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The Rising Gentrification of Thrifting within the context of Pakistan: Attitudes towards the practice & consequences of its destigmatization

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### Abstract

*The following paper aims to shed light on the growing relevance of the momentum of purchasing second-hand clothing amongst middle/ upper-middle class youngsters in through an effective qualitative analysis and the conduction of ten semi-structured interviews of female students hailing from Forman Christian College, Lahore, Pakistan. It also aims to underline the many possible causes of the need for such gentrification of the practice of 'thrifting' in relation to greater conversations surrounding social class behavior and social media utilization as well as the possible impacts of such gentrification and acceptability on conventional thrifting markets and their traditionally and historically working class purchasers. The results of the study demonstrate a clear relationship between rising gentrification of thrifting within the country owing to greater upper-class integration within the practice, as well as the ways in which it can potentially be a source of concern for local flea markets.*

**Keywords:** Thrifting, Destigmatization, Social Class, Gentrification, University Students

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Cite Us



## Title

### The Rising Gentrification of Thrifting within the Context of Pakistan: Attitudes towards the Practice and Consequences of its Destigmatization

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## Abstract

*The following paper aims to shed light on the growing relevance of the momentum of purchasing second-hand clothing amongst middle/ upper-middle class youngsters in through an effective qualitative analysis and the conduction of ten semi-structured interviews of female students hailing from Forman Christian College, Lahore, Pakistan. It also aims to underline the many possible causes of the need for such gentrification of the practice of 'thrifting' in relation to greater conversations surrounding social class behavior and social media utilization as well as the possible impacts of such gentrification and acceptability on conventional thrifting markets and their traditionally and historically working class purchasers. The results of the study demonstrate a clear relationship between rising gentrification of thrifting within the country owing to greater upper-class integration within the practice, as well as the ways in which it can potentially be a source of concern for local flea markets.*

## Keywords:

[Thrifting](#), [Destigmatization](#), [Social Class](#), [Gentrification](#), [University Students](#)

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## Introduction

Pakistan's imports of second-hand clothing exceeded \$180 million in 2021 (Khalid, [2021](#)), and the wider insurgence of greater inflation within the country, significant light needs to be shed on the greater relevance of the phenomena of 'thrifting', with regards to its current greater relevance amongst young adults amidst long-withstanding societal and cultural taboos surrounding the act of purchasing second-hand clothing itself as well as the growing destigmatization of the practice in light of the country's fluctuating economic conditions. With

acceptance for second-hand clothing increasing day by day (Freestone et.al, [2007](#)) and the market for second-hand clothing expected to grow by 185% by 2029 (Smith, [2021](#)), the question of whether the purchase of second-hand clothing within the context of Pakistan continues to be a largely social-class oriented preference as a consumerist practice continues to be significantly negated, with the taboo surrounding second-hand clothing increasingly changing (Sajjad et.al, [2021](#)), and the popularization of thrift shopping having dispelled the elitist stigma surrounding second-hand shops (Park et al., [2019](#)). As





such, this growing 'gentrification' of the practice of thrifting in light of the country's economic conditions has allowed individuals to purchase second-hand clothing because of their reasonable prices (Sajjad et. al, [2021](#)), whilst simultaneously gradually debunking existing class-based stereotypes surrounding the conventionally stigmatized notion of purchasing second-hand clothing amongst the middle and upper-middle classes within the country, the booming landa bazaars (flea markets) of the country paying heed to this very notion (Khalid, [2023](#)).

The used clothing market contains used or unused clothes, for resale by their owners or business purposes, and clothing vendors select items still acceptable for resale (Vicamara et al., [2023](#)), and the term 'thrifting' has been defined as the activity of buying used goods, with the phenomena of buying used clothes also being attached to other terms such as second-hand and preloved (Zahro et al, 2023). Deemed to be a rising 'trend' amongst the youth, thrift shops are often sought after by young people who are hunting for used clothing for personal use, usually reselling them at a higher price than buying them directly from the market (Fitria, 2023), a notion which inevitably contributes to the rising gentrification and greater social class oriented relevance of the practice of thrifting, which shall be elaborated upon later in the second half of this review.

Recent studies have also deemed affordability, quality, and design that have contributed to the popularity of second-hand trade (Chipambwa, [2016](#)), while other studies from developing countries such as Bangladesh emphasize less the need for youth to purchase second-hand clothing because of sustainability and more on the potentiality of finding fashionable clothing at affordable prices (Iqbal et. al, [2024](#)), while also citing factors such as the availability of vintage clothing often associated with feelings of nostalgia. Similar studies have been conducted in Indonesia, demonstrating significantly positive responses to the concept of purchasing second-hand clothing amongst youth, deeming thrifting as a rising fashion trend that allows people to find unique and rare items that are hard to find in retail stores (Sharky, [2023](#)). Additionally, it also allows for the reduction of

clothing-related waste and pollution and fosters creativity through the mixing and matching of used items to create something new and unique (Sharky, [2023](#)).

From a sociocultural perspective, the term gentrification holds great value in relation to urban economics, coined by Ruth Glass in 1964, and refers to the inflow of affluent investment into lower/working-class neighborhoods (Yeom et.al, [2019](#)), while other definitions have sought to elaborate on this existing definition in a number of different forms, referring to the process by which members of the middle class physically and culturally reshape working-class inner-city environments' (Rose, [1996](#)). The process of gentrification often mixes people of different socioeconomic strata, congregating a variety of social norms (Smith et.al, 1986), bringing in new standards of consumption, often leading to conflicts and at a larger cost to the original residents of the gentrified area (Smith et.al, [1986](#)). While this holds to be true as the literal definition of gentrification from the perspective of urban sociology, the term has since its inception taken upon a number of different forms in relation to cultural and social practices, including within the domain of clothing and fashion. From this perspective, the gentrification of specific fashion choices such as thrifting may be coupled with the greater consequence of destigmatization, with social media playing an important role in eradicating this stigma through the introduction of online retailers that offer second-hand value via distribution channels (Sajjad, [2021](#)) thereby making the practice more accessible but with its own set of potential problems such as those associated with the reselling of thrift store clothing items and the price surges that may occur as a result. It should however be kept in mind that little research regarding this topic exists within the domain of most developing countries, let alone within Pakistan, although the presence of varying forms of flea/thrift markets is more relevant within this part of the world.

Whilst more 'well off' individuals tend to recognize the importance of spending ethically in relation to their clothing preferences, their unconscious

gentrification of thrift store clothing may change the function of such spaces, leading to a greater form of 'pricing out' (Bobadilla, 2023), which may lead to increased prices of thrift store clothing items thus making them less accessible, prominent within this study's mention of the region of Bushwick in New York City and its thrift markets. Another study sheds light on the growing criticism of the practice in popular culture, making the practice lose the uniqueness that it once possessed (Larsen, 2008), owing to factors such as the glamorization of the practice through social media, making it seem 'trendy' and 'cool' amongst the middle/upper-middle classes (Larsen, 2008). With Pakistan's imports of second-hand clothing exceeding \$250 million in 2022 and thereby placing the country as the largest importer of used clothing in the world according to the OEC, its flea markets in the form of its landa bazaars and an increasing number of digital thrift stores and their accessibility making the practice more valuable higher 'up' the social strata now more than ever.

### Research Methodology

A qualitative research, the data was collected in the form of comprehensive semi-structured interviews, for the purpose of using 'probes, spontaneous questions to explore and deepen understanding' (Wilson, 2014) that serve as significant benefits of this particular research method. For the purpose of making the data collection process as effective as possible, a group of ten female students aged between 19-24 and currently enrolled at FCCU were selected and interviewed over a period of two months. Besides these characteristics, the participants were also regular 'thrifsters', and so were either regular purchasers of second-hand clothing or had purchased second-hand clothing in the past six months prior to the conducted

interviews. The participants were recruited via the snowball sampling method of sample population collection due to it being a method of a convenience sample, useful when it is difficult to access subjects with the target characteristics (Naderifar et.al, 2017). As part of this, a few available contacts were utilized for the purpose of being introduced to other potential participants with the characteristics previously mentioned and were thus recruited through mutual contacts and social media. Prior to the interview process, the participants were handed out a screening questionnaire consisting of general demographic questions such as average household income and age.

All ethical considerations were taken into consideration and valued. The research received a clearance from the Institutional Review Board associated with FCCU. The participants were also handed out a consent form to fill out upholding ethical considerations such as the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' opinions, and the participants were given the full liberty to opt out of the interview process at any given time during the data collection process. The conducted interviews were recorded and transcribed, of which the participants were also informed. Upholding these ethical considerations, the actual names of the participants have not been mentioned in this paper.

Utilizing Braun & Clarke's six-step thematic analysis, including 'familiarization of data, generation of codes, generation of themes, reviewing themes, determination of themes & naming them and reporting the findings' (2006), the generated data was divided into themes relevant to the context of the paper as a whole. Overall, two significant themes were generated through a thorough analysis of the data. Figure 1 demonstrates the characteristics of the interviewed participants.

**Table 1**

*The Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Age	
19-21	4	40
22-23	6	60

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
24	0	
Gender (All females)		
Major		
Sociology	3	30
Psychology	5	50
Computer Science	1	10
English Literature	1	10
Monthly Income (Total Household)		
100k-200k	4	40
Greater than 200k	6	60
Year of Study		
Junior	5	50
Senior	1	10
Sophomore	2	20
Masters (in FCCU)	2	20

## Findings

The two generated themes took the form of on the one hand, being able to understand what the notion of thrifting/purchasing second-hand clothing meant to the ten interviewed participants in relation to also being able to understand the participants' need to start thrifting in the first place, thereby presenting itself as the first theme of the paper. The second theme is largely more overarching, taking into account the participants' personal opinions regarding the state of purchasing second-hand clothing amongst the middle/upper-middle classes, and their general attitudes towards the rising gentrification of purchasing second-hand clothing as a whole.

## Underscoring Thrifting: Meaning & Motivation

The participants were initially asked to elaborate on their personal definition of the practice of purchasing second-hand clothing, with a vast majority of the participants defining the practice in more or less the same way. For most of the participants, thrifted clothing meant second-hand/used clothing, with some of the participants even using words such as pre-loved and pre-owned.

"To me, it means being able to recycle and reuse something which has already been used, it is accessible and also easy to accommodate" (SR, 21).

"Thrifting" to me means buying any pieces of clothing that are usually not in stores and are not bulk-made. They are not extremely expensive, they're basically clothes that are not being mass produced and you're getting them either second-hand or there's like a minor defect in them or they're export leftovers, so anything along those lines" (MS, 21).

In relation to these definitions, some of the participants emphasized the importance of price in relation to the quality of second-hand clothing, highlighting the importance of purchasing potentially cheap clothing at very good quality. This was deemed to be a largely imperative factor, since growing inflation within the country has allowed for even the most basic of facilities such as clothing to be deemed as a growing luxury, allowing for the participants to be incredibly critical of the prices of first-hand retail clothing.

The thing is, because of how expensive things have gotten and it's not just that things are expensive, the quality has dropped as well. The economy and the quality of things have gone down. Can't justify

spending 30k-40k on a single piece of clothing.' (MA, 22).

Keeping these above-defined meanings of the notion of thrift clothing in mind, the participants were next asked to elaborate on the ways in which they started purchasing second-hand clothing in light of the overall taboo nature of the practice itself within this particular social strata of the country. Here, a distinct contrast existed between the participants, with most of the participants having resorted to the act having stumbled upon thrift 'pages online through various social networking sites, while the remaining participants emphasized having been introduced to the act via friends and relatives from a very young age.

"I started thrifting during the COVID time, so more than three years ago. I remember how everyone was locked in their houses and how everyone was shopping for clothes online and that's when I came across a lot of online thrift stores so I started shopping from there for jewelry and also for clothes." (IR, 21).

"I would say around 2020, I started seeing a lot of people get into thrifting and second-hand shopping which was great. And then, the whole online trend of Instagram thrift stores and online shopping became more common. I'm not sure but I that around 2020 when COVID-19 hit, the amount of people going to online thrift stores began to grow. That's when I started seeing the rise" (AJ, 19).

Being 'locked in' during the COVID-19 pandemic for these participants at least, allowed for a swift transition from their need to purchase first-hand clothing in person to this newer form of shopping that enabled them to sift through the varying forms of thrift stores that were becoming prominent online, thereby making the act more accessible and convenient for them. The underlying notion that was thus upheld in relation to the growing prominence of these stores online was the overall accessibility of the practice itself, as well as the growing relevance of online thrift stores as a means of making money for those who were running them. These online thrift stores brought them other benefits as well, including their effective recognition of various existing digital sub-cultures and the types of clothing prominent

within them, allowing for individuals craving specific fashion requirements in relation to aesthetics and individuality to benefit, which were normally not available in retail stores.

"Okay, so I am guilty of having given in to these ridiculously expensive online stores whereas it is so different in person. I don't know how these online stores opened up on Instagram, but I think it was somewhere in the pandemic when people were restricted to their houses and all of a sudden, everybody was consuming a lot especially people like us who were privileged enough to be consuming so much and we then had thrift stores on Instagram and on Facebook, at the swipe of a finger" (MA, 22).

"I started thrifting when I saw my friends doing it, mostly through Instagram and social media. I found a few good pages which are really good. More importantly, these pages have stuff which is usually not available in the market such as Victorian gowns and corsets, things that you don't normally find in the markets" (ZA, 22).

Despite this however, there were also some participants who deemed their personal acceptability of the practice to their families, with emphasis on their early exposure to the practice through consistent visits to Pakistan's prominent land bazaars, with thus less likeability towards the growing notion of online thrift stores owing to their significantly higher prices and the lack of ability to bargain and explore them effectively.

"In my head, if it isn't 'landa' (thrift carts), then it isn't thrifting. I will start with what isn't thrifting first: it isn't going onto your Instagram accounts and checking out preloved clothing pages and getting a top for 2k rupees and calling it a steal. No, that's not it. For me, it has to be a whole scavenger hunt and for me personally, thrifting shouldn't be convenient. It has to have that layer of inconvenience there for it to be a true experience, right? So, it has to be you going to these in-person thrift sellers and spending hours until you finally say to yourself 'Ah, I got it!' If it's there and right in front of you, it's too convenient to be called thrifting. So, that's what my experience of



thrifting has been and that's also been the most fruitful one and that's how I would define it as well" (FG, 22).

"Pretty much everything else is cheaper in person I would say, or so I realized after visiting these in-person 'landa' bazaars. They are catering to a specific class so I guess that is why the prices tend to be low, although you usually have to surf around for what you type or the type of clothing that you are looking for (IR, 2021).

"I started using second-hand clothes ever since I was a kid. There are a lot of 'sasta bazaars' and 'landa bazaars' throughout Lahore. So, my grandmother lives in Gujranwala and they have a Sunday Bazaar every Monday and Thursday so every time we are there during these days, my mother does take us to these bazaars which I call thrift stores but of course, my mother says landa' (ZS, 2022).

For these participants then, the practice of thrifting was not simply deemed as the mere act of purchasing second-hand clothes, but was also seen as an experience of all sorts; taking into account the many benefits that come with in-person thrifting including the ability to sift through and bargain, in light of the absence of these benefits when thrifting online.

### **Attitudes towards thrifting: the wider 'gentrification' of thrifting in relation to social class & its growing influence on the practice**

Whilst the growing significance of the phenomena of thrifting in relation to both conventional and 'newer' forms of digital thrifting can be attributed to a number of different factors, the contextual significance of this paper aims to shed light on the extent of the rising need for greater middle/upper-class insurgence within the practice itself and the ways in which it continues to influence the practice for better or for worse. Keeping this in mind, an overwhelming majority of the participants attributed the growing acceptability of the practice of thrifting to the recent 'class' interference in relation to the act, particularly with regards to those higher 'up' the social strata, thereby deeming the practice as no longer being seen as predominantly catering to the working/lower-middle classes of the country.

"Now, the definition has sort of evolved for us to digest it well. This 'definition' has garnered better acceptance, from a time when it was simply a very middle-class way of looking at it and this was also the time when it was looked at shamefully. But that acceptance from the upper classes has now sort of made thrifting 'cooler' and because they're doing it, it's not shameful anymore. You know, a friend from DHA deciding to wear that crop top that is thrifted is supposed to be 'cool' (FG, 22).

For these participants, the availability of trendier clothing at cheaper rates was often coupled with the alarming need for individuals from particularistic social classes 'higher' up within the context of Pakistani society to integrate themselves at a wider level within a practice deemed to be largely conventionally working class, for reasons including but not limited to both destigmatizing the practice itself as well as swiftly defining the relevance of the practice itself, owing to the influence and social capital that they tend to carry. To resort to purchasing second-hand clothing is often seen as a uniquely 'cool' experience for these individuals, often an experience at the cost of the lack of recognition of the significance of the practice to those lower down the social strata, who may utilize the practice out of sheer necessity and hardship. While it does destigmatize the act significantly, it demeans the essence of the practice itself and brings with it a number of other potential disadvantages as well.

"The main thing about online thrifting is the insane amount of gentrification that is happening. These people from the higher income classes, go and buy so many clothes from the landa and then they sell them online for 5 times the profit. One, you are taking clothes away from a community that really needs them. And two, what is the point of making that much profit? I would understand it if you needed the money but I personally know people who don't need the money, but they're well off and they're only doing it because it's fun (AJ, 19).

For the majority of the participants, the rising insurgence of online thrifting in many ways was deemed to be a significant contributor to the rising gentrification of thrifting, with the in-person

experience of visiting thrift markets/bazaars being seen as a 'novel' experience, and the greater prominence of in-person thrifting being deemed as a working-class practice. With these online stores and the exorbitant prices at which they tend to sell second-hand clothing, the rising need for private individuals to purchase second-hand clothes from in-person bazaars and sell them at higher prices online was deemed to be a significant disadvantage of the act itself, with this practice in itself making the process of thrifting largely acceptable to the upper/middle classes who tend to participate in it the most. This disadvantages the community that needs them, despite the bazaars being largely existent to cater to their clothing needs.

"I have brought a few ridiculously expensive items from these places and these items are usually priced at four times the cost that they were purchased at. In-person thrifting makes clothing more accessible; you get to bargain. And you know what? It's not just bargaining with the vendors; you form actual bonds with the vendors. The online stores are a scam" (MA, 22).

"Now with all these already well-off people of our age buying thrift clothing and sometimes even opening their own stores online, it just makes the spirit of it go away. And this is also why I think online thrifting is so expensive now, people are just using it to make money and to make a big deal out of it online. They'll say 'Oh look, this is me recycling' and 'Oh look, I'm so into sustainability' when in reality they are just hoarding clothes and are no better, and are also using all the plastic in the world. Online thrifting is only going downhill now because everyone wants to be seen as a 'sustainable shopper' online" (IR, 22)

The notion of purchasing and partaking in 'ethical' fashion in relation to purchasing second-hand clothing as an efficient alternative to fast fashion and a step towards greater 'sustainability' is a notion that is widely associated with the largely 'fashion-conscious' segment of the middle/upper middle classes within Pakistan, some of the participants shed light on the lack of need to resort to sustainability with regards to this particular segment of society, who were instead

merely encouraging the practice in order to 'appear' more sustainable instead of being wholly devoted to the cause. Adding onto the existing notion of thrifting being seen as a 'novel' experience, these participants emphasized the irony normally associated with the mindsets of those middle/upper-middle-class individuals who choose to thrift, including their need to 'hoard' second-hand clothing as opposed to purchasing responsibly, which debunks the notion of practicing sustainability in relation to second-hand clothing.

"The word 'landa' has such a negative connotation to it now, but when it's done online it becomes trendy. Poor people have been thrifting for ages, and I don't mean Instagram stores, I mean those carts on Anarkali, and poor people have been getting by. Once people get tired of these thrifting stores selling ridiculously overpriced items because more and more people are now finding these items at half the price if not a quarter of the price. These online markets will end. It's like a contradiction to capitalism within itself" (MA, 22)

Despite this rising gentrification, the majority of the participants were widely critical of this rising notion, despite belonging to the same social strata themselves. With rising prices and the growing disadvantages of the rise of online thrifting to local markets, the participants highlighted what they believed would be a growing recognition of the harms of online thrifting, which was deemed as the most significant contributor to the growing gentrification of thrifting. Some participants however, also felt that the opposite could very well hold to be true as well in the long run, with the wide-scale thrift market monopolization at the hands of those higher up the social strata allowing for local markets to lose their significance, while online markets with their exuberant prices will continue to flourish.

The gentrification is already happening. People like me who value convenience and can't always go to these vendors, will give in to this online thing. That's a lot of loss for these vendors who are already suffering from the pandemic, the local thrift market has been impacted. But I feel like it's going to die down in a

way that the masses will no longer have access to it but a very specific, elitist demographic will be able to monopolize on it. Thrifting as we know it now is not going to exist if the online gentrification of it exists" (FG, 22).

"I think there's a very huge probability that this is only happening because it's trendy at the moment so I think that a huge portion of people will stop doing it, mostly because there are entire debates surrounding eco-fashion and all that nowadays, god knows what will happen to those debates a few years from now" (ZS, 22).

Keeping in mind the above arguments surrounding the overall uniqueness and novelty of the practice of thrifting that is felt by the middle/upper-middle classes within the country, the 'culture' of thrifting, as noted by some participants, has been deemed as a 'trend', largely attributed to conversations surrounding 'sustainable' fashion within the midst of the covid-19 pandemic, by this particular segment of Pakistani society. As such then, the short-term nature of the culture of thrifting amongst these social classes will inevitably die down too, once the overall 'trendiness' of the practice becomes stagnant and overused.

## Discussion

As the findings of this study demonstrate, while the majority of the participants were in agreement over the varying benefits that the purchase of second-hand clothing provides including but not limited to the variety, quality and cheap prices of the clothing itself, they were equal parts concerned over the growing acceptance and greater encouragement of the practice by those choosing to now resort to it, including the more prominent and influential upper/upper-middle income social domains within the country that continue to utilize the practice for their own benefit, deeming the long-since existent and historically relevant practice of purchasing second-hand clothing through the array of landa bazaars and flea markets within the country as a rising avenue for their growing fondness for uniqueness and novel experiences. With the consistent usage of terms such as gentrification and social class influence by the

majority of the participants in the study, this increasing gentrification of second-hand clothing was attributed to a number of factors as mentioned by the participants, including and more significantly the insurgence of online thrifting that allows for effective and profit-motive based price setting at the individual level, the availability of aesthetic specific clothing as well as more prominently, the growing appearance of engaging in greater 'sustainability' via the consistent purchase of second-hand clothing, allowing for the practice to be deemed as a 'trend' and a unique experience with little to no recognition of the wide-scale influence and significance of the practice to the working class communities within the country that continue to benefit from it. As was thus then mentioned by most of the participants, while such growing integration of those higher up the social strata within this domain that has long since been reserved for a specific class within the country has allowed for the greater destigmatization of the practice in general, it serves to be largely lead to a number of consequences as well, which can be detrimental to those who have long-since been associated with these markets themselves. With a rise in thrift store prices and overconsumption of clothing at thrift stores leading to the availability of less clothing for low-income individuals (Ma et.al, 2021), the local thrift markets are bound to be at risk because of such increasing gentrification, at the hands of those for whom the markets do not operate in the first place.

A clear contrast within the domain of the purchase of second-hand clothing was underscored by most of the participants, particularly in relation to the ways in which the insurgence of online thrifting has both encouraged and continues to widely celebrate the long-since stigmatized notion of thrifting, allowing for it to be seen as less of a taboo. These participants, having engaged in online thrifting despite being critical of it, saw it as a medium for increasing the pre-existing gentrification of the act, shedding light on its emphasis on profit maximization and less on cost convenience, as well as the availability of 'trendier' and usually branded clothing at cheaper prices that serve to benefit those higher up the social strata, whilst disadvantaging those lower down and marginalizing them, with social media amplifying this and pushing

privileged people to 'thrift out' (Ronobir, 2020). As such, the participants demonstrated a clear preference for in-person thrifting, particularly those who had long since already been engaging with it, due to lesser gentrification within these domains. Though this holds to be valid, some of the participants also mentioned the growing influence that online thrifting is having over in-person thrifting, with the former allowing individuals to purchase second-hand clothing at cheaper prices and sell them at higher prices online, once again leading to the lack of availability of good quality clothing for low-income individuals (Ma et.al, 2021).

With the above-highlighted findings shedding light on the consistent usage of words such as gentrification and the destigmatization of particularistic acts/practices due to the overarching influence of particular strata within the domain of those practices, it thus becomes apparent that the findings of the study correspond with the theoretical frameworks put forth by the neo-Marxist school of thought, particularly the works of Gramsci in relation to social class and cultural domination, allowing for an effective system of 'cultural hegemony' to be created by those higher up the social strata. The term hegemony has been used to describe the dominant ideology of the ruling class, which along with capitalism, controls 'culture' where bourgeoisie values enter and then become accepted and become values that are considered reasonable (Hamdi et.al, 2024). From this perspective, the rising influence of the upper-middle/upper classes within the wider domain of traditional 'working class' practices has allowed for the greater gentrification of the practice of thrifting, destigmatizing it but at the cost of the many above-mentioned disadvantages that it entails. Corresponding with the findings, the overarching impact of those higher up the strata with regards to culture formation and appropriation within the context of Pakistani society disadvantages the general masses; a phenomenon that continues to be a source of concern for those affected by it, but which also continues to largely be amplified through the new-age insurgence of online thrifting which has further allowed for the greater reduction of social class barriers in relation to certain practices such as

thrifting, at the cost of however not fully recognizing the significance of the practice of purchasing second-hand clothing as was put forth by most of the participants. By deeming the practice to be a 'trend' and treating it as such, the essence of the practice is largely sidelined in relation to its necessity and wide-scale historical and modern usage within the context of Pakistan for a certain segment of society, shedding further light on the ways in which the context of social-class oriented cultural hegemony continues to be both significant and dangerous for existing class structures within Pakistan.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study shed light on the notion of class-oriented stratification persistent within the context of many developing regions within the Global South, with greater emphasis on the ways in which the wider social class within Pakistan continues to be a source of intrigue in relation to its two-fold relationship. On the one hand, the wider social divide within Pakistan continues to be more consistent than ever, with income shared by the bottom 20% being less than one-tenth to the top 20% (Munir et.al), whilst simultaneous trends demonstrate ironically, the greater gentrification of practices such as thrifting amongst the middle/upper-middle classes of the country, that continue to see the practice as a means of showing off their fashionable tastes and individuality, with a desire to stand out (Razzaq et al, 2022). The study highlighted factors such as the availability of vintage clothing and the novelty of the practice as being significant contributors to the rising need for the middle/upper-middle classes to purchase more second-hand clothing now more than ever, which has allowed for greater social class integration and somewhat reduced class-related barriers, but at the cost of the lack of recognition of the practice to do it, as well as growing instances of unethical practices being incorporated within the historically relevant domain of thrifting to the context of Pakistan, as was put forward by the participants. As such, the study aims to shed greater light on the growing destigmatization of the practice of thrifting within Pakistan at the cost of the many negative

consequences that it entails, including but not limited to rising prices, over hoarding of clothing by those with greater social capital as well as the ways in which it gradually continues to affect the culturally relevant landa bazaars of the country, with the aim of nurturing greater conversations surrounding the sociological notions of the importance of social class and cultural acceptability relevant to Pakistan.

This study has implications for varying interest groups associated with the notion of second-hand clothing. Educational institutions (particularly

universities) can help foster better notions of environmental sustainability and ethical fashion practices through the use of volunteers and awareness programs through the collective efforts of student bodies and societies present within campus premises, with the additional use of student-led activities to further the cause. Awareness can also be created with regards to the protection of the local markets and the harms of over-hoarding, so as to ensure that those who tend to favor these markets for their prices and accessibility are able to continue to do so.



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