



Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

## **An Analytical Study of Theatre Activism as a Catalyst for Social Change in Pakistan**

**Dr. Adil Aziz**

Department of Mass Communication Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

Email: [adil.aziz@lcwu.edu.pk](mailto:adil.aziz@lcwu.edu.pk)

**Dr. Zaeem Yasin**

Associate Professor Department of Mass Communication Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

Email: [zaeem.yasin@lcwu.edu.pk](mailto:zaeem.yasin@lcwu.edu.pk)

**Sheharbano Anwer**

Department of Mass Communication Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

Email: [Shehrbanoanwar94@gmail.com](mailto:Shehrbanoanwar94@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores how theatre serves as a medium for social change and human rights advocacy in Pakistan. An analysis of the literature reveals a significant gap: the absence of a journalistic perspective on theatre. To address this, a qualitative methodology was employed, involving in-depth interviews with showbiz reporters from the country. Purposive sampling was highly beneficial for this study design, as it allows for the selection of specific individuals who are most relevant for collecting research data. The research was conducted through the lens of public service media theory, which supports the overall objectives of the study. All respondents agree that theatrical activities were very limited after the partition, and now they have nearly come to an end. Various segments of society share the responsibility for the decline of this art form. The issues of social change and activism appear to be largely irrelevant in this context. Occasionally, a few theatre performances were observed, which reflected the responsibilities of public service.

**Keywords:** Theatre, Medium, Issues, Arts, Drama, Effects, Challenges, Activism, Commercial, Parallel.

Theatre is a mirror to society, reflecting its flaws, challenges, and ambitions. Theatre has been used for different purposes since the Greek period. It is known as a major element of culture (Asghar, 2018). Since ancient times, the Indo-Pak region has had a great treasure and practice of this culture (Bilal, 2018). In ancient times, religious and cultural festivals were celebrated through performances, i.e., summoning gods and influencing nature, as with rain dances and healing ceremonies (Cohen, 2017). Initially, the art of theatre was used to demonstrate the religious practices and teachings all over the world and in the sub-continent. Gradually, it became a medium of education, propagation, information and entertainment (EBEWO, 2009). Now the theatre is an effective tool for change; a tool for communication and development all over the world. In human civilization and culture, theatre (Folk media) has deep roots. "Theatre, music, and dance are the three traditional art forms which have been part of human culture" (Nag, 2013). Theatre reflects the culture and makes it more persuasive to influence the public. The United Nations has been using theatre for some proliferation projects to bring awareness, education and entertainment to



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

the people. On the other hand, many countries around the world are utilizing theatre for development, democracy, education, public awareness and many other projects. In Pakistan, a country rich in cultural diversity and historical complexities, theatre has long served as a medium for expression, dialogue, and dissent. From conventional folk performances to present-day plays, theatre has evolved as an influential tool for activism, addressing pressing social issues such as gender inequality, political corruption, and human rights across the globe. As the nation struggles with numerous social challenges, theatre offers a unique platform for marginalized voices, nurturing community engagement and awareness. Understanding the dynamics of theatre activism can illuminate its potential as a medium for societal transformation. This paper aims to analyze the impact of theatre activism in Pakistan, exploring how theatrical performances contribute to social change and empower communities. For this purpose, qualitative methodology was carried out, and the researcher collected data from experienced showbiz reporters in the country through in-depth interviews. Selecting showbiz reporters for the study makes the research more reliable because they observe theatre activities daily and have a better understanding of the growth or decline of theatre in the country. The study aims to evaluate entertainment journalists' perspectives on theatrical events using public service media theory. They are well-connected with theatre actors, directors, and owners, which is why they can accurately describe the real situation of theatre drama in Pakistan, including issues, activism, and the challenges faced by organizations.

### **Theatre in Pakistan 2010 to 2020**

Pakistan National Council of Arts organized a theatre festival in Islamabad in 2011. Several theatre groups from Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar, Skardu, Muzaffarabad, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rawalpindi/ Islamabad participated in the festival. A total of 22 plays were played at this festival. Despite the festival, these dramas are being performed throughout the year in different places in Pakistan. Character Dhela, Puk Gyan Ambian, Tera Jalwa, Chan Chan de Samne were being performed in Mehfil theatre, Naz, Tamasil and an Arts Council. The "Mohinjdaró Hotel" theatre play was played by Ajoka based on religious terrorism. "America Chalo" was played at the Alhamra Art Council. In 2012, a three-day theatre festival was organized by Ajoka Theatre in collaboration with the Punjab Information and Culture Department. Punjab Lok Raqs also organized a theatre festival in 2012. The second youth theatre festival was arranged in Larkana in 2012. Avanti musical theatre drama was performed at the Karachi Arts Council in 2012. Masti was played in Al-Falah theatre, Lahore, in 2012. NAPA organized a theatre festival in Karachi, and CHANNAN, a community health organization, arranged a community theatre festival in Lahore in 2013. The year 2014 was full of stage shows, musicals, comedies, and plays highlighting social issues and political satire. KopyKats Productions, under the patronage of Anwar Maqsood, has dominated the theatre landscape in the country. The play opened in Lahore in March as a part of Ajoka's 30-year celebration. Ajoka also performed its popular plays, such as "Dara", "Bullha" and the Manto titled "Kaun Hae Ye Ghustakh" throughout the year in 2014. The Mass Foundation in Lahore took the bold step of tackling the issue of sexual abuse of children and sexual labour in their play "Guddo", performed at the Alhamra Arts Centre, Lahore. "Sur", a stage drama, was played in the Lahore Arts Council in 2017, which was based on the knowledge of music rags. "Kala Mendha Bhaes" was performed by Ajoka Theatre at the Arts Council Lahore. Theatre dramas, commercial and non-commercial activities are happening till today in Pakistan. Nokar Saib, a commercial theatre play, remained very popular in Lahore. So many street theatre activities are also observed in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

Independence Theatre Pakistan presented “Nazam Saka” in 2019 and organized the “Tamasha” festival for children in the Lahore Arts Council in 2018. “Hae Mahabbat” and “Matti kay Gharinde” were played in the Karachi Arts Council by NAPA and Copy Kats in November 2019. Theatre dramas and festivals are being organized by many NGOs and the Arts Council of Pakistan to date, along with commercial dramas in Pakistan. “Kurri Potolay Wargi” is presented in the Naz Theatre Hall, Lahore. “Aakhri Salute” was presented by Theatre Walay, and “Man Maen Tu Majood” was staged by Tehreek E Niswan in 2020. Similar activities are in the pipeline. English theatre plays are also being performed in different parts of the country along with Urdu and Punjabi theatre plays. For instance, Drama Queen Production is in Karachi, and Shah Sharabeel works in Islamabad for English theatre plays. New theatre groups are also emerging these days, like Zanmbeel reading theatre, Independence theatre Pakistan, Azad theatre, Moon theatre academy Quetta, Sadaf theatre academy Quetta, Theatre Walay, Copy Kats, Ollomolpolo and T.F. theatre in KPK, Gayyoor Theatre Company reestablished in 2019. Many theatre groups emerge and vanish soon, because of financial, logistics and excise problems. It is also observed that many private theatre halls are being built in recent years in Lahore, Gujranwala, Karachi, Hyderabad, Sahiwal, Multan, and Faisalabad for commercial theatre activity. Now, universities and colleges are offering theatre courses. Ajoka Theatre has introduced the Ajoka Institute for Theatre Arts. Many other institutes have been established for theatre arts in recent years in Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, and Peshawar after 2010.

### Literature Review

Rashid (2015) explores two influential theatre organizations in Punjab: Ajoka Theatre and Punjab Lok Raqs. Both are non-profit entities showcasing issue-based dramas through street theatre and in-house performances. Ajoka Theatre focuses on commercial opportunities and receives government sponsorship, while Lok Raqs operates more democratically and emphasizes Sufi thought. Ajoka stages performances in multiple languages with elaborate costumes, while Lok Raqs exclusively performs in Punjabi with simple props or none at all. This comparative analysis highlights the unique approaches and impacts of these organizations, underscoring their significant roles in shaping Punjab's cultural landscape.

Afsar and Gill (2004) emphasized that theatre for development (TFD) is highly effective in changing the attitudes and behaviors of rural Sindh, Pakistan residents. Their research revealed that people are reluctant to discuss their sexual health due to feelings of shame, leading to difficulties in addressing health issues. A five-day theatre workshop in Sindh yielded promising results, with participants openly discussing health-related issues and suggesting better communication. The TFD tool proved successful during the workshop organized by Ahang (NGO) in collaboration with the Villages Development and Welfare Association (VDWA) and Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO).

Saleem (2014) argues that Ajoka Theatre in Pakistan embraces Brechtian traditions to create powerful political performances. Led by playwright Shahid Nadeem, Ajoka challenges traditional Aristotelian theatre and addresses societal issues. The plays, including Dukhini, Aik thi Nani, and Kala Mendha Bhes, are metaphorical and rooted in regional culture. Ajoka's performances compel the audience to reflect on pressing social and political issues.

Majid (2015) study delves into the relationship between theatre and conflict through metaphorical art, embeddings, and a symbiotic approach. The study examines four theatre organizations, highlighting the hurdles they face in conflict zones. These activist groups



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

use metaphorical techniques in their plays to address societal issues and challenge the state order. The study defines and connects sub-concepts of metaphors and techniques with conflict and theatre, providing historical context and emphasizing the use of metaphor in alternative theatre as a powerful technique for protesting against the state.

Waheed (2014) studied the portrayal of women in Lahore's parallel and commercial theatre. The research found that women are depicted more negatively and are underrepresented in commercial theatre compared to parallel theatre.

Hassan (2012) highlighted the neglect of theatre in Pakistan, attributing its decline to government indifference and the transformation of stage drama into mere entertainment. The lack of a monitoring system and the colonial-era regulations further exacerbate the issue. The study suggests implementing new laws, fostering professionalism, and deploying qualified individuals to monitor and revitalize commercial theatre, with crucial government support.

An effort has been made to mention original literature work done in Pakistan. Most of the work is taken from the researcher's PhD thesis. The research articles based on theatre work belong to Ajoka Theatre, the oldest organization in Pakistan working for human rights. Lok Rehs is now overdue due to financial problems and poor artist conditions. Despite the problems, its Captain, Lakht Pasha, passed away a few years ago.

The first study in the literature review discusses a comparative analysis of two organizations, focusing on their art and craft. Both organizations are dedicated to bringing about societal change. The recent work in the study involves efforts to measure the impact of their activism. The second article discusses the situation in rural Sindh. It focuses on the efforts of the Sindh Health Department and NGOs in addressing sexual health in Pakistan. They believe that theatre can effectively influence people's attitudes and behaviors. To achieve this, they conducted a five-day theatre workshop in rural Sindh and performed dramas based on real-life situations. They have reported positive and powerful results from this initiative. The third article highlighted Ajoka Theatre's craft and its method of work. Few theatre organisations have a hegemonic role in Pakistan, with Ajoka leading the way. Consequently, academic work on Ajoka is observed repeatedly. The fourth study emphasizes the impact of using parallel theatre and political activism to oppose states. It emphasizes that activism should be expressed metaphorically and artistically due to its sensitive nature, which can potentially harm both the artists and the organization. The current research aims to investigate this situation in Pakistan. The last two articles highlighted the state of commercial and parallel theatre in Pakistan. They revealed how theatre negatively portrays women and their issues, often marginalizing them. The decline of theatre art in Pakistan is attributed to the unprofessional attitude of artists, the irresponsible behavior of organizations, and the government's indifference towards the arts.

### **Research Methodology**

“The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and interpret issues or phenomena systematically from the point of view of the individual or population being studied and to generate new concepts and theories. The choice of methodology is directed by the questions being raised” (Viswambharan & Priya, 2016). The qualitative methodology used for the current study involves in-depth interviews as the primary research method. Non-probability sampling was employed to collect data, allowing for the selection of appropriate correspondents for the research. This method is particularly suitable for this investigation as the correspondents are experienced showbiz reporters. “Purposive samples are used frequently in mass media studies when researchers select respondents who use a



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

specific medium and are asked specific questions about that medium. A purposive sample is chosen with the knowledge that it is not representative of the general population” (Wimmer & Domnick, 2011). The theory of public service media prioritizes the needs of society. In line with this theory, it is straightforward to analyze current research and determine whether Pakistani theatre is serving the public interest or not.

Having concern for the national culture, language and identity, serving the needs of the political system

Providing balanced and impartial information on issues of conflict

Having a specific concern for „quality“, as defined in different ways

Putting public interest before financial objectives

Public service broadcasting theory also relates (PSM) to the kind of organization that would be needed to achieve the goals indicated.

Summaries of in-depth interviews along with thematic analysis:

### **Tahir Sarwar Meer**

Meer is a well-known showbiz reporter with over twenty years of experience. He has worked for various news outlets and is currently with Public News Channel. In addition to his reporting, he is also involved in theatre acting and has created and directed TV showbiz programs.

In Pakistan, theatre and all other arts have not been accepted; they have not been given respect. Theatre and arts are something of the third rank here; it does not get their proper position. In a society where the artist is respected, art also reaches its peak. Where the artist is respected, the communicative power of art is also effective. On the other hand, the theatre on our side, which is called Juggat Theatre, is only our speciality; it did not get that respect and status. People in Pakistan mostly belong to the lower middle class and they have major problems with livelihood. There is no money in this work, especially in parallel theatre. There is no prominent artist in Parallel Theatre who attracts the audience, actors like Amanullah, Babubaral, Mastana and Suhail Ahmad. People are more talented in commercial theatres. Other parallels, etc., are not effective. living can be made only from commercial theatre. Parallel theatre can't do this. A professional approach not only grows the theatre but also means of livelihood for poor artists. Parallel Theatre is not a work that challenges the status quo or is very disruptive. There is no notable work which has caused any problem to the state. It is not such a popular medium; I do not at all agree that this parallel theatre is affecting so many people that the state may have a problem. The state has also not fulfilled its responsibility to improve whether it is a parallel or commercial theatre. A new theatre has emerged in which women dance. It is not bad at all. It is a complete theatre. However, comic theatre should be separated from it. Amanullah was a great guru of juggat 'wit', but it destroyed the theatre in Pakistan. Why should we criticized juggat, we like and spit it. It is a part of our culture. Whole life is not juggat. So Juggat should be on time. These dramas are good examples of story, juggat, characters, conflict, climax and well-knit endings combination, e.g Aik Tera Sanam Khana, Shartyya Mithe, Dabbal Sawari, and many more. Umer Shareef has also done a good job in the fields of Karachi and Lahore. Issues are discussed in stage drama sometimes separately in a witty way, and most often they are proper plot of drama. But the issues and problems remain the same in Pakistan; there is little variation among them. The responsibility for the degradation of stage plays also rests with the theatre management and artists themselves. Now there is no responsible person who manages the condition. There is no question regarding government institutions, they have no interest to do performing their duties. However, the social role of parallel theatre is not special. Parallel theatres work on social issues, but society does not take its influence at all. This is because there was no big actor



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

among them like Sohail Ahmed Sahib. Those who are left starve and do not get money. A drama performed by unpopular and unprofessional actors will not change anything. We are standing where we stood fifty years ago today. First of all, this work should be respected, which it is not. Whatever you respect will automatically become great. If the basic needs of the society are smoothly available for everyone, like economy, education, controlled population, and health, then the theatre will grow and be strong. Not only theatre, when other fine arts sectors develop, they will get respect like music, film, then theatre will also get improvement, don't just talk about theatre.

### **Aftab Khan**

Khan is a very seasoned showbiz journalist and play-writer. He has spent thirty years in the field of showbiz reporting. Now Khan is working for Express TV. He belongs to Karachi.

I have seen many Gujarati language theatre plays in Karachi. They produced these dramas along with Memon community. Skandar Sanam and Lateef Kabadia are prominent names in the community. Then, Memon theatre began with full zeal and zest in the early eighties, along with Gujarati dramas in Karachi. These continued till 1995-1996, as well as Urdu plays. In Lahore, people still visit the theatres, but in Karachi, all this has ended. However, people used to go theatre with their families from 1970 to 2000 in Karachi, there was a big boom. I have observed these kinds of activities with a complete sense, which is why I talked about the decade of the seventies, because 1959 is my birth year. Today, cinemas are closed in Karachi. And the same is true of the theatre here. Then, to attract the people towards the theatre, a dance (Mirch Masala) started in it. In such a situation, Moin Akhtar moved away from here, and Zareen became the town of the talk. Theatre became completely commercial. One of the reasons for the devastation of the theatre was that the actors from India started getting good money; they started making the same demand from the local producers, due to which the producers ran away from this field. Anwar Maqsood has breathed new life into the theatre. NAPA has a vital role, along with Anwar Maqsood. But Napa performs only Shakespeare and other English plays, which do not match with local culture; therefore, commoners do not take an interest in these plays. beside this, the institute has its particular audience. Moreover, Napa has a small auditorium which does not fulfil the requirements of the public. Theatre is over in Karachi, now, once in a blue moon on Eid or Fourteen August. There is a Navy club in Karachi called Fleet Club. Khadim Achwy has performed in many theatre plays at Fleet Club. Currently, Pashto plays are occasionally being performed here because regular Urdu theatre productions have almost ceased. Theatre plays focus on social and political issues and are performed by Anwar Maqsood and Dawaar. "Angan Terrah" It is a comedic play filled with social and political satire. On the other hand, commercial theatre plays, which used to be popular, are mostly centred on family-related issues. Theatre, especially the plays by Anwar Maqsood, is a much better choice for family entertainment. Many efforts are being made to improve the theatre and attract audiences to it. Zain Ahmad, the director of Napa in Karachi, is carrying on the tradition of storytelling through theatre. He and his team, all of whom are Napa students, travel to remote areas of Karachi to engage with and educate underprivileged children through their storytelling performances. People of all ages, both men and women, participate in these gatherings. It is essential to mention Faisal Malik, the CEO of Thespian Theatre, who is doing an excellent job in the field. Thespian Theatre performs string puppet shows called "Putli Tamasha" and drama for children in rural Sindh. For the past ten years, Thespian has been making significant contributions. These organizations are a beacon of hope for the future of theatre in Pakistan. Some individuals



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

are working in Rural Sindh, and one of them is Tanveer Afridi, a popular singer. He carries his tent theatre to rural Sindh, which is a very challenging job because there is no profit involved; it is completely free for the people. In rural Sindh, there is not much presence of theatrical organizations, so people are not familiar with stage drama. Instead, they enjoy their own traditional Notanki plays during wedding seasons and do not have a concept of a theatre hall. Revival of the theatre industry in Pakistan is possible through private companies and businessmen showing interest, along with government-private partnerships. Costly tickets are unaffordable for the general audience, which is a major factor contributing to the decline of the theatre industry here. The government should establish an institute for theatre enthusiasts and artists to support the welfare of theatre and its practitioners, similar to NEFDEC cinema. It is possible to strengthen the field by collaborating with other developed countries, such as Iran and China, if we are unable to work with India. We need to acquire new techniques and training to advance the theatre industry.

### **Naveen Ali**

Naveen has extensive experience in the field. She has been working for Geo for almost five years and is currently employed as a showbiz reporter for Sama TV.

Theatre has been extensively documented, but there is not much in practice. There is very little interest in theatre, resulting in very few visitors. The idea of classroom theatre is not well-received in Pakistan. In Pakistan, the meaning of theatre has completely changed after the millennium; it is now associated with vulgarity. Theatre has become more focused on commercial interests rather than prioritizing entertainment and art, leading to a decline in its traditional theatrical essence. Greed for money, hooliganism, and political interference have contributed to the disappearance of genuine entertainment, artistic expression, and dramatic impact in commercial theatre. Even in instances where societal and political themes are present in theatrical productions, the absence of a discerning, educated, and well-behaved audience in the theatre undermines the potential impact of the performances. Even though the world has gone digital, we still face the same issues that existed centuries ago. Women's issues are not the only challenges; there are bigger issues here. Parallel theatre has also become outdated, still grappling with old problems, with no creative aspect to it. Only a few people are embracing Art Theatre as a form of art driven by their passion, and these individuals are also its audience. Not many people have enough spare time to revisit a topic from three months ago and encounter the same issues that they have already heard and seen. In addition to what happened in theatres when sales of Dirty Juggat also stopped, the pressure group positioned women in a way that the public craved to see. Now everything is available on mobile; these people have gone through this too. Why is the government turning a blind eye to the decline of the theatre? Because it has its shortcomings in the theatre, people.

The main reason is that it is no longer important, and the media has come which are providing the best entertainment and also saving people's time and are also very suitable for the family. Theatre is now competing with these faster media, so it has to adopt some innovative ways to attract the attention of the audience and the attention of the government. Earlier, there was only theatre; there was no other medium. People had no other choice, so people used to come and watch whatever drama was played and leave, but now it is not like that. In the next 10 years, the theatre will disappear completely, not only the theatre, but all the conventional media will disappear. It may be nobody know the name of the theatre in the next generation. Now the only survivor is the Digital way. Those who take away the culture have skillfully taken away the culture from us. To save the culture, new



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

techniques and methods have to be approached with the same intensity so that this legacy can be passed on to the next generation.

### Major Themes for analysis and coding sheet

There are eight categories of codes with serial numbers represented by the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, which correspond to different themes. The symbol "-" indicates disagreement, and "R" represents the respondent. For example, R1 is respondent number 1, R2 is respondent number 2, and R3 is respondent number 3. Agree and disagree words are the interpretation of responses to the researcher's questions.

1	-A	R1	Disagree	Growth of theatre in Pakistan, especially in Lahore
2	-B	=	=	Parallel theatre is not effective/ They are not professional
3	-C	=	=	There is no remarkable work that challenged the status quo; the state has ever harassed them.
4	-D	=	=	The state has never fulfilled its responsibilities
5	E	=	Agreed	Commercial theatre has a powerful impact compared to parallel comedy theatre. Adult theatre should be separate
6	F	=	Agreed	Commercial theatre management and actors are equally responsible for the degradation of theatre and drama
7	-G	=	Disagree	Art is not Acceptable in Pakistan. no future, when the Basic need of life is fulfilled, then all kinds of art will grow in Pakistan. Bread, Health, education, Shelter.
8	H	=	Agreed	Social issues are discussed, but the same issues as earlier

1	-A	R2	Disagree	Growth of Theatre in Pakistan, especially in Karachi/ nobody knows stage drama in rural Sindh Professional way, except Notanki drama
2	B	=	Agree	Parallel theatre is contributing to the slum area of Karachi, doing an excellent job.
3	-C		Disagree	Overall, not a threat and challenging
4	-D	=	Disagree	The state has never fulfilled its responsibilities
5	E	=	Agree	Commercial theatre has its impact, and very popular issues are family-oriented most of the time.
6	F	=	Agree	Actors, management and Government are all responsible for the degradation of theatre drama
7	G	=	Agreed	Young people/street theatre/ Hope for the future
8	H	=	Agreed	Social and political issues are discussed in Theatre drama

1	-A	R3	Disagree	Theatre is not growing in Pakistan.
2	-B	=	Disagree	Parallel theatre has no impact
3	-C	=	Disagree	Not challenging, but it has become their tool.
4	-D	=	Disagree	The state has no interest, blind eye, not fulfil its responsibilities.
5	E	=	Agree	Commercial theatre has impact, vulgarity, and nudity, made it so popular
6	F	=	Agree	All are responsible for the degradation of the theatre
7	-G	=	disagree	It has no future
8	H	=	Agree	Issues are discussed, but the same old repetition of issues



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

### Findings

The consensus is that the growth of theatre in Pakistan is not progressing. The golden period for theatre in Pakistan was from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s. Despite this golden period, there have been very few theatre activities in urban areas, especially in the big cities of Pakistan. Theatre has not flourished in Pakistan for several reasons, including religious factors, unprofessional behaviour of actors and organisers, government indifference to the arts, and the humiliation of artists.

R1 and R2 disagree on the effectiveness of parallel theatre in Pakistan. They believe that the actors and organisers are unprofessional and unpopular among the public, especially when compared to big names in commercial theatre like Late Aman Ullah, Baboobaral, and Suhail Ahmad. However, R3 believes in the effectiveness of parallel theatre and presents examples of theatre work in Karachi for development.

All the respondents agree that theatre does not have a subject to challenge the status quo or engage in activism against the political system and the exploiters, especially in parallel theatre. It's the vice versa.

The government has not fulfilled its responsibility to develop and nurture the arts, especially theatre art, in Pakistan. The respondents unanimously agree on this point.

In point 5 of the table, the letter E highlights the power and popularity of commercial theatre in Pakistan. It engages the audience, and people like it very much. R1 suggested that dance theatre should be separate from adults, and comedy theatre should work separately. R2 also praised the theatre of Anwar Maqsood for families. R3 described the popularity of commercial theatre due to its vulgar text and its impact on the audience. Commercial theatre's patronage is controlled by crooked individuals who operate it according to their desires, which is why it remains influential and dominant.

All participants agree that the decline of theatre in Pakistan is attributed to the government's lack of support for artists, actors' lack of accountability, writers' failure to provide quality content, organizers' commercial interests, and directors' inability to effectively guide the drama. Often, one person is expected to fulfil all these roles.

R1 and R3 share the same viewpoint that theatre has no future in Pakistan. R1 believes that art is not respected and accepted in Pakistan. They argue that basic needs should be met before theatre can thrive.

In the digital age, with everything available for free on mobile phones, people are reluctant to spend time and money on traditional media. R2, however, disagrees and believes that the younger generation and new theatre trends are the hope for the future.

Issues are discussed to varying degrees in all types of theatre performances. However, the subjects in drama have remained the same since the partition. All respondents agree on this point.

### Conclusion

In light of journalistic experience and observation, it is easy to understand the situation of theatre in Pakistan, which is not up to par according to requirements. Few activities were observed until the mid-nineties. The frequency of performances is very limited, and there is not enough theatre in Pakistan compared to the population. The impact of theatre can be easily measured, especially in parallel theatres that are at our fingertips. Therefore, there is no question of theatrical activism, which has the potential to affect the political and economic system, societal change, and social development. On the other hand, according to historical information mentioned in this paper, theatre organisations and their performances discuss issues like poverty, hunger, education, women's issues, unemployment, and many others faced by third-world countries. Thus, theatre is fulfilling



## Vol. 2 No. 3 (October) (2024)

the requirements of public service media theory in Pakistan.

### References

- Asghar, S. (2018, August 4). Revival of Theatre Necessary for a Richer Culture. Daily Times, p. 37. Lahore: Pakistan
- Bilal, A. (2018). Pakistani Theatre: A Unique Cultural Form of South Asia. *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 33(1),85-95. Retrieved January 28, 2019, from [http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/5\\_v33\\_1\\_18.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/5_v33_1_18.pdf)
- Cohen, R., & Sherman, D. (2017). Theatre Traditions: East and West. In *Theatre: Brief Version* (Ed. 11, pp. 221-254). Boston: U.S, McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Ebewo, P. (2009). Theatre: A Cultural Tool for the Propagation of Peace in Africa. *Journal of Peacebuilding& Development*, 4(3), 21-32. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2009.962940238278>
- Nag, B. (2013). Role of Theatre and Folke Media in Promoting Social Development. *Global Media Journal-Indian Edition*, 4(2). Retrieved from [http://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-media-journal/COMMENTARY-DEC%202013/Commentary\\_6\\_Baishakhi\\_Nag.pdf](http://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-media-journal/COMMENTARY-DEC%202013/Commentary_6_Baishakhi_Nag.pdf)
- Rashid, T. (2015). Theatre for Community Development: Street Theatre as an Agent of Change in Punjab (Pakistan). *India Quarterly*, 71(4), 335–347. Retrieved January 8, 2020, from <http://iqq.sagepub.com> DOI: 10.1177/0974928415602604
- Afsar, H. A., & Gill, S. (2004). Sexual and Reproductive Health Promotion at the Grassroots: Theatre for Development - A Case Study. *Journal for Medical Association*, 54(9), 487-90. Retrieved January 11, 2020, from <https://jpma.org.pk/PdfDownload/502>.
- Saleem, M. (2014). Ajoka: An Alternative Theatre in Brechtian Tradition. *Meyar* 11, 37-44. Retrieved January 11, 2020, from <http://www.iiu.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/downloads/journals/mayar/articles-wise/Meyar-11-2014/35.pdf>.
- Majid, A. (2015). The Symbiotic Embeddedness of Theatre and Conflict: A Metaphor-Inspired Quartet of Case Studies. (Master's Thesis). Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University. Washington, D.C, USA. Retrieved January 11, 2020, from <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/760825>
- Waheed, R. (2014). Portrayal of Women in Parallel Theater and Commercial Theater of Lahore: a Comparative Analysis of Ajokoa Theater and Comedy Drama Theater (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan.
- Hassan, M. (2012). Problems and Issues with The Stage Drama in Pakistan: A Study of Public Perceptions from Rialto Theatre, Rawalpindi. (Unpublished M.Sc. thesis). International University: Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Viswambharan, A. P., & Priya, K. R. (2016). Documentary Analysis as a Qualitative Methodology to Explore Disaster Mental Health: Insights from Analyzing a Documentary on Communal Riots. *Qualitative Research*, 16(1), 43-59.
- Wimmer, R., & Domminick, J. (2011). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. Wadsworth: Boston, USA.