



## Constructing Inclusive Citizenship: Fundamental, Cultural and Religious Rights Narratives in History Textbooks Taught in Elite Schools in Pakistan

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### Abstract

*Given the crucial role of history education in shaping civic identity, this study investigates citizenship rights perspectives constructed in the history textbooks of elite private schools in Pakistan. Following Gagnon and Pagé's analytical model, this study adopts a qualitative content analysis to probe fundamental rights, cultural rights, religious rights, and related concepts within textbooks. The findings highlight problematic silences, selective narratives, and externally imposed frameworks on rights issues. Deterministic and politically skewed historical accounts impede the development of critical faculties and introspection, which are essential for engaged democratic citizenship. This study has notable implications for reforming unbalanced curricula and decolonizing history teaching toward the objectives of citizenship education, such as educating future citizens to contribute to a peaceful, just, inclusive, and democratic society in Pakistan. The paper not only presents its findings but also looks at what the findings entail for the development of inclusive citizenship education.*

**Keywords:** citizenship education, history textbooks, content analysis, Pakistan, human rights, private schools



## **Introduction**

Inclusive citizenship education is an approach aimed at developing a sense of belonging and participation amongst all students regardless of their background, identity, or ability (Oxley & Morris, 2013; Russell, 2002). It recognizes that society is diverse and endeavors to promote a more equitable and just educational environment.

Globally, education systems are increasingly recognizing the need to educate future citizens to contribute to peaceful, just, inclusive, and democratic societies (UNESCO, 2015).

Consequently, citizenship education has gained significant traction in formal schooling in recent years. Citizenship education aims to equip students with an understanding of social, political, and civic institutions, an appreciation of diversity, knowledge of rights and obligations, and a commitment to engagement and social justice (Banks, 2017). It encompasses four key dimensions: imparting knowledge and understanding of the community, nation, and the world; developing skills and competencies needed for active participation; instilling communal and civic virtues; and fostering a civic identity alongside a national identity (Peterson et al., 2015).

Contemporary citizenship education programs worldwide rest on human rights as their keystone (Tibbitts, 2017; UNESCO, 2015). Human Rights Education informs learners about norms and ideas of safeguarding citizenship rights, enables a school atmosphere that respects the rights of all, and allows young citizens to exercise and enhance their communities' rights. It is based on ideas of dignity, justice, equality, freedom, diversity, and social responsibility. Citizenship education aspires to foster national identity, commitment to community with a global identity, and a sense of belonging to all humanity (Peterson et al., 2015). It balances rights and duties, unity and diversity, political literacy, and social intelligence. Schools have the opportunity to promote unbiased, analytical, and ethical citizenship globally through their formal and informal curricula.

However, public schooling systems worldwide are dramatically under-equipped and under-resourced to provide effective citizenship education (Banks, 2017; Tibbitts, 2017).

Developing states in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America face pressing ethnic fault lines, religious divides, challenges of migration, and a legacy of colonial rule, adding complexities to citizenship education (Kennedy, 2012; Tibbitts, 2017).

In Pakistan, citizenship education faces exceptional challenges due to trauma, turmoil, and bitterness carried forward by the partition (Jalal, 1995). Ethnic tensions, uneven economic development, and centralized governance have bred perceptions of grievances in sub-national



groups and demand greater provincial rights or separatism (Waseem, 2016). The resulting civic deficit is manifested in low political participation, the absence of an accountable government, the weak rule of law, and arrested growth of civil society (Zaidi, 2005). Therefore, Pakistan faces an acute crisis of national integration and democratic, inclusive citizenship (Mehdi, 2004). Pakistan's education policy endorses the reforming of Islamic studies, Pakistan studies, social studies, and language curricula for tolerance, pluralism, and civic responsibility (Government of Pakistan, 2009). However, substantive research on citizenship education in Pakistan is scant, especially using comprehensive analytical frameworks and private schools, which now educate over 46.5 percent of the enrolled students (PIE, 2022).

This study qualitatively explores citizenship rights concepts transmitted in history textbooks of Pakistani elite private schools, focusing on fundamental rights, cultural rights, and religious rights components of the framework developed by Gagnon and Pagé (1999). History as an academic field is closely related to citizenship education, as historical knowledge provides citizens with an understanding of continuity between past and present, analyzing cause and effect over national and global time periods and the origins of today's social, political, and cultural realities (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Vickers & Jones, 2005).

Through content analysis, this study examines how fundamental human rights are presented, what rights violations are highlighted, which conflicts or struggles are emphasized, and whose perspectives predominate. It investigates what political, social, and cultural rights are discussed, which identity groups and value systems are centered or marginalized, and what factors are shown to enable or breach rights. It also examines how interconnected societal power dynamics are portrayed and what notions of change, development, and redressal are depicted regarding rights issues, including trajectories presented from past to present.

While the existing research on citizenship in Pakistan's textbooks is limited, the current study is comprehensive. The study emphasizes the importance of the need to examine private school textbooks through systematic qualitative procedures and Gagnon and Page's (1999) citizenship rights framework because, through these textbooks, the identities of the future decision-makers will be formed (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). Thus, qualitative analysis of qualitative data has defined systematic categorization through inductive and deductive approaches to explain the meaning of the data with Gagnon and Pagé (1999) framework deductively and generate new categories as needed inductively.



## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of the study revolves around the rights of citizenship and indicates the sharing of principles as a requirement for the settlement of those rights for human and diversity awareness (Tibbitts, 2017). This is within the framework of the rights dimensions of citizenship, as claimed by Gagnon and Pagé (1999)—which outlines elements such as rights (fundamental, political, social, and cultural) and programs and measures (identity recognition, equal assessment, anti-discrimination, and equity measures).

## **Citizenship rights**

With the focus on living together, the agreement on certain common principles becomes a pressing issue in citizenship education (Jun, 2021). In the past, schools were usually set up to transfer certain agreed-upon ideas of a dominant social, cultural, and political system to students to generate unity and a coherent nation-state (Banks, 2017). At present, in addition to striving to build a sense of nationhood, schools are embracing values that promote human rights and affirm diversity (Baytiyeh, 2018). The purpose is to give students a peaceful, honorable, tolerant, free, equal, and bonding spirit; as a result, the concept of human rights is now being put on citizenship education as a main ingredient (Alicia Muñoz, 2018; Dina, 2005; Quennerstedt, 2022).

Human rights education broadly addresses three dimensions. The first is education about human rights, which refers to what students should know. It encompasses the principles, standards, and documents that define human rights in general and that specifically relate to human rights. It also covers the ideal values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that promote and reinforce citizenship rights or that must be preserved to secure these rights. Education about human rights involves teaching and learning about the mechanisms that ensure human rights. The second is education through human rights, which is about how students' rights should be protected in education. It is about the rights of teachers to teach and of students to learn in environments that are safe, healthy, protective, challenging, and free from violence.

Education through human rights involves teaching and learning in ways that enhance the rights of all children to gain from education. The third, education for human rights, points to the claim that people should appreciate and exercise their rights, respect, recognize, protect, and fulfill the rights of others, and participate actively in achieving and maintaining an equitable and just society.

Education for human rights raises important questions for practitioners in child rights education in particular (Zajda, 2020). To what extent are citizens equal with regard to the



rights enumerated for all people? To what extent are programs and measures undertaken to rectify inequalities and secure access to assets, enabling all students—girls as much as boys, rich as much as poor, citizens as much as aliens—to gain socially and cease to be defined by any single group membership?

To teach human rights, participatory and transformative methodologies are more successful than traditional ones (Alter & Fernekes, 2022; Coysh, 2017). Learners should be exposed to democratic experiences in their schools and classrooms that signify different identities and cultures and could help them internalize human rights values and behaviors (Alter & Fernekes, 2022; Tibbitts, 2017).

Human rights education is a part of the UN agenda. UNESCO has made human rights learning an imperative by suggesting that respect for human rights and basic freedoms be incorporated into education so that it can play a role in each local society (Hoffmann, 2010). Any abstract rights system must enforce anti-discrimination steps to legal processes for equality in the political system and collective standards of economics and politics sustained by all organizations, units, and society (Donnelly, 2003; Juss, 2022). The role of dialogue is to limit the situation of both social justice and the persecution of societies based on the basic concept of democracy of the subjects of education and the demand for peace cooperation (Bickmore, 2015).

Gagnon and Pagé (1999) framework distinguishes between two micron-components: rights, programs, and measures. They further expanded rights into fundamental, political, social, and cultural rights. Programs and measures were defined to include recognition, equal treatment, the fight against prejudices, and equity measures. The current study is part of a larger doctoral project in which citizenship was explored in 13 books. For lack of space, this paper presents only the results pertaining to the first micron-component, namely fundamental and cultural rights, while the other micron-components may be found elsewhere (e.g., Arjumand et al., 2024; Rauf et al., 2024).

Gagnon and Pagé (1999) proposed that the broad interpretation that can be given to the notion of fundamental rights regards them as rights possessed by all people due to their human nature and, therefore, it is about inalienable and inviolable prerogatives. The meaning of fundamental rights adopted for the purposes of the conceptual framework is much more restricted and refers only to human rights that are institutionalized in law. That is, they are recognized and protected by constitutions, human rights charters, or laws dealing with this



subject. Among the fundamental rights guaranteed by legal instruments in liberal democratic societies are the right to individual freedom, the right to life, the right to security, the right to physical integrity, and the right to equality. However, cultural rights refer particularly to the protection of a collective identity characterized by a culture proper (Gagnon & Pagé, 1999).

Studies have persistently shown the significance of history education, and specifically history textbooks, in shaping collective national identity, citizenship perspectives, and human rights awareness (Barton & Levstik, 2013). Textbooks are considered to be one of the most powerful means of transmitting official knowledge, shaping a collective memory of the past, and imagining shared futures (Foster & Crawford, 2006). Textbooks constructed in any national and religious context present some historical narratives, give or deny legitimacy to some identities, and include or exclude others (Vickers & Jones, 2005). Studies in Pakistan have shown that the public school textbook materials promote a nationalist Islamic identity and present a hostile attitude towards religious diversity (Durrani, 2008; Joshi, 2010). However, research on the history textbooks used in the private schools of Pakistan is still limited.

### **Research Methods**

The current study employs qualitative content analysis as its research method. Qualitative content analysis is one of the most widely used methods for reconstructing the central points of text data. It is used to make inferences by taking clear steps in identifying themes, emerging patterns, and unique interpretations and attributing their meanings and significance (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023; Schreier, 2014). It entails looking at the connections, interactions, and relative significance of the words, context, and social actors that report the original data, trying to discover the underlying themes but being constantly in contact with the data, deciding the meaning of linguistic statements (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023; Schreier, 2014). This study, then, focused on the construction and meaning of the concepts of duties and responsibilities and underlying meanings, values, and ideologies of the history textbooks used at elite private schools in Punjab.

NVivo software was employed to systematically analyze the selected history textbooks using a qualitative content analysis. The books used in this analysis are listed in Table 1. Initially, all the books were carefully read and re-read to familiarize ourselves with the information. The excerpts relevant to citizenship rights were then coded according to Gagnon and Pagé's (1999) citizenship rights framework, which included fundamental rights, cultural rights, religious rights, and so on. The themes coming from the data requiring new codes, emerging



through an inductive process, were developed. The researchers then collected nodes with similar codes, merged them, and gave the name of the node to that code. These nodes were then aggregated into larger thematic nodes, for example, “abuse and violation normalized,” “silence on recent conflicts,” “religion used for dominance,” etc. The themes were then analyzed to determine their connection, and their relative significances were identified. In the end, findings were interpreted to imply inclusive citizenship education, keeping Pakistan’s context in view.

Table 1  
 List of Books Selected for Qualitative Content Analysis.

No.	Book Type	Book Title	Key
1.	Book specifically designed for Pakistani students	Understanding History for Class 6	UH6
2.	Book specifically designed for Pakistani students	Understanding History for Class 7	UH7
3.	Book specifically designed for Pakistani students	Understanding History for Class 8	UH8
4.	Book specifically designed for Pakistani students	Oxford History for Pakistan 1	OHP
5.	Book specifically designed for Pakistani students	History in Focus 1	HIF
6.	Book specifically designed for Pakistani students	Pakistan History, Culture, and Government	PHCG
7.	Book specifically designed for Pakistani students	The History and Culture of Pakistan	THCP
8.	Book specifically designed for Pakistani students	Pakistan - A Historical and Contemporary Look	PHCL
9.	Book specifically designed for American students but being taught in Pakistani Elite Schools	My World History	MWH
10.	Book specifically designed for IB MYP	Individual and Societies 1	IS1
11.	Book specifically designed for IB MYP	Individual and Societies 2	IS2
12.	Book specifically designed for IB MYP	Individual and Societies 3	IS3
13.	Book specifically designed for IB MYP	History By Concepts (MYP) By Concepts	HBC

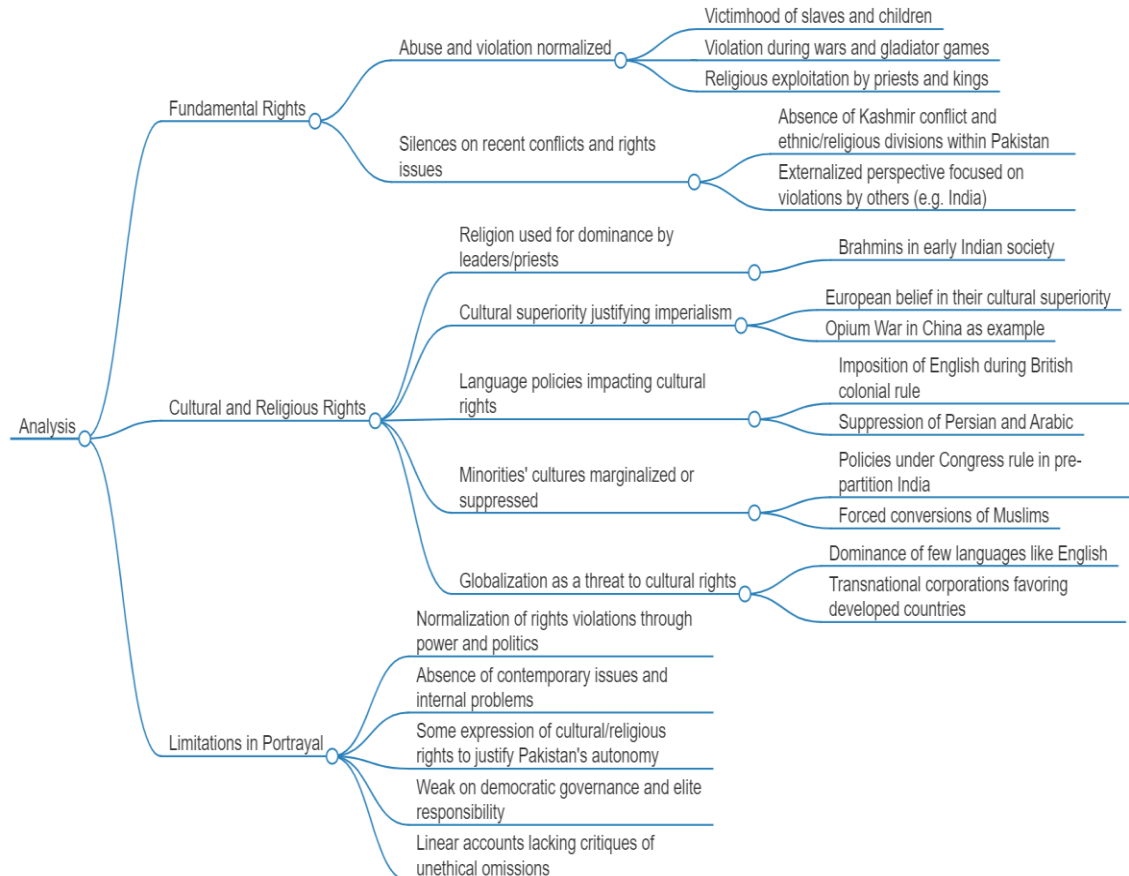


## Results

The findings in the form of themes and sub-themes are provided below:

Figure 1

A visual representation of themes and sub-themes



### Fundamental Rights

#### Abuse and violation normalized

The study of human rights in the books established the fact that the implementation of these rights from the beginning of civilization until today's world has always been at the mercy of powerful hands. By giving examples of the violation of human rights by the powerful elite of the time through fun or in the name of god, books naturalize victimhood and convey the message that the violation of human rights of the masses has never been a topic of concern for the majority of the rulers, or that masses were accustomed to it. For instance, books maintained that, in early civilization, religion played a crucial role in the establishment of a power system and the determination of cultural traits. Writers asserted that in the age of





kings, the priests and the kings used to proclaim that they were the god or the most beloved person of the god to the people.

The historical content of all books reflects that the chief victims of the violation of fundamental rights were slaves. There are no laws protecting their basic human rights. “Until about AD 130, a master had the right to kill a slave without reason” (OHP, p. 44). The book also informs students about the generosity and humanity of the Greeks, but it was also mentioned that slaves had no rights. The book further elaborates

*The idea that slaves were compared to animals such as donkeys or goats who could be used up until their death has been a long one, even the philosopher Aristotle stated that a free man’s ‘property’ was more than tools and also living tools, or slaves. This idea diminishes the autonomy and human worth of the people. (OHP, p. 32)*

Children remained victims of human rights violations even after the transition of the human age from early civilization to the industrial era. Childhood labor in different forms has remained common throughout history. Books informed the students about the children who worked in factories and mills as “pauper apprentices” to boost industrialization in Europe. The motivation to hire children was as follows:

*Mill owners benefited greatly from employing children in mills. First, they could pay children less than they could pay for adults. Furthermore, a child’s size was perfect for going under machines and repairing broken threads (fixers) and cleaning up the loose cotton (scavengers). (HBC, p. 9)*

Little was left to human rights during World War 1 and World War II. As a result, a breach of basic human rights was pictured with the “casualties numbered over 37 million people, both military and civilian, with more than 16 million dead and 20 million wounded, besides almost eight million prisoners of war” (UH8, p. 31). The book further stated that “there was enormous destruction, and the economies of the countries involved suffered huge losses” (UH8, p. 31). Moreover, “the rights of citizens such as freedom of speech and the right to hold protest meetings were suspended” (UH8, p. 31).

In Rome, governance, which was considered a hallmark of early civilization, the writers introduced the students to gladiator games in which leaders and aristocrats find pleasure in violating fundamental rights. For instance, one book mentioned that the reason the games were so popular with the people was because:

*They were bloody entertainment, and they could actually be deadly. These games were seen by people from all walks of life, as thousands would come to see violent spectacles. These spectacles included the hunting of wild and exotic animals, the execution of prisoners, and the throwing of religious martyrs to the lions. At the center of all these spectacles, however, were the gladiators, who were the symbols of*



*Roman virtues such as honor and great courage and used all the martial skills that they had learned to engage in an all-out fight to death. These events could all be viewed at one of the many Coliseums that were built for all of these events. (IB1, p. 91)*

In addition, a book mentioned that other than entertainment, violation of fundamental rights was also done in the name of religion. It was also mentioned that religious leaders shed the blood of innocent people in the name of god. The Aztecs believed their god of war, Huitzilopochtli, brought them victories in conflict and caused the sun to rise every day. They also believed that, without the nourishment of human blood, Huitzilopochtli would grow weakly. For this reason, the Aztecs sacrificed thousands of individuals annually. These men's hearts were torn out of their bodies and offered to Huitzilopochtli. The people of the Aztecs were mostly war prisoners. Each year, around one thousand advanced warriors are taken prisoner for the purpose of human sacrifice. Additionally, Aztecs often sacrificed children. These children were specifically to god of rain and fertility, Tlaloc (MWH, p. 593).

Instead of declining, with the advancement of civilization, slave culture also flourished, and the slave trade became an established business without any human rights. The writers informed the students about the "triangular trade" between Europe, Africa, and America. As a result of this trade, "between 1500 and 1870, about 9 million to 11 million Africans were enslaved and transported to the Americas" (MWH, p. 816). On the one hand, the slave trade was a violation of fundamental rights at the individual level, but on the other hand, it also served as the exploitation of national rights on a vast scale. Population stagnation and, in some cases, population decline, resulted in the arrest of economic development in Africa. This slave trade further paved the way for colonial conquest.

### **Silences on recent conflicts and rights issues & externalized perspective (focused on violations by others)**

The analysis revealed the absence of present-day references or contemporary struggles in which these rights issues are implicated, including conflicts with India, especially over Kashmir. Within Pakistan, ethnic tensions, religious divisions, and periods of autocracy prevail, with governance being brittle and rights deficient. This absence reinforces the vision that Pakistan's principal problems lie elsewhere, not least in India's objections to its existence.

The books published for Pakistani students described the violation of fundamental rights in Pakistan at the national level. The concern of exploitation of the fundamental rights of



Kashmir arose with the independence of Pakistan: “Indian soldiers arrived in Kashmir on 27 October along with the accession papers to be signed by Hari Singh. Although he signed it on that day, he backdated it to the day before the Indian invasion” (PHCG, p. 119). Up to this date, it has not been solved and is waiting for a “United Nations supervised plebiscite” (PHCL, p. 202).

Pakistan has not only confronted India on the issue of the violation of the basic rights of Kashmiris but also on the division of financial and military assets (THCP, p. 114), territorial division, the accession of princely states (THCP, p. 112), economic resources (THCP, p. 111) and the dispute of canal water (THCP, p. 115). Basic right violation in Pakistan was discussed only in the Indian context, giving the impression that India’s aggression towards human rights while Pakistan has suffered the abuse of human rights. However, the situation of basic rights within the territorial division of the present day of Pakistan, for which the government is directly responsible for, has also not been discussed.

### **Cultural and Religious Rights**

#### **Religion used for dominance by leaders/priests**

The books stated that in early civilization, exploitation to govern and dominate common people and religious exploitation was normal. The historical account also conveys the message that with the elevation of the human age from early civilization to modern times, the slogans of nationalism and capitalism gained popularity. These deep-rooted slogans helped breed customs that violated cultural and religious rights. The books also narrated that the religious exploitation of Aryans took place when the Brahmins were:

*The only ones in early Indian society who were even permitted to do any of the religious rituals. They believed that even if there were a little mistake in their ceremonies, there would be consequences from the gods. This gave Brahmins the ability to have a lot of power because the Vedas were not to be held by just anyone but only by a Brahmin. (MWH, p. 212)*

#### **Cultural superiority justifying imperialism**

The cultural rights abuses occurred when peoples of the nations who were ethnocentric, meaning that their cultures were more civilized and superior to others, utilized this prejudice and discrimination. For instance, a book underscored, “National pride fueled competition for control of foreign lands,” and provided justification for imperialism was “European belief in their own cultural superiority.” For centuries, Westerners saw the world divided into ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ peoples. They believed imperialism would bring the benefits of modern civilization to the world” (MWH, 907).



Other books also stressed that economic motives of Western countries largely caused the abuse of social-cultural and economic rights. The story of the opium war in China also served as an example of how mighty hands violated cultural rights. Opium was also a significant part of the transnational trade at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was a profitable commodity for merchants as it was used for both recreational and medical purposes. By the end of the eighteenth century, the use of opium for recreational purposes had been banned in most parts of Europe, Asia, and China. To earn huge profits from the Chinese market, British traders breached Chinese law, sold opium to the Chinese market, and opened opium dens. This also led to a war between Britain and China (HBC, p. 480). “China had been utterly defeated and demoralized. By the end of the nineteenth century, Britain, France, and Germany had seized huge territories in China, which were known as their spheres of influence” (HBC, p. 56). The book further mentioned that economic, political, and military pressure was exerted on the “spheres of influence,” which fortified human rights abuse (HBC, p. 221).

### **Language policies impacting cultural rights**

The books highlighted the negative impact of language imposition on the cultural rights of the people in the Indian subcontinent during British colonial rule. They underscore that language serves as a flagship of any culture, and this time, it was the language that was victimized through proper and deliberate planning to assault the cultural rights of the people of the sub-continent. This assault was Thomas Babington Macaulay’s brainchild, as he believed that “European ideas were far better than anything from India.” His aim was to educate a group or class of Indians who would take on Western values and help the British to govern the millions of other Indians. Following Macaulay’s ideas, the “British imposed on educated Indians a European culture which was probably not appropriate for them” (PHCG, p. 29).

The books further mentioned that after the language change, the government established schools whose medium of instruction was English, which was meant to propagate Western ideologies throughout the country. Once the Indians were steeped into the realms of Western thought and science, Macaulay’s object could be achieved” (UH8, p. 10). First, “literary works such as *Gulistan*, *Boston*, *Akhlaq-i-Jalali*, *Akhlaq-i-Nasiri*, and *Anwaar-i-Suhaili* were widely read” but after Macaulay’s educational policy was not the part of education. The devastating effect of this cultural violation was that when the English language replaced Persian “as the official language of the British Empire in India, Muslim education received a



setback from which it would never recover because Persian and Arabic no longer had the economic power to benefit the people of the subcontinent” (UH7, p. 70).

### **Minorities’ cultures marginalized or suppressed**

As the rights have been on the whim of mighty hands, as soon as Congress was allowed to form government in both Hindu and Muslim-majority provinces, it also took steps to suppress the cultural rights of Muslims. The Wardha education scheme was introduced, which not only focused on Hindu religion and culture in schools but was a clear violation of the cultural rights of other minorities. It forced children to “sing Bande Mataram as the anthem and bow to the portrait of Gandhi, which Muslim religious teachings disallowed.” Then, “the Vidya Mandir” scheme was launched in Central Provinces at primary schools; “it encouraged the use of Hindi as the medium of instruction.” Furthermore, “policies were adopted to harm the interests of Muslim landowners. In Bihar, cow slaughter is prohibited. The non-acceptance of Muslim culture and traditions by Congress ministries made Muslims come to hate the rule of the Congress ministries” (UH8, p. 58).

Another issue of forced conversion in the books was witnessed in the subcontinent during the 1920s, when radical communal parties from India “wanted to convert all Muslims of the subcontinent into Hindus,” and the policy of “India for the Hindus only” was adopted (UH8, p. 50).

### **Globalization as a threat to cultural rights**

One of the books, *Individuals and Societies*, also mentions how globalization and transnational companies in the modern era have served as a challenge to cultural rights. It explains that globalization has resulted in only a few languages, such as English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and Arabic, dominating international business and commerce (IS2, pp. 47-53). A consequence of this is that many languages spoken by smaller populations will become endangered. In addition, transnational corporations might favor more developed countries, where they will earn more profits, rather than less developed countries, where profits would be lower (IS2, pp. 47-53).

The message delivered by the books was that economic gains were often behind the violation of cultural, religious, and social rights. The culture and religions of the ruling elite were more superior than those of the common people. To make the colonial mind, it was necessary to recognize the cultural superiority of the colonial master. There were far more accounts of



cultural, religious, and economic abuse than stories of kings and princes who were lovers of cultural and religious differences and distributive justice in their domain.

### **Limitations in Portrayal**

The findings show that Pakistan's history curriculum does not focus on critical, analytical, and conceptual knowledge but rather revolves around historical facts. In addition, the textbooks provide linear accounts of future rights development during rights denial and negotiation among rights traders protesting or participating in governance. While they represent historical situations where all citizens remain oppressed, or some participate in freedom disputes, there is speculation that the texts are unethical because the writers positively identify rights but do not present them.

First, the textbooks present a narrative in which the question of human rights is resolved through power and politics rather than morality. Second, rulers, dominant groups, and victorious societies have systematically abused the basic human rights of subjects, minorities, and those conquered by politicizing, economizing, or ideologizing their uniqueness and intense interests. Third, textbooks consistently express cultural and religious rights as part of their choice of political imperatives, forcefully explaining why the political imperative of autonomy for Pakistan's identity must be granted. However, they are weak in conferring democratic governance and fail to indict Pakistan's national and indigenous elites, including themselves, for the "non-performance" of freedom.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Discussion**

This study focuses on elite private school history textbooks, aiming to examine how citizenship rights are portrayed. Historical narratives frame citizens' sense of collective identity as secured in their citizenship (Barton & Levstik, 2004). However, little empirical research has been conducted on the history textbooks of private schools. A study of history textbooks is a distinctive and vital way to gain insights into the citizenship perspectives with which future elites and decision-makers are shaped (Mehdi, 2004). This is particularly important, given Pakistan's abiding instability and the consequent need for a unifying vision of citizenship based on a consensual understanding of rights and responsibilities (Virdee, 2021). In Pakistan's case, unlike the state-mandated textbooks, its private schools enjoy reasonable autonomy over their curriculum, including history books (Aziz, 1993; Joshi,



2010). Thus, it seems crucial to ascertain the concept of citizenship fostered by these textbooks.

The research is framed in terms of rights—using Gagnon and Pagé (1999)—to investigate the elements making up the conceptions of citizenship rights constructed within textbook accounts arranged chronologically. First, textbooks present a narrative in which the question of human rights is resolved through power and politics rather than morality (Kiernan, 2007). Rulers, dominant groups, and victorious societies have systematically abused the basic human rights of subjects, minorities, and those conquered by politicizing, economizing, or ideologizing their uniqueness and intense interests. Religious leaders of every sort, including bishops, kings, Brahmins, and Imams, seek to subjugate the masses by invoking and perverting the moral force of religions into rituals of power that restrict their rights. Over centuries, slavery and racial discrimination have appeared as universally accepted institutions until abolished; human rights are a recently born, still shaky idea, contesting the deeply unequal, racialized, and collectivist civil societal orders (Donnelly & Whelan, 2020). Second, the analysis reveals the absence of present-day references or contemporary struggles in which these rights issues are implicated, including conflicts with India, especially over Kashmir (Khan, 2024). Within Pakistan, ethnic tensions, religious divisions, and periods of autocracy prevail, with governance being brittle and right-deficient (Waseem, 2016). This absence reinforces the vision that Pakistan’s most important problems lie elsewhere, not least in India’s objections to its existence.

Third, textbooks consistently give cultural and religious rights some expression as part of their choice of political imperatives, forcefully explaining why the political imperative of autonomy for Pakistan’s identity must be granted (Durrani et al., 2017). However, they are weak in conferring democratic governance and fail to indict Pakistan’s national and indigenous elites, including themselves, for the “non-performance” of freedom.

Fourth, textbooks provide linear accounts of rights development toward the future during rights denial and negotiation among rights traders protesting or participating in governance (Carretero et al., 2012). While they represent historical situations where all citizens remain oppressed or some participate in freedom disputes, there is speculation that the texts are unethical because the writers positively identify rights but do not present them.

The findings from this study are highly relevant to inclusive citizenship development in Pakistan. Pakistani elite schools’ textbooks have the ability to mold students’ understanding of what their rights are, how different or similar they are from the ‘masses,’ and their views



on inclusion, in other words. The limited representation of marginalized groups, acceptance of rights infringements, and focus on external factors rather than others, such as how people should behave and live are some of the areas of concerns. These can hinder the development of inclusive attitudes among students. To develop inclusive citizenship, more balanced and critical history textbooks that acknowledge the experiences of people in their own Pakistani societies would also need to promote reflective and empathetic thinking skills of students (Banks, 2014; Oxley & Morris, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Future studies should investigate the curricula of other social studies courses, larger textbook sample sizes, and classroom implementation of textbooks. Comparative studies may be necessary to further evaluate how the perspectives of public, private primary, and secondary school curricula vary. Provincial textbook councils and independent publishers must address textbook weaknesses by equipping staff with the capacity to recognize and equitably present historical views of past and present concerns relating to human rights issues. Teachers also need more professional development to utilize historical instruction as a site of critical literacy and engagement. Factors not considered within the limitations of this research, such as variances in syllabus expectations of large and small school contexts and varying cultural and geographic locations, must be further researched. Public consultation with students, academics, and civil society must be held prior to embarking on curriculum revisions.

The findings show that Pakistan's history textbooks for elite schools do not adequately focus on critical, analytical, and conceptual knowledge but rather on historical facts. To respond effectively to future crises and challenges and address the shortcomings of daily practice, teachers and curriculum developers should emphasize content mastery, move the focus of inquiry to the discipline of history, and renew their approaches to teaching and developing curricula (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

This paper suggests three central measures for curriculum and instruction reforms in history education: rigorous curricular reforms at all levels promoting disciplinary citizenship knowledge and skills that consolidate historical learning; transformational citizenship learning that creates meaningful spaces for open dialogue, youth involvement, and reparative social dialogue; and deeply and continuously enacting history and social sciences epistemologies in schools and society (Carretero et al., 2012). Pakistan's inclusive future hinges on whether its young, diverse demographics can imagine and realize its rights and equity-based development. The struggle for meaningful, relevant, and inclusive citizenship is far from complete.





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