

The Impact of Cultural Relevance and Content Localization on the Utility of YouTube Videos for Autism Support in Pakistan: Perspective of Teachers and Parents

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Abstract

Lack of access to formal autism services in Pakistan has seen the use of online resources like YouTube as an informal source of relevant information pertaining to parenting and teaching children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). However, the existing autism content mostly made in the West poses a question of its cultural scale and practicality in regards to the contexts of Pakistan, including language, societal, education. The paper explores cultural relevance and content localization concerning usage of YouTube video on developing the understanding and application of autism supportive strategies between teachers and parents in Pakistan. A quantitative, survey-based research design was used, and 100 parents and teachers in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, who could rely on YouTube to provide information on autism, were interviewed. The survey calculated perceptions of accessibility to the language, culture presence, and how watched content was translated to actual action at home and classroom level. The results show that there was strong relationship between localized content in terms of culture and language and strategy implementation where the participants reported considerable improvement in understanding, confidence and application to videos resembling their local languages, family structure as well as educational realities. On the contrary, Western-based content was generally viewed as challenging to use as it did not fit contextually and had resource constraints. Though it was known that YouTube was an increasing confidence platform, it would only work effectively depending on cultural congruency. The research finding is that localization goes beyond translation and is essential in the digital translation of awareness in any meaningful action. These findings highlight the importance of culturally sensitive, Pakistan-specific Autism Multimedia message in order to empower digital health communication and enhance care practices in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, YouTube, Cultural Relevance, Content Localization, Pakistan Health Communication, Practical Utility, Educational Technology, Digital Awareness.

Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has become an urgent issue of public health and education in Pakistan, and the recent estimates suggest that the problem affects one and a half million children (Saeed, 2021).). However, there is a conspicuous lack of every facility of diagnosis and support even amidst the rising prevalence. Households go around a bare field full of a severe shortage of

qualified specialists, the continuation of social stigma, and institutional challenges that delay early diagnosis (Haider, 2024). These issues are aggravated by geographical inaccessibility and the use of traditional medicine in rural and semi-urban areas, and thus place parents and educators in the difficult task of supporting multifaceted neuro-developmental requirements with minimal professional advice. (Ms. Shumaila Khalid, 2025). Without localized institutional assistance such online platforms, especially YouTube, have borne the brunt of being important repositories of just-in-time data. To caregivers and educators in Pakistan, YouTube also brings a visual intuitive and affordable source that avoids traditional obstacles to expert knowledge. (Alasmari, 2025) Empirical literature suggests that video modeling and multimedia learning proves particularly effective with autistic students who typically have strong visual-perceptual skills. However, there is a serious issue of so-called cultural mismatch as most high-quality autism materials are made in Western resource-rich settings. Most of these videos feature interventions that are specific to nuclear families, small classes, and English-speaking environments, which might not align with multi-generational households and class rooms with limited resources by the standards of Pakistan. (Sadia Mushtaq, 2024). As a result, the usefulness of such digital materials greatly depends on the localization of content and cultural applicability. The notion of localization implies that it is more than the work of translating a specific language; it involves the need to adapt a strategy to the socio-economic backgrounds and cultural traditions of the intended audience (Naderbagi A, 2024). Even though the Western-centric content would improve the overall understanding, its practical use is often hampered as the recommended strategies appear to be unfamiliar or cannot be deployed within the Pakistani systemic environment (Saifuddin, 2025). This paper argues that in order to transform the YouTube into a passivity tool of awareness into an active tool of empowerment, the content should correlate with the local linguistic requirements, including the Urdu language and regional language, and cultural expectations. This study attempts to find out the influence of cultural relevance on the actual practice of support strategies in Pakistan by studying the views of the front line stakeholders who are the parents and the teachers.

Research Objective

The research aims to determine how cultural salience and localized content in YouTube video affect knowledge and application of support strategies to children with autism by Pakistani teachers and parents.

Research Questions

1. How much do teachers in Pakistan and parents in Pakistan consider YouTube materials on autism culturally relevant and linguistically adequate?
2. What is the impact of culturally relevant and localized YouTube content on the pragmatic strategies and approaches applied by educators and parents in the support of autistic children in Pakistan?

Literature Review:

The current research needs a thorough analysis of world-wide and local digital health communication and ecosystems, and specifically the intersection of YouTube discourse, linguistic localization, and cultural salience as the latter relates to autism support in Pakistan. The relative lack of specialized medical care, especially developmental pediatricians, and the cost of prohibitive care in lowest and middle-income contexts has both produced a switch of primary burden of care in clinical facilities to both home-based and online settings. According to (Alasmari, 2025), mothers of children with autism are turning to social media, as a lifeline source of health information, urging to attribute the visual affordances of such platforms as YouTube to

the factors influencing potential users to bypass traditional obstacles in geographic distance and long queue queues. (Ms. Shumaila Khalid, 2025), goes further to argue that despite having a paradigm shift opportunity of digital and assistive technologies offered to Pakistan to alleviate service gaps, their practical use will often be limited due to the absence of systematic professional training and a unified policy that measures the quality, accuracy and relevance of the content accessed by citizens. Another issue that has emerged in the recent literature is the so-called cultural gap between the autism products created in the West and South Asian specific socio-cultural condition. As (Saifuddin, 2025) notes, the majority of evidence-based practices (EBPs) that are presented on YouTube are proven in high-resource and mostly Western settings and may not reflect multi-generational households, structures of collective decision-making, and different levels of literacy that are common in Pakistan. This gap highlights the need of localization which is an exhaustive process that requires more than translations; this should involve adjustment of the social validity so that local caregivers can be able to implement interventions that are socially, economically and physically achievable like the specific play-based strategies or the type of behavioral management techniques. An example would be how a video that advises a child to have a quiet sensory-neutral room would be practically impossible in a family that lives in a multi-generational and overcrowded apartment in Karachi. Linguistic appropriateness is one of the key factors of the successfulness with which an intervention will be implemented in both classroom and home-based environments. Whereas there is plenty of English-language content, which also often has high quality, it creates a major digital divide among teachers and parents who retain more fluency in Urdu or the materials of their regional languages that include Punjabi, Sindhi, or Pashto. According to Kamran .(Kamran, 2023) when used in instructional videos are not based on local pedagogical values, or schools in Pakistan feature high student-to-teacher ratios, educators tend to view videos as aspirational, as opposed to practical. Such outlook makes a discouragement to the teachers to make efforts in effecting the proposed changes. Also, (Zohaira Chaudhry, 2025)claims that to make autism support truly efficient in the situation, digital help should clearly address the particulars of the local religious frameworks and the importance of the extended family in caregiving, which is not always present in global materials yet became the key aspects of Pakistani identity. The ultimate scale of utility of a You Tube video is its ability to enable a caregiver to stop being an observer and start taking action. The article by Divan (Divan, 2015)) shows that caregiver-mediated models adapted well to the low-to-middle-income countries (LMICs) have high social validity and clinical efficacy. On the other hand, a lack of such adaptation leads (Sadia Mushtaq, 2024) to conclude that Pakistani parents usually are overwhelmed by an imported flow of advice that requires specific tools, costly toys, or very elaborate settings that are not available to the families. This creates a utility gap wherein the information is understood but not usable creating a feeling of ineptitude and frustration instead of empowerment. In its turn, this implies that the development of passive awareness into practicable utility depends on the localization of content that could appeal to the systemic realities, monetary inputs, and cultural priorities of the Pakistani viewers.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, survey-based research design to explore how cultural relevance and content localization in YouTube videos impact the capacity of parents and teachers in Pakistan to apply autism-support strategies.

The quantitative component utilized a structured online survey

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeHcxF4gH1RWjTHUxXhmKWck0iyZ0-hUspt62TyWh4q1-Zx8g/viewform> (*The Impact of Cultural Relevance and Content Localization on the Utility of YouTube Videos for Autism Support in Pakistan*, n.d.) to explore how the availability of localized content (e.g., Urdu/regional languages and local family structures)

influences the implementation of support strategies in homes and classrooms. This approach allows for statistical analysis, providing measurable insights into the study's objectives. The questionnaire tool was to be designed as a way of obtaining empirical information which is directly gathered through parents and teachers who are considered as the major caregivers and educators of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The responses provided some measurable results concerning the importance of variables like exposure to the content focused on the West and localization, the notions of linguistic accessibility and the level of social validity of the manifested strategies in the context of determining the ability of the participants to employ behavioral and educational changes. The methodological consistency in the data collection was done in the realization of the structured design of the instrument, which made the identification of significant patterns in relation to the dichotomy between digital awareness and tangible action possible.

Population and Sampling Techniques

This question targeted a specific target population group of parents and educators living in the major urban areas of Pakistan and using YouTube as the source of information concerning autism. It used purposive sampling in order to obtain a relevant and specialized representation. Data were collected focusing on the members of the Global Special School and the Autism Care Foundation which were considered as one of the most important units of measurement of practitioners and caregivers in the field. Besides, parents and teachers were also included in the sample and targeted by recruitment of psychologists practicing in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, specifically those who had children with ASD. These cities were chosen due to the high levels of concentration of special education institutions and their relatively high rates of activity on online platforms and among caregivers.

Data Collection

The data collection was planned to be done during November-December 2025. The questionnaire was sent online through WhatsApp, email, and professional networks, to contact parents and teachers of the twin cities. One-hundred participants joined the study including 46 teachers, 48 parents, and 6 persons that presented both as parents and teachers. Google Forms were used to anonymize all answers and log it in Google Sheets to protect the confidentiality of the participants and maintain the data integrity.

Data Analysis

All the 100 participants were considered to examine the relationships between the perceived cultural relevance and the use of instructional strategies. Basic statistical manipulation and frequency distribution were used to identify the trends in linguistic preferences, perceived authenticity of the Western content, and the occurrence of the effective implementation of the strategies. The resultant research findings provide certain clues to understanding the way in which localisation of digital information influences the decision-making process and practicality of the methods used by Pakistani parents and teachers in supporting the children with autism spectrum.

Findings:

The quantitative findings from the survey, involving 100 teachers and parents of autistic children in Pakistan, provide a detailed understanding of how cultural relevance and content localization influence the utility of YouTube videos in autism support.

- **Exposure to Non-Localized Autism Content**

5. Most autism-related YouTube videos I watch reflect Western contexts rather than Pakistani realities.

108 responses

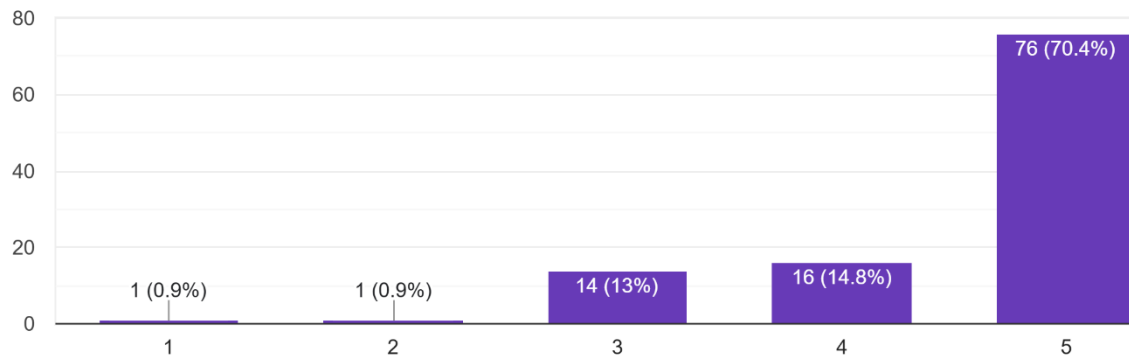


Chart 1: 71% of respondents' report that mostly autism-related YouTube videos reflect Western contexts rather than Pakistani realities.

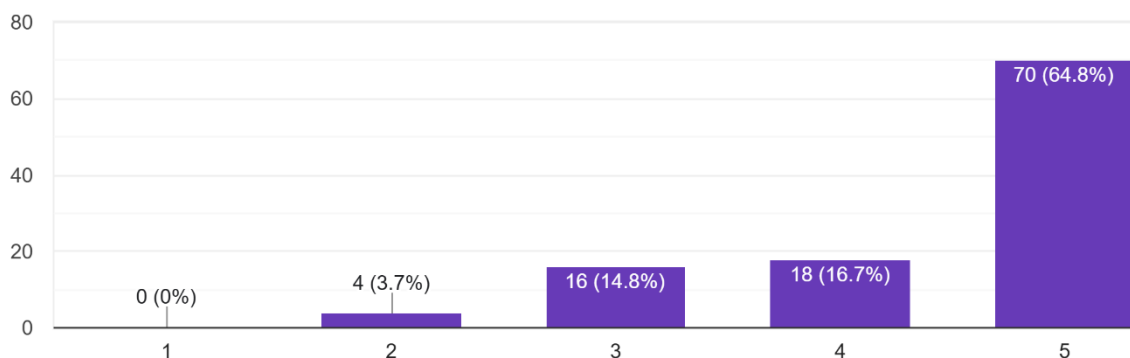
The vast majority of respondents ($n = 71$, 71%) had a highly positive response to the question of whether the majority of the autism-related videos on YouTube were created in the context of western cultural and educational paradigm. This implies that Pakistani educators and parents are mainly exposed to content that does not entirely conform to the indigenous family, classroom and societal context, which helps highlight the existence of a major gap in culturally relevant online content in Pakistan.

Perceptions of Linguistic Appropriateness

Chart 2: 83% believe autism-related videos in Urdu or local languages are easier to understand and relate to.

6. Autism videos in Urdu or local languages are easier for me to understand and relate to.

108 responses



Language has emerged as a critical factor affecting comprehension and engagement. A large proportion of respondents ($n = 83$, 83%) either agreed or strongly agreed that videos presented in Urdu or local languages were easier to understand than English-only content. Although English remained the most commonly accessed language (46%), a notable proportion preferred bilingual content (English and Urdu), reflecting the need for linguistically inclusive communications.

- **Influence of Cultural Relevance on Practical Application**

8. Culturally relevant YouTube videos help me apply autism support strategies in my home or classroom.

108 responses

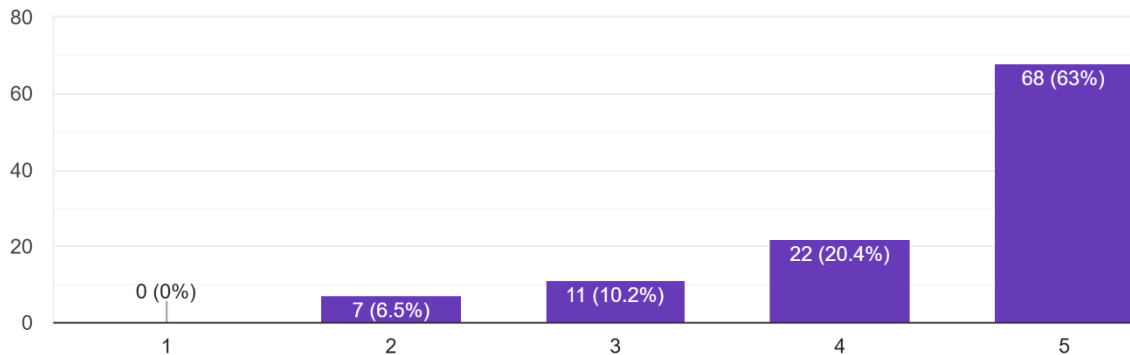


Chart 3: 85% report that culturally relevant YouTube videos help them apply autism support strategies more effectively.

The findings revealed a strong relationship between cultural relevance and practical application. A significant majority of respondents (n = 85, 85%) agreed or strongly agreed that videos reflecting Pakistani cultural and educational realities enabled them to apply autism support strategies more effectively in classroom and home environments.

- **Barriers Created by Culturally Mismatched Content**

9. I find it difficult to apply autism strategies from YouTube videos that do not match Pakistan's educational or social realities.

108 responses

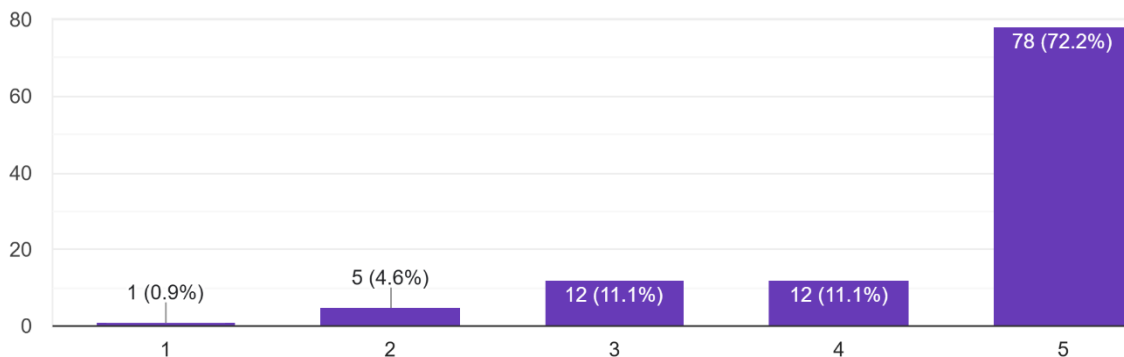


Chart 4: 75% report difficulty applying strategies from culturally mismatched YouTube videos.

In contrast, a large proportion of respondents (n = 75, 75%) strongly agreed that they found it difficult to apply strategies shown in videos that did not match Pakistan's social norms, resources, or educational systems. This finding suggests that cultural mismatch acts as a significant barrier, reducing the practical usefulness of informative content.

- **Confidence Gained Through YouTube Content**

10. After watching autism-related YouTube videos, I feel more confident supporting an autistic child.

108 responses

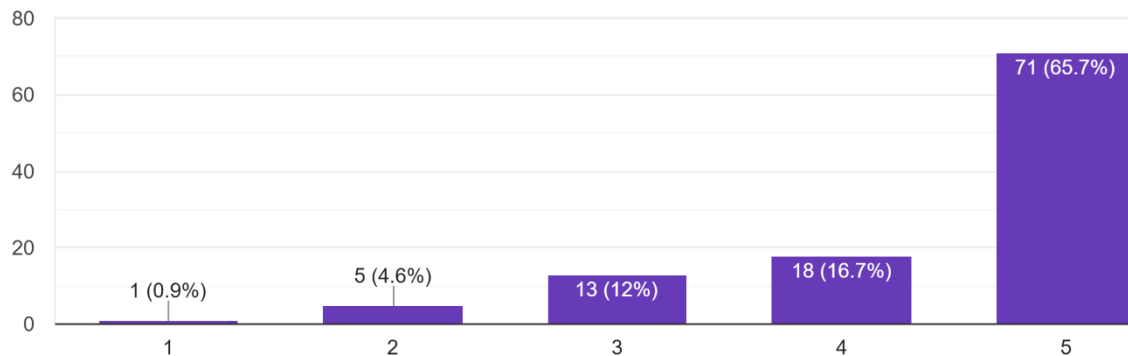


Chart 5: 69% report increased confidence in supporting autistic children after watching YouTube videos.

Despite limitations related to cultural alignment, YouTube videos were perceived as confidence-enhancing by the participants. Most respondents (n = 69, 69%) strongly agreed that watching autism-related YouTube content increased their confidence in supporting autistic children, indicating YouTube’s role as an empowering informational platform when content is accessible.

- **Preference for Localized Representation**

7. YouTube videos that show Pakistani family structures, classrooms, or social norms feel more relevant to me.

108 responses

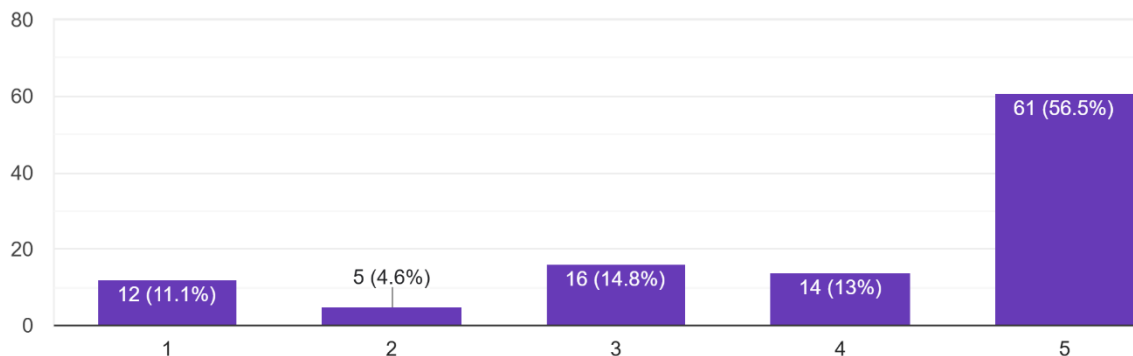


Chart 6: 71% feel videos showing Pakistani families and classrooms are more relevant and useful.

The respondents expressed a clear preference for content depicting familiar environments. A combined 71% agreed or strongly agreed that videos portraying Pakistani family dynamics, classroom settings, and social interactions were more relevant, reinforcing the importance of contextual representation in autism-related educational content.

- **Demand for Localized and Culturally Responsive Content**

11. In your opinion, what is the biggest limitation of autism-related YouTube content for Pakistani parents and teachers?

108 responses

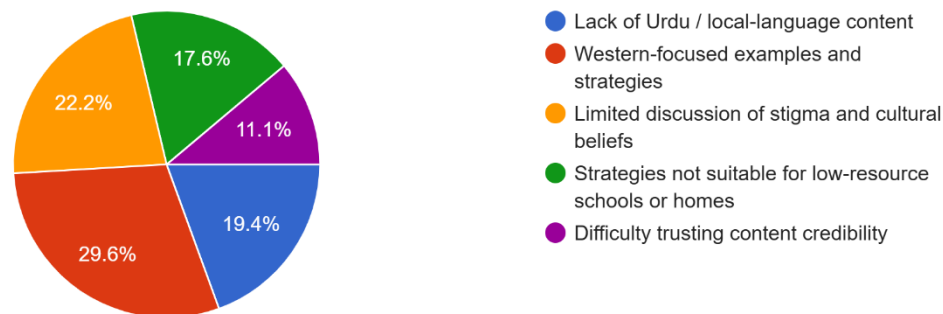


Chart 7: 83% believe localized and culturally adapted YouTube content would improve autism support practices in Pakistan.

A strong majority of respondents indicated that culturally localized, linguistically accessible, and context-aware YouTube content would significantly enhance their ability to understand autism and apply support strategies. Respondents favored content featuring local professionals, real-life Pakistani case examples, and culturally sensitive explanations. Together, these findings demonstrate that cultural relevance and content localization play crucial roles in shaping how Pakistani teachers and parents understand and apply autism support strategies on YouTube. While YouTube remains a widely used and confidence-building resource, its effectiveness is significantly constrained by Western-centric content and language barriers for non-native English speakers. The results clearly support the research objective and questions by showing that localized, culturally responsive content enhances comprehension, confidence, and practical application, whereas culturally mismatched content limits real-world implementation.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore how cultural relevance and content localization influence the utility of YouTube videos for autism support in Pakistan, particularly in shaping teachers' and parents' understanding and application of support strategies for children with autism. The findings provide important insights into the complex relationship between digital media, cultural context, and practical caregiving in Pakistan's socio-educational environment. The high proportion of respondents who perceived autism-related YouTube content as predominantly Western in orientation (71%) confirms the existence of a significant cultural mismatch, aligning with earlier research that highlights the dominance of Western narratives in digital health and educational media (Sadia Mushtaq, 2024). Culturally misaligned autism content limits practical utility by presenting intervention models that do not reflect Pakistan's family structures, classroom realities, or resource constraints. This finding supports (Kamran, 2023) argument that when strategies appear unrealistic or culturally distant, users perceive them as aspirational rather than actionable. Linguistic appropriateness emerged as a central factor shaping comprehension and engagement. The strong agreement among respondents that Urdu or bilingual content is easier to understand (83%) reinforces sociocultural learning theories that emphasize language as a primary mediator of knowledge acquisition (VYGOTSKY, 1978). This result aligns with findings by (Zohaira Chaudhry, 2025), who note that English-dominant autism resources in Pakistan often exclude

caregivers and teachers with limited English proficiency, thereby widening the digital divide. While English-language videos were frequently accessed, preference for bilingual content suggests that localization must go beyond access and address meaningful understanding. Critically, the findings demonstrate that cultural relevance directly influences the practical application of autism support strategies. A substantial majority of respondents (85%) reported that culturally relevant YouTube videos enabled them to apply strategies more effectively in home and classroom settings. This supports Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which posits that child development interventions are most effective when aligned with the individual's immediate social and cultural environment. Similar conclusions were drawn by (Divan, 2015), who found that caregiver-mediated autism interventions adapted for low- and middle-income countries showed higher social validity and implementation success. Conversely, the difficulty reported in applying strategies from culturally mismatched content (75%) highlights the limitations of unadopted Western-based guidance. This mirrors findings by (Terol, 2025), who argue that without localization, even evidence-based practices risk remaining theoretical rather than functional. Strategies requiring specialized tools, small class sizes, or controlled environments are often incompatible with Pakistani classrooms and multi-generational households, leading to frustration rather than empowerment. Despite these barriers, YouTube was widely perceived as a confidence-building resource, with 69% of respondents reporting increased confidence in supporting autistic children. These findings echo (Alasmari, 2025) observation that digital platforms serve as psychological support systems for caregivers in contexts where professional services are limited. However, as demonstrated in this study, confidence alone does not ensure effective practice. Without cultural and linguistic alignment, increased awareness does not consistently translate into sustained behavioral change. The strong preference for content depicting Pakistani families, classrooms, and social interactions (71%) further emphasizes the importance of representation in digital health communication. Similar to how trusted spokespersons enhance message credibility in crisis communication, localized representation increases perceived realism and trust in autism-related content (Gay, 2010). Respondents' demand for culturally responsive content (83%) signals a clear public need for media that reflects local realities rather than imported frameworks. Overall, these findings affirm that localization is not merely a matter of translation but a process of cultural adaptation that determines whether YouTube functions as a tool for passive awareness or active empowerment. This study extends the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from Pakistan, a context that remains underrepresented in autism and digital media research, and underscores the need for culturally grounded digital interventions to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The main interest of this research will be the perceptions of teachers and parents towards YouTube autism content and how cultural relevance and content localization will influence their perceptions and adoption of strategies and practice of autism as support in Pakistan. The research failed to assess the clinical usefulness of particular autism interventions, as well as the medical and diagnostic outcomes of the autism spectrum disorder. It rather dwells on the communicative and educative value of digital media as informal support system in Pakistani context. The results reveal that despite the evident affordability and trustworthiness of YouTube as a source of information, cultural and language correspondence largely determine the practical utility of this media. Nevertheless, the findings of this research might not be applicable to the whole nation as it was only constrained to the key cities in Islamabad, and Rawalpindi where access to online resources as well as the educational facilities and awareness of autism can be relatively high compared to the rural territories. Opinions expressed in the countryside or underrepresented areas, where the level of digital literacy and Internet penetration varies dramatically, can deliver different results.

Also, the research was based on self-reported survey data leaving the opportunity of bias in response, such as social desirability and recall bias. It is possible that the participants had overreported a positive interaction with YouTube material or their confidence in strategy implementation due to perceived expectations. The lack of demographic indicators, including the educational level, the number of years in the teaching profession, the socioeconomic background, or the specific urban-rural categorization of the surveyed cities, does not allow achieving more detailed subgroup or stratified analysis. Nonetheless, this research offers valuable knowledge on how the cultural relevance and localization defines the process of digital awareness to the practical action in supporting autism. It highlights the importance of contextually-based, linguistically-accessible online content to make sure that YouTube should not just serve as an informational platform, but as an instrument of successful and realistic support of autistic children in Pakistan.

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