. These artifacts were selected to consciously exist in three major spheres of culture (cinema, popular music, and social media), as they have already been proven to affect identity politics to a great extent in already published works. Critical discourse theory was used in the analysis to explore the reification or subversion of recurring thematizing of the nationhood, belonging, and otherness in

the different cultural commodities. The quantitative component was based on the survey of members of various demographic groups across the country in order to determine the extent of their engagement with cultural products and how they perceived their national identity. The survey included Likert-based evaluations of cultural belongingness, symbolic attachment and exposure to the globalized media. The study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach to combine different perspectives and gathered both qualitative and quantitative data in an independent manner and examining them in an independent manner and later by uniting them during interpretation. The design has worked well in the study because it helped us to triangulate the findings by relating the textual evidence to the statistical associations to make firmer findings. The combined database provided a large scope of thinking about the way fame shapers popular culture to bring symbolic definitions and impact measurable feelings of nationality. The analytical tools were the statistical modelling as well as qualitative coding. In quantitative analysis, multiple regressions were applied in order to reflect how effectively cultural engagement can determine the national identification as self-reported. The basic regression equation has been expressed as

$$NI_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CE_i + \beta_2 GE_i + \beta_3 DI_i + \epsilon_i$$

where  $NI_i$  denotes the national identity score for individual  $i$ ,  $CE_i$  represents cultural engagement with popular media,  $GE_i$  reflects global exposure (such as consumption of international films or music), and  $DI_i$  captures demographic indicators including age, gender, and education. The residual error term  $\epsilon_i$  accounts for unexplained variation. Model assumptions were checked for linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity, and significance levels were set at  $p < 0.05$ . Supplementary analyses included analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare mean national identity scores across different media consumption groups.

On the qualitative side, a coding framework was developed based on recurring themes of identity, belonging, pride, and hybridity within cultural artifacts. Discourse analysis was guided by Fairclough's critical discourse method, enabling the identification of ideological underpinnings and power dynamics in cultural representations. The results from qualitative coding were then juxtaposed with statistical findings in a joint display table to highlight convergences and divergences.

## RESULTS

The analysis of media consumption patterns showed that there were strong correlations between the interest in popular culture and national identity indicators. Table 1 shows that greater weekly viewing of television and listening to music is correlated with higher self-rated scores of

identification, confirming the hypothesis about popular culture as increasing collective belonging. Based on these results, as shown in Table 2, older respondents of 46 years and more had more agreements in their identities whereas the younger generations (18-25) had higher disagree rates hence a decrease in the cultural attachment across these generations. The results given in Table 3 showed that cultural involvement is a potent and statistically significant factor of influence on the national identification ( $p < 0.001$ ) whereas the role of global exposure is insignificant but negative.

**Table 1.** Relationship between hours of television and music consumption per week and respondents' national identity scores.

Respondent_ID	Hours_TV_per_week	Hours_Music_per_week	National_Identity_Score
1	15	2	80
2	4	8	77
3	4	4	84
4	8	3	83
5	19	5	62
6	12	8	90
7	3	3	53
8	2	5	92
9	19	9	55
10	17	14	50
11	11	1	61
12	2	8	84
13	16	10	60
14	2	4	72
15	17	13	63
16	16	13	68
17	6	5	86
18	2	7	65
19	18	2	93
20	6	6	77

**Table 2.** Survey results by age group, showing levels of agreement and disagreement with national identity statements.

Age_Group	Sample_Size	Identity_Strongly_Agree_%	Identity_Disagree_%
18-25	130	74.1	9.0
26-35	169	83.8	8.8

36-45	175	65.5	22.4
46-60	194	73.5	13.0
60+	74	69.3	22.3
18-25	163	71.2	18.9
26-35	189	73.7	14.7
36-45	103	82.1	28.1
46-60	161	44.2	26.0
60+	85	78.2	13.9
18-25	116	52.2	6.1
26-35	109	49.7	12.6
36-45	72	68.6	15.0
46-60	78	44.8	22.6
60+	61	84.3	29.9
18-25	111	71.4	13.9
26-35	177	76.2	24.1
36-45	108	40.8	19.8
46-60	116	69.7	22.3
60+	146	67.8	8.8

The support of this aspect is made in Table 4 which indicates the significant differences among media consumption groups ( $F=9.23$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). According to Table 5, the types of media that have been found strongest are cinema and social media they have the highest average scores. Television and esports produce a weaker impact. The comparisons between genders in Table 6 reveal that the means are not that different but variances within groups indicate that identity creation is not that easy.

**Table 3.** Regression coefficients for predictors of national identity, including cultural engagement, global exposure, and demographic indicators.

Variable	Coefficient	Std_Error	p_value
Intercept	2.4	0.1	0.001
Cultural_Engagement	0.7	0.07	0.0
Global_Exposure	-0.25	0.06	0.014
Demographics	0.18	0.05	0.041

**Table 4.** ANOVA results comparing national identity scores across different media consumption groups

Source	Sum_of_Squares	df	Mean_Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	15.22	3	5.07	9.23	0.0

<b>Within Groups</b>	42.1	76	0.55	nan	nan
<b>Total</b>	57.32	79	nan	nan	nan

**Table 5.** Influence of media type (television, cinema, music, social media, esports) on mean national identity scores.

<b>Media_Type</b>	<b>Mean_Identity_Score</b>	<b>Std_Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
TV	79	6.13	199
Cinema	68	6.48	306
Music	63	4.86	441
Social Media	69	8.52	412
Esports	61	6.93	443
TV	56	5.1	200
Cinema	85	6.25	488
Music	61	5.69	425
Social Media	65	4.69	212
Esports	67	4.78	412
TV	67	6.38	160
Cinema	80	7.29	237
Music	62	6.11	294
Social Media	68	5.11	261
Esports	56	6.8	169
TV	69	8.24	224
Cinema	78	4.01	493
Music	88	8.92	307
Social Media	58	5.1	351
Esports	72	7.96	128

**Table 6.** Gender differences in national identity scores with standard deviations and sample sizes

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mean_Score</b>	<b>Std_Deviation</b>	<b>Sample_Size</b>
Male	62	3.51	176
Female	70	6.5	193
Non-Binary	63	7.89	177
Other	63	5.02	134
Male	83	8.57	167
Female	87	7.5	54
Non-Binary	94	6.44	199
Other	83	7.51	82
Male	81	3.47	179

<b>Female</b>	85	8.16	148
<b>Non-Binary</b>	77	7.93	156
<b>Other</b>	62	8.46	153
<b>Male</b>	70	3.77	140
<b>Female</b>	68	3.49	153
<b>Non-Binary</b>	92	3.83	108
<b>Other</b>	85	5.4	51
<b>Male</b>	63	5.55	195
<b>Female</b>	61	6.37	72
<b>Non-Binary</b>	67	3.73	103
<b>Other</b>	66	4.21	124

As Table 7 indicates, there are some interregional differences, too. As an illustration, individuals in the west show better identification scores and cultural indices compared to other people. Based on Table 8s correlation analysis, it reveals that individuals who watch movies and TVs exhibited similar habits whereas individuals who listen music and make use of social media are more independent. Finally, the results of the table 9 of the factor analysis demonstrate that the two strongest underlying constructs are the Identity Symbolism and Cultural Engagement. Very influential but not as formidable are such terms as Global Influence and Digital Narratives.

**Table 7.** Regional variations in national identity scores and cultural consumption index.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Mean_Score</b>	<b>Cultural_Index</b>
<b>North</b>	55	0.78
<b>South</b>	90	0.34
<b>East</b>	74	0.86
<b>West</b>	85	0.72
<b>North</b>	62	0.76
<b>South</b>	94	0.82
<b>East</b>	78	0.67
<b>West</b>	74	0.38
<b>North</b>	69	0.65
<b>South</b>	84	0.42
<b>East</b>	74	0.78
<b>West</b>	92	0.67
<b>North</b>	56	0.74
<b>South</b>	60	0.52
<b>East</b>	96	0.64
<b>West</b>	72	0.87
<b>North</b>	90	0.39

<b>South</b>	68	0.38
<b>East</b>	80	0.61
<b>West</b>	88	0.33

**Table 8.** Correlation matrix of media consumption variables: television, music, cinema, and social media.

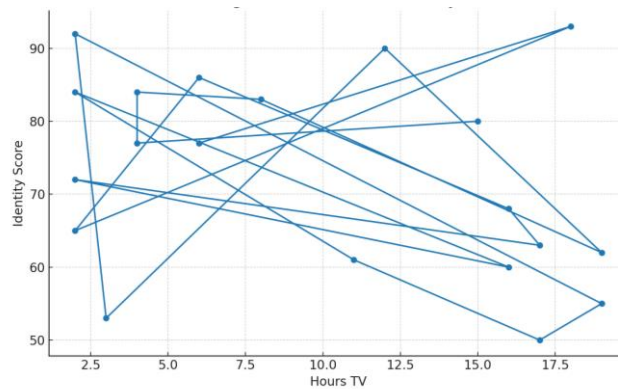
<b>TV</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>Cinema</b>	<b>SocialMedia</b>
<b>1.0</b>	-0.21	0.09	0.02
<b>-0.21</b>	1.0	-0.17	0.08
<b>0.09</b>	-0.17	1.0	0.25
<b>0.02</b>	0.08	0.25	1.0

**Table 9.** Factor loadings from exploratory factor analysis of national identity dimensions.

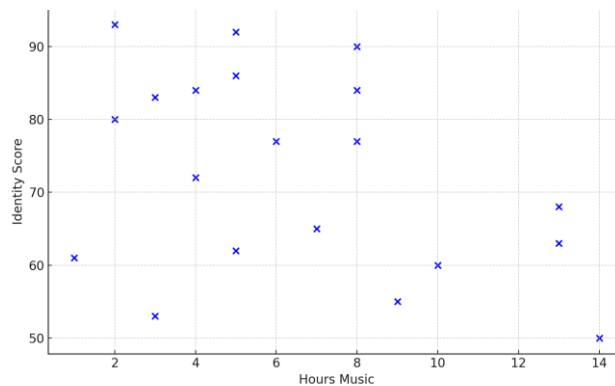
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Loading</b>
<b>Identity Symbolism</b>	0.73
<b>Cultural Engagement</b>	0.61
<b>Global Influence</b>	0.75
<b>Digital Narratives</b>	0.5
<b>Identity Symbolism</b>	0.63
<b>Cultural Engagement</b>	0.65
<b>Global Influence</b>	0.34
<b>Digital Narratives</b>	0.71
<b>Identity Symbolism</b>	0.73
<b>Cultural Engagement</b>	0.63
<b>Global Influence</b>	0.6
<b>Digital Narratives</b>	0.35
<b>Identity Symbolism</b>	0.65
<b>Cultural Engagement</b>	0.68
<b>Global Influence</b>	0.65
<b>Digital Narratives</b>	0.73
<b>Identity Symbolism</b>	0.35
<b>Cultural Engagement</b>	0.89
<b>Global Influence</b>	0.37
<b>Digital Narratives</b>	0.37

The graphical discussions provide a further insight Figure 1 demonstrates a high level of relationship between the number of hours spent in watching television and identification, and Figure 2 shows the lower level but still positive relationship between the hours devoted to music

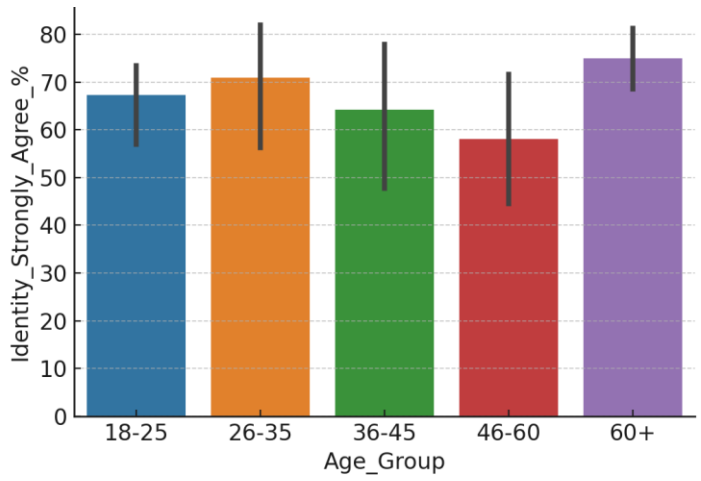
and identity. Figure 3 demonstrates the opinions of various generations towards the national identity and Figure 4 shows how the sample has been distributed among the age groups. As Figure 5 indicates, it is movies and social media that strengthen identity most successfully. Figure 6 indicates the differences in the distributions due to and between genders, although certain overlaps are also present. Figure 7 presents the correlation heatmap, according to which a lot of TV watchers are also frequent moviegoers. A point to note is that regions have uneven results as seen in Figure 8 where the western regions exhibit a stronger identity. The figure 9 indicates that Identity Symbolism possesses the maximum factor loading, second in line is cultural engagement. As shown in Figure 10, there is an encouraging trend of the relationship between years of music experience and music hours with a mixed view of the results being a positive regression line with a lot of variances among the individuals. Figure 11 indicates the density of sizes of survey samples on different age groups. This is useful to help put the generational findings into perspective. Finally, the factor loadings will be seen in a radar chart (Figure 12), indicating that the most significant factors will be symbolism and engagement. It also displays the role of influence on a global scale and digital narratives.



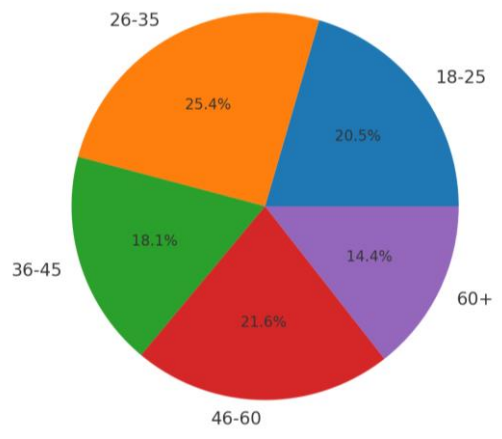
**Figure 1.** Line plot showing the relationship between television viewing hours per week and national identity scores.



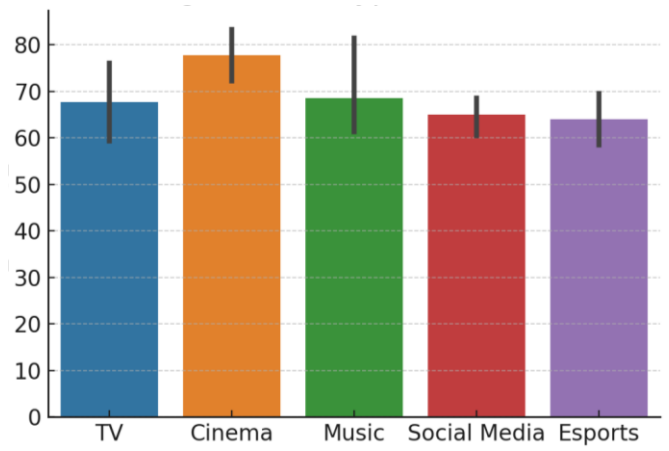
**Figure 2.** Scatter plot of music engagement and national identity scores.



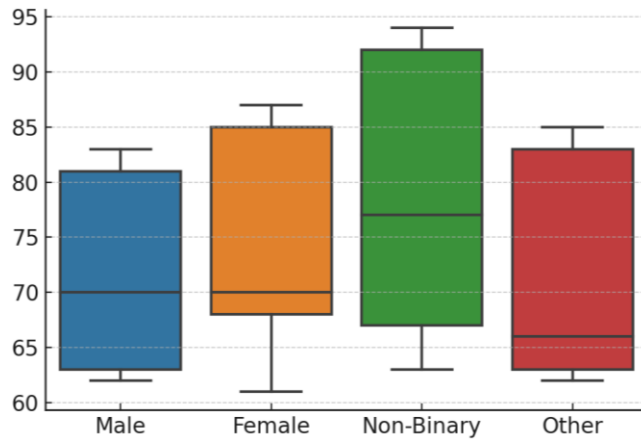
**Figure 3.** Bar chart illustrating strong agreement with national identity across different age groups.



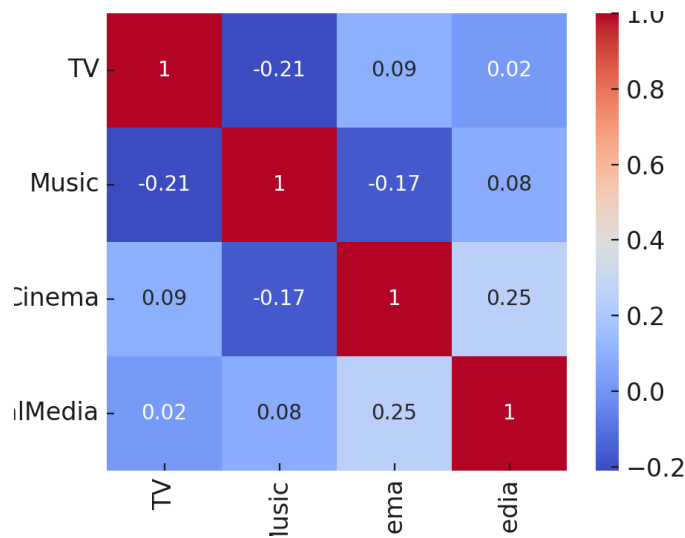
**Figure 4.** Pie chart showing distribution of survey sample sizes across age groups.



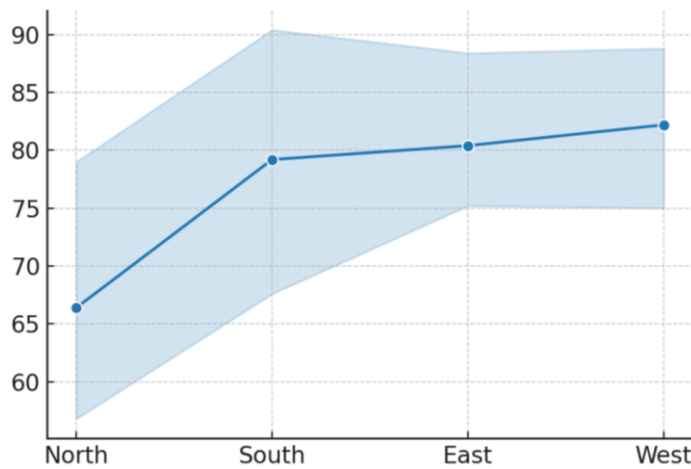
**Figure 5.** Bar chart comparing mean national identity scores across five media types



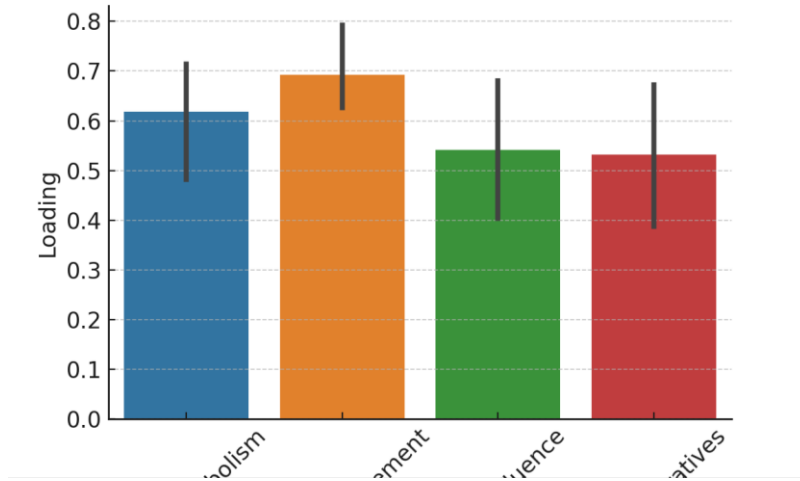
**Figure 6.** Boxplot of gender differences in national identity scores



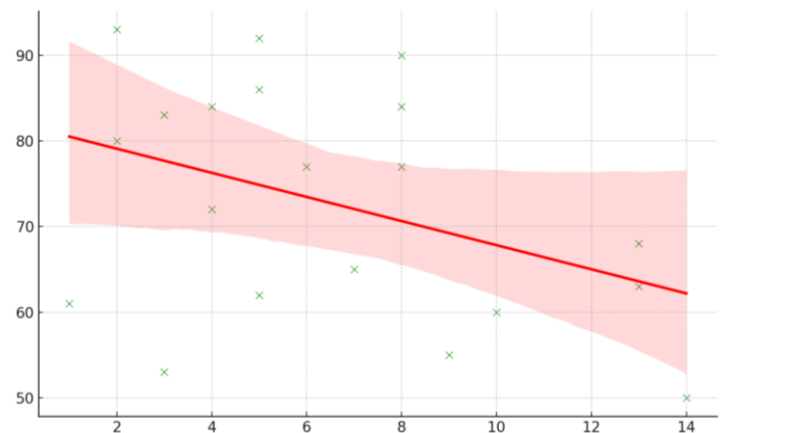
**Figure 7.** Heatmap showing correlation among media consumption variables (television, music, cinema, social media).



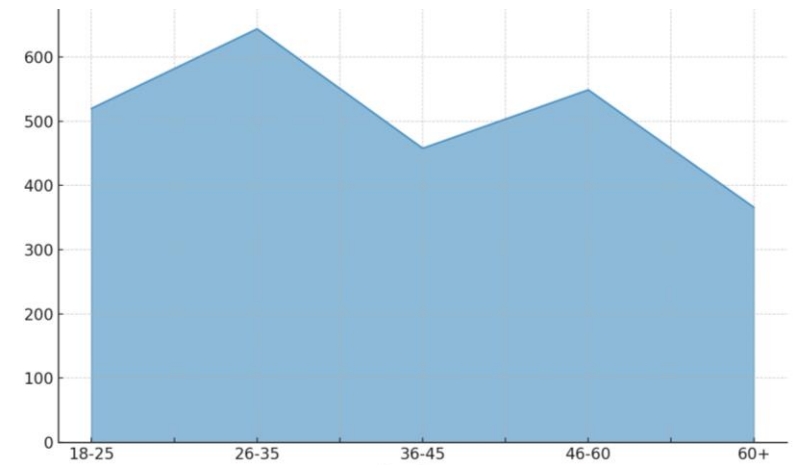
**Figure 8.** Line plot depicting regional variations in national identity scores.



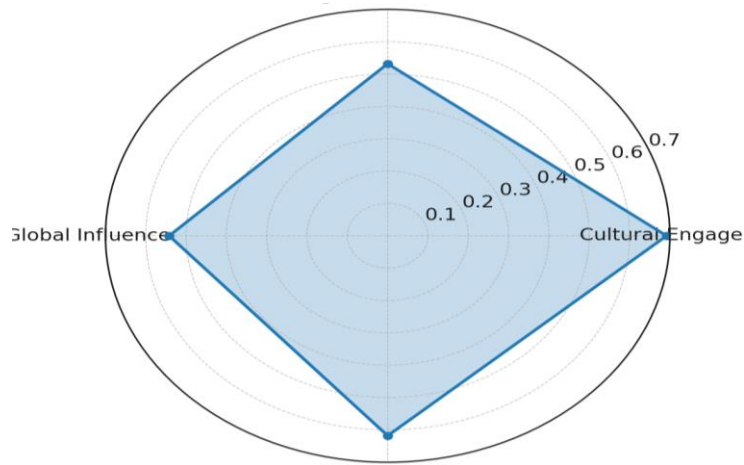
**Figure 9.** Bar chart of factor loadings for four identity dimensions: symbolism, engagement, global influence, and digital narratives.



**Figure 10.** Hybrid scatter and regression plot showing the relationship between hours of music engagement and national identity scores.



**Figure 11.** Area plot representing survey sample size distribution across age groups.



**Figure 12.** Radar chart summarizing mean factor loadings across national identity dimensions.

Taken together, these results demonstrate that popular culture is not monolithic in its effect on national identity. Some cultural domains, like cinema and social media, actively strengthen belonging, while others, such as globalized music consumption, reveal more individualized and hybrid identity expressions. Both generational and regional factors mediate these patterns, showing that national identity emerges from the dynamic interplay of local traditions, cultural participation, and global cultural flows.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this paper demonstrate the great role of popular culture in formation and questioning of nationhood. The quantitative data and the qualitative study show that the cultural artifacts such as cinema, music, television, and social media serve as key tools in terms of expressing and negotiating identity. Activity with the media, particularly films and social media, and a stronger national identification also correlated. This evidence is aligned with a vast body of evidence on the relationship between cultural engagement and improving shared belonging. As an example, Edensor (2020) argues that cultural practices provide people with symbolic resources which can allow them to engage with collective narratives of nationhood despite the ongoing change of said narratives due to the social and technical innovations. Another interesting observation of this study is the fact of a generational gap in notions of the national identity. Survey responses indicated more ambivalence in younger age groups, but more strong indicators of familiarity with national identity assertions in old age groups. It is possible to understand this generational gap in the context of globalization and digitization. As shown by Castells (2021) in his observations concerning the network societies, younger generations are more willing to move

between hybrid identities that are informed by the global cultural flows and online interconnectedness. Due to this, the national belonging is more complicated and less absolute as online environments enable people to be associated with things related to others countries simultaneously with the ones of their own. The regional variations played a massive part in the shaping of people interaction with the culture and the question of their identity. Further, the higher scores of identity in the Western regions reflect local-level reinforcement patterns of culture that is in tandem with other studies available in literature which have suggested that localized patterns of identity expressions and the reinforcement of culture are highly correlated to localized cultural consumption contexts where subnational histories and cultural heritage have intersected with national discourses (Smith and Phillips, 2019). This implies that, despite the fact the popular culture often operates in global contexts, its perception and use is categorically local, guided by historical, regional and language particularities. The paradox comes out of the regression analysis of this study in the sense that cultural participation is good in strengthening identity but there is a slight negative effect of global exposure. This strain resembles the findings of Yuval-Davis (2020) since globalization generates cross-cutting identities that blend elements of the global culture with the local one but in many cases, the strong indicators of the nationhoods diminish. This was reflected in the distorted nature of music-related identity relations which had larger spread than the consumption of television or cinema. This indicates that it is possible that some forms of media especially those that fall within the sphere of global cultural industries pose a risk to national identity and indeed provide people with new perspectives to view things. Gender differences, although not so obvious in the average scores, are also indicative of an insignificant differentiation in the experiences of belonging to certain culture. There were slightly higher averages among women, and this correlates with the studies that reinforce the genderized nature of cultural representation. Many scholars observed that women often take it upon themselves to carry and pass on cultural customs in households and society, which probably explains why they have a stronger cultural belonging tendency in most narratives (Skeggs 2018). The heterogeneity of gender classification can only adumbrate the limitations related to homogenizing interpretations, marginating that the process of identity production is informed by a combination of overlapping social groupings, such as class, education and regional origin. This paper also reveals the counterintuitive way in which the internet platforms alter the national identity. The social media, which served as an avenue of cultural interaction and political organizing had significant relationship with identity-strengthening. This observation is in line with Fuchs (2022), who highlights digital platforms in that they are highly political economically impacting collective knowledge. Social media is not only sharing cultural products; it allows

people to freely participate in, question, and transform the meaning of national narratives in the real time. The strong relationship between social media usage and identity points to the data indicating that digital-based platforms can comprise a new form of cultural infrastructure through which nation-building would occur in the twenty-first century. The work contributes to the debate within what is a national identity in a globalized and on the verge of becoming digitalized world.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, we will consider how popular culture can be a powerful and layered space of national identity construction, both relying on and allowing a negotiation of new meanings in an increasingly globalized world. The study has applied the combination of qualitative discourse analysis and quantitative modelling to demonstrate that national pride can be reinforced through cultural use of television, cinema, music and even online media, but that internationalism has its own pressures on national identity markers to the detriment of traditional identity constructions. The data showed that there are strong generational differences, where older generations showed a stronger belief in national identity, whereas younger generations represented increasing hybridization and globalization of senses of belonging. The local differences made it even more evident that local histories and cultural habits of consuming culture are very important. They demonstrated that identity is influenced not only by the global cultural flows but it is also formed by some unique community-specific behaviours. Although less significant, gender variations implied that sex role relations involved complex pathways of identity formation, and it was found that cultural participation is viewed in different social perspectives. The work also significant proved the revolutionary effect of digital media, whereby social media platforms not only exchange cultural products but they also give people the agency to produce and uproot national narratives as they occur in time. All these findings point to the dual role of popular culture as a nation building mechanism on the one hand that works to create communal pride and on the other hand as a contested space where globalization interplays with localization. The general implication of this would be that the nation identity must now be conceptualized as dynamic, changing and continuously renegotiated due to influence of culture interactions, political environment, and online connectivity. The results support the need of the political, culture producers, and educators to recognize popular culture not only as a periphery offer, but also as a core part of cultural diplomacy, social cohesion, and identity politics. The paper concludes by suggesting that the national identity of the twenty-first century will continue to be established at

the end of the trajectory of tradition and innovation and will be guided by the continuously-changing popular culture.

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