



Youth Development through Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) in Sindh: Indigenous Approaches for Teacher, School, and Community Empowerment through Customized Training

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Abstract

Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) has emerged as a critical educational paradigm to address gaps in holistic youth development, particularly in socio-cultural contexts marked by limited skill-based learning opportunities. In Pakistan's Sindh province, 60% of the population is under the age of 25, yet the secondary education system remains dominated by rote memorization, academic content delivery, and minimal integration of problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and emotional intelligence training. This mixed-methods study, conducted through the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Karachi, evaluates the current implementation of LSBE in secondary education, explores indigenous approaches, and proposes a framework for customized teacher and community training to strengthen LSBE delivery. The study engaged 277 undergraduate students via structured questionnaires (Cronbach's α ranging from .783 to .877 across LSBE skill dimensions) and 12 in-depth interviews. Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, correlation, and regression modeling, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Results revealed strong positive correlations among self-awareness, problem-solving, communication, critical thinking, decision-making, interpersonal skills, and emotional development. Significant differences emerged across school boards for self-awareness and decision-making skills. Thematic findings highlighted LSBE as largely absent from secondary schooling, with barriers rooted in cultural constraints, insufficient facilities, untrained teachers, and lack of community engagement. The paper proposes policy, curriculum, and teacher education reforms grounded in indigenous pedagogical approaches and supported by community-school partnerships. Recommendations align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing quality education, gender equality, and youth empowerment for sustainable socio-economic progress in Sindh

Keywords: Life Skills-Based Education, Teacher Training, Sindh Education, Indigenous Pedagogy, Youth Development, Pakistan, Sustainable Development Goals

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Introduction

Context and Rationale

Pakistan's youth demographic offers both unprecedented opportunity and complex challenges. According to the *Pakistan Economic Survey* (2014), approximately 68.8% of the population falls under the age of 30, with a youth bulge expected to persist until at least 2040. In Sindh province, the Bureau of Statistics Pakistan (2021) estimates that nearly 60% of residents are under 25. While this demographic dividend could fuel economic growth, the current education system has not adequately prepared young people to navigate the demands of the 21st-century workforce or civic life (UNDP, 2018; UNESCO, 2015).

Sindh's secondary education sector suffers from chronic issues, including high dropout rates, gender disparities, insufficient infrastructure, and outdated teaching practices (Government of Sindh, 2018). Most critically, the prevailing pedagogy prioritizes rote memorization and exam preparation, leaving minimal scope for developing problem-solving, critical thinking, effective communication, and emotional regulation skills—core competencies underpinning LSBE (Masood et al., 2021). This misalignment has produced graduates ill-equipped to address real-world complexities, undermining both employability and civic participation (World Bank, 2018).

Life Skills-Based Education in the Policy Landscape

The *National Education Policy* (NEP, 2009) recognized LSBE as essential for teacher education programs, intending to integrate it across curricula to prepare the next generation of educators. Similarly, the *Sindh Youth Policy* (2018) calls for “progressive policy interventions” to build prosperous, resilient youth through equitable opportunities in education and skill development. However, these policy frameworks have struggled with translation into practice due to socio-political, economic, and institutional barriers (Rehman, Ashraf, & Mukhtar, 2023). The Higher Education Commission's *Undergraduate Education Policy* (2020) further emphasizes competency-based learning, which requires a robust LSBE foundation during secondary schooling.

Despite policy attention, LSBE implementation in Sindh remains fragmented. Teacher education curricula seldom include structured LSBE modules, and in-service teacher training programs are rarely tailored to local socio-cultural contexts. This has resulted in a disconnect between educational policy, classroom practice, and labor market demands.

Indigenous Approaches and the Sindh Context

Sindh is distinguished by its rich cultural heritage and the title “Land of Sufis,” reflecting deep-rooted traditions of tolerance and pluralism. However, the region also contends with financial inequality, rural–urban disparities, and significant variation in educational quality (Haider, Sharjeel, & Iqbal, 2021). Indigenous approaches to LSBE—rooted in local languages, traditions, and community values—are essential for relevance and acceptance. Incorporating cultural narratives, engaging elders in mentorship, and embedding gender-sensitive practices are



strategies with demonstrated success in similar contexts (Aly, 2007; Saeed, 2016; Mumtaz, 2018).

Problem Statement

There exists a critical gap in equipping Sindh's youth with the life skills necessary for personal fulfillment, economic productivity, and active citizenship. Current secondary education practices insufficiently integrate LSBE, resulting in a generation that struggles with decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and emotional resilience. Furthermore, the absence of indigenous, culturally grounded training models for teachers and community stakeholders perpetuates this gap. Without urgent, context-sensitive intervention, Sindh risks squandering its demographic dividend.

Study Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Evaluate secondary school curricula and implementation in Karachi, Sindh, with reference to LSBE.
2. Assess alignment between LSBE curricula and pre-service teacher education programs.
3. Propose revisions to teacher education curricula incorporating LSBE.
4. Design and pilot training programs for school leaders, in-service teachers, parents, and community leaders aligned with LSBE frameworks.
5. Develop research-led indigenous approaches for LSBE implementation.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant difference in the opinions of male and female students regarding LSBE skill dimensions (self-awareness, problem-solving, communication, critical thinking, decision-making, interpersonal skills, emotional skills development, and overall impact on personal development).

H2: There is a significant difference in the opinions of students from different school boards (Karachi Board, Federal Board, Foreign Boards) regarding the same LSBE skill dimensions.

Literature Review

Introduction to Life Skills-Based Education

Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) refers to an educational approach aimed at equipping learners with the cognitive, emotional, and social competencies necessary to navigate personal, academic, and professional challenges (UNESCO, 2014; WHO, 1997). These skills, including problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, communication, and emotional regulation, are recognized as vital for holistic human development (Durlak et al., 2011). LSBE goes beyond traditional subject learning, integrating experiential and participatory methods to prepare individuals for the complexities of modern life (World Bank, 2018).

The concept gained global recognition in the 1990s when organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



(UNESCO), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) advocated for life skills education as part of a comprehensive strategy for youth development (UNICEF, 2017). These agencies emphasized LSBE's role in fostering resilience, promoting mental health, and enhancing employability, particularly in developing countries where education systems often fail to prepare students for real-world challenges (Bagga & Banerji, 2021).

Global Perspectives on LSBE

Globally, LSBE is implemented as both a stand-alone curriculum and an integrated component of formal education. In East Africa, for example, UNESCO-supported programs have embedded LSBE into secondary school curricula to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes, reduce gender-based violence, and promote civic engagement (UNESCO, 2015). In Southeast Asia, LSBE initiatives often emphasize disaster preparedness, environmental stewardship, and vocational skills, tailored to regional priorities (Bancin & Ambarita, 2019).

Meta-analyses have shown that LSBE significantly improves social-emotional competencies, academic performance, and behavior regulation among youth (Durlak et al., 2011). For instance, a longitudinal study in the United States found that students participating in LSBE programs demonstrated a 23% improvement in social-emotional skills and a 9% increase in academic achievement compared to peers (Taylor et al., 2017). These results underscore LSBE's potential as a transformative tool for education systems worldwide.

LSBE in South Asian Contexts

In South Asia, the implementation of LSBE is often challenged by conservative socio-cultural norms, resource constraints, and policy-practice gaps. In India, LSBE has been integrated into vocational training and non-formal education programs, with studies reporting increased employability and social participation among marginalized youth (Garai & Shadrach, 2006; Vaish, 2008). Bangladesh has adopted LSBE in secondary schools to address adolescent health and gender equality issues, reporting positive shifts in student attitudes and behaviors (Svanemyr et al., 2015).

However, scaling up LSBE in the region requires sensitivity to local cultural values, religious beliefs, and community dynamics. For example, Svanemyr et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of engaging parents, religious leaders, and community stakeholders to gain acceptance for topics such as gender equity and emotional intelligence, which may otherwise face resistance.

The Pakistani Policy Framework for LSBE

In Pakistan, LSBE is acknowledged in national and provincial education policies but remains under-implemented (Government of Pakistan, 2009; Government of Sindh, 2018). The *National Education Policy* (2009) advocates for embedding LSBE in teacher training programs and curricula. The *Sindh Youth Policy* (2018) similarly identifies life skills as essential for preparing youth for social and economic participation. The Higher Education Commission's *Undergraduate Education Policy* (2020) underscores the need for competency-based learning, which depends on early exposure to LSBE.



Despite these policy commitments, actual integration into classrooms is rare. Teacher education curricula often omit LSBE, and professional development programs for in-service teachers seldom address life skills pedagogy (Rehman, Ashraf, & Mukhtar, 2023). The disconnect between policy and practice is further exacerbated by inadequate monitoring, lack of culturally relevant training materials, and minimal coordination between education departments and community organizations (Haider, Sharjeel, & Iqbal, 2021).

LSBE in the Sindh Context

Sindh's education system is characterized by significant disparities between urban and rural areas. Urban centers such as Karachi may have better-resourced schools and higher teacher qualifications, but they still face challenges related to overcrowding, rote learning, and limited co-curricular engagement (Masood et al., 2021). Rural schools, in contrast, often operate with minimal facilities, underqualified teachers, and irregular attendance (UNESCO, 2015).

The province's rich cultural heritage offers opportunities for localized LSBE implementation. For example, traditional storytelling, folk music, and community gatherings can serve as culturally resonant methods for imparting communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills (Aly, 2007). Gender-sensitive approaches are particularly crucial in Sindh, where entrenched norms may restrict girls' participation in education and limit their exposure to life skills (Mumtaz, 2018).

Indigenous Approaches to LSBE

Indigenous approaches emphasize aligning LSBE content and pedagogy with local languages, cultural practices, and community values. In Sindh, this could involve integrating Sindhi and Urdu literature, proverbs, and historical narratives into life skills lessons, thus making learning more relatable and engaging (Saeed, 2016). Community elders and local leaders can play a mentoring role, bridging the gap between formal education and real-life application.

Research suggests that culturally congruent LSBE enhances learner engagement, fosters community ownership, and increases program sustainability (Vaish, 2008; Svanemyr et al., 2015). However, these approaches require careful design to avoid reinforcing harmful stereotypes or excluding marginalized groups.

Teacher Empowerment and Training for LSBE

Teachers are the linchpin in successful LSBE implementation. Studies indicate that teacher training programs focusing on facilitation skills, cultural competence, and participatory pedagogy significantly improve LSBE delivery (World Bank, 2018). Continuous professional development, mentorship, and peer learning communities are essential for sustaining these gains (UNICEF, 2017).

In Pakistan, teacher training for LSBE must address both content knowledge and pedagogical skills. This includes strategies for fostering self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence among students. Training should also prepare teachers to handle culturally sensitive topics in ways that respect local values while promoting progressive change (Rehman et al., 2023).



LSBE and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

LSBE contributes directly to multiple SDGs, particularly:

- **Goal 4:** Quality Education — by enhancing cognitive, social, and emotional learning outcomes.
- **Goal 5:** Gender Equality — by promoting equitable participation and challenging discriminatory norms.
- **Goal 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth — by improving employability and entrepreneurship skills.
- **Goal 16:** Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions — by fostering civic responsibility and conflict resolution skills (UNESCO, 2014; United Nations, 2015).

The integration of LSBE into education systems is thus not only an educational imperative but also a developmental necessity.

Research Gaps

While there is broad consensus on the value of LSBE, significant research gaps remain in the Pakistani context:

1. **Empirical studies** on LSBE implementation in Sindh's secondary schools are limited.
2. **Culturally responsive training models** for teachers and community stakeholders are underdeveloped.
3. **Comparative analyses** of LSBE outcomes across different school boards (local, federal, and foreign) are scarce.
4. **Longitudinal studies** tracking LSBE's impact on employability, civic engagement, and well-being are virtually absent.

This study addresses these gaps by combining quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate current LSBE practices, identify contextual barriers, and propose indigenous, evidence-based strategies for improvement.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a **mixed-methods research design** (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of LSBE implementation in Sindh's secondary education system. The rationale for this design lies in the need to capture both measurable patterns of LSBE skills among students and nuanced, context-specific insights from stakeholders. Quantitative data enabled statistical analysis of skill levels, while qualitative findings provided depth through personal narratives, perceptions, and experiences.

Setting

The study was conducted in Karachi, Sindh's largest urban center, which serves as an educational hub hosting diverse school systems — including the Karachi Board, Federal Board,



and various foreign curriculum schools (e.g., Cambridge International, IB). While Karachi represents urban Sindh, the findings have broader implications due to shared policy frameworks, teacher training institutions, and curricular structures across the province (Government of Sindh, 2018).

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised undergraduate students at the University of Karachi who had completed their secondary education in Sindh. This group was chosen for two reasons:

1. They could reflect on their secondary school experiences with a degree of maturity.
2. They represented a mix of educational backgrounds across different school boards.

A purposive sampling strategy (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016) was used to ensure representation across gender, academic disciplines, and school systems. The final quantitative sample consisted of 277 students (166 females, 111 males). Additionally, 12 participants (6 male, 6 female) were selected for structured qualitative interviews to capture a range of perspectives.

Instruments

Quantitative Survey

A structured questionnaire was developed, consisting of **51 items** across eight LSBE domains:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Self-Awareness (SA) | • Interpersonal Skills (IS) |
| • Problem-Solving and Reasoning (PSR) | • Emotional Skills Development (ESD) |
| • Communication Skills (CS) | • Impact on Life Skills and Personality Development (ILSPD) |
| • Critical Thinking Skills (CTS) | |
| • Decision-Making (DM) | |

Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5).

Qualitative Interviews

A structured interview protocol was designed to explore participants' experiences of LSBE in secondary school, perceptions of its importance, and recommendations for improvement. Questions probed curriculum content, teacher preparedness, cultural relevance, and barriers to implementation.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire underwent expert review by three faculty members from the Department of Teacher Education, University of Karachi, to ensure content validity. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the eight domains ranged from .783 to .877, indicating acceptable to high internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2019).



Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected through in-person distribution of questionnaires on campus, ensuring informed consent and anonymity. Qualitative interviews were conducted in a private setting, audio-recorded with participant permission, and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS for:

- Descriptive Statistics (means, standard deviations)
- Independent Samples t-tests (gender differences)
- ANOVA (differences by school board)
- Pearson Correlation Coefficients (relationships among LSBE skills)
- Multiple Regression Analysis (predictors of personal development)

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), following six steps: familiarization, coding, theme generation, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the report.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards outlined by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and the University of Karachi's research ethics guidelines. Participants provided informed consent, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained. Data were stored securely, with access limited to the research team.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	111	40.1
	Female	166	59.9
Year of Study	1st Year	85	30.7
	2nd Year	92	33.2
	3rd Year	61	22.0
	4th Year	39	14.1
School Board	Karachi Board	139	50.2
	Federal Board	78	28.2
	Foreign Boards (O/A Level)	60	21.7

Note: Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.

Results

The results are organized into two main subsections: (1) Quantitative Findings and (2) Qualitative Findings. Each is accompanied by descriptive interpretations linking directly to the research objectives and hypotheses.



Quantitative Findings

Descriptive Statistics of LSBE Domains

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation for each LSBE domain across the sample ($n = 277$). The mean values for all domains fall between 3.4 and 3.9 on a 5-point scale, indicating that students generally perceive themselves to possess moderate to high levels of LSBE-related competencies.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for LSBE Domains

LSBE Domain	Mean	SD
Self-Awareness (SA)	3.68	0.72
Problem-Solving and Reasoning (PSR)	3.74	0.69
Communication Skills (CS)	3.81	0.65
Critical Thinking Skills (CTS)	3.59	0.71
Decision-Making (DM)	3.66	0.68
Interpersonal Skills (IS)	3.73	0.70
Emotional Skills Development (ESD)	3.57	0.75
Impact on Life Skills & Personality Dev.	3.84	0.64

The highest mean was observed for *Impact on Life Skills and Personality Development* ($M = 3.84$), suggesting students feel LSBE experiences influence their overall growth. The lowest was *Emotional Skills Development* ($M = 3.57$), indicating a relative gap in emotional regulation training.

Gender Differences in LSBE Domains

Summarizes the results of independent samples t-tests comparing male and female students' LSBE domain scores.

Table 3

Independent Samples t-test Results by Gender

LSBE Domain	t	df	p-value	Significant?
Self-Awareness	2.31	275	0.022	Yes
Problem-Solving	1.54	275	0.124	No
Communication Skills	1.27	275	0.205	No
Critical Thinking	1.11	275	0.268	No
Decision-Making	2.04	275	0.042	Yes
Interpersonal Skills	0.97	275	0.333	No
Emotional Skills Dev.	1.89	275	0.060	No
Impact on Life Skills	1.14	275	0.255	No



Significant gender differences were found for *Self-Awareness* and *Decision-Making*, with females reporting higher scores than males. This suggests possible differences in how male and female students experience or internalize LSBE-related skills.

Correlation Among LSBE Domains

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Matrix for LSBE Domains

Domain	SA	PSR	CS	CTS	DM	IS	ESD	ILSPD
SA	1	.64**	.59**	.57**	.61**	.56**	.49**	.62**
PSR		1	.66**	.63**	.64**	.58**	.55**	.68**
CS			1	.60**	.62**	.59**	.53**	.66**
CTS				1	.58**	.55**	.54**	.60**
DM					1	.61**	.56**	.65**
IS						1	.52**	.63**
ESD							1	.58**
ILSPD								1

Note: $p < .01$ for all correlations marked .

All domains are significantly and positively correlated. The strongest relationship is between *Problem-Solving and Reasoning* and *Impact on Life Skills and Personality Development* ($r = .68$, $p < .01$).

Regression Analysis

Table 5

Multiple Regression Predicting ILSPD

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p-value
Self-Awareness	0.21	0.06	.19	3.50	0.001
Problem-Solving	0.27	0.07	.24	3.86	0.000
Communication Skills	0.18	0.05	.17	3.60	0.000
Decision-Making	0.20	0.06	.18	3.33	0.001
Emotional Skills Dev.	0.12	0.05	.11	2.40	0.017

$R^2 = 0.58$, $F(5, 271) = 74.67$, $p < .001$

Together, these five predictors explain 58% of the variance in *Impact on Life Skills and Personality Development*. *Problem-Solving* was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .24$).

Qualitative Findings



Thematic analysis yielded **seven major themes**, each illustrating different aspects of LSBE experience and perception.

1. **Varied Experiences of LSBE** — Some schools offered leadership opportunities through debates, clubs, and community service; others focused exclusively on exam preparation.
2. **Absence in Curriculum** — Most participants reported LSBE topics were not systematically taught in secondary school.
3. **Importance for Holistic Growth** — Students recognized LSBE as critical for personal and academic success.
4. **Limited Exposure Before University** — Many only encountered LSBE-related training after entering higher education.
5. **Barriers to Implementation** — These included inadequate facilities, untrained teachers, and socio-cultural resistance to certain topics (e.g., emotional intelligence, gender equality).
6. **Acute Rural Disadvantage** — Students from rural Sindh described severe lack of LSBE resources and awareness.
7. **Community Support as Enabler** — Engagement of parents and local leaders was cited as essential for LSBE acceptance and sustainability.

Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Key Findings

This study set out to examine the state of Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) in Sindh's secondary education sector, assess alignment with pre-service teacher education programs, and develop recommendations for integrating indigenous, culturally responsive approaches. The findings reveal that while students generally report moderate to high self-perceived LSBE competencies, critical gaps persist in emotional skills development, structured LSBE curriculum inclusion, and equitable access across school systems and genders.

The quantitative results demonstrated statistically significant gender differences in *Self-Awareness* and *Decision-Making*, with females reporting higher competencies. Differences across school boards were also evident, particularly in *Self-Awareness* and *Decision-Making*, where students from foreign boards outperformed their Karachi and Federal board counterparts. Strong positive correlations among LSBE domains confirm the interconnected nature of life skills, aligning with prior research (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Regression analysis underscored *Problem-Solving and Reasoning* as the most influential predictor of overall life skills and personality development. Qualitative findings reinforced these patterns, highlighting the scarcity of LSBE in formal curricula, the importance of culturally relevant approaches, and the pivotal role of community support in overcoming socio-cultural barriers.

Interpreting Gender Differences



The observed higher scores for females in *Self-Awareness* and *Decision-Making* echo global evidence suggesting that girls often demonstrate stronger metacognitive and reflective practices in structured learning environments (Bancar & Ambarita, 2019; UNICEF, 2017). This could be due to socialization patterns in Pakistan where female students, often under greater societal scrutiny, may develop heightened self-awareness as a coping mechanism. Additionally, female students in urban contexts may have increased exposure to co-curricular activities promoting leadership and decision-making, especially in private or elite institutions. However, this finding also warrants caution: rural and low-income female students in Sindh frequently face severe educational deprivation (Mumtaz, 2018), suggesting that the higher averages here may reflect the urban skew of the sample rather than a universal trend.

School Board Disparities

Differences in LSBE competencies across school boards point to systemic inequities in curriculum design and resource allocation. Foreign boards (e.g., Cambridge International, IB) integrate LSBE competencies into project-based learning, group work, and inquiry-led pedagogy (Bagga & Banerji, 2021). In contrast, Karachi and Federal boards largely maintain exam-centric approaches that undervalue collaborative problem-solving, critical thinking, and emotional literacy (Masood et al., 2021). This finding aligns with Svanemyr et al.'s (2015) cautionary analysis that LSBE efforts in Pakistan have been uneven, benefiting urban elite schools while leaving public-sector institutions underserved. Without curricular reforms and teacher capacity building in local boards, LSBE access will remain a privilege rather than a right.

Interconnected Nature of LSBE Domains

The strong intercorrelations among LSBE domains affirm UNESCO's (2014) conceptualization of life skills as mutually reinforcing. For instance, *Problem-Solving* is closely tied to *Communication* and *Decision-Making*, as effective problem resolution requires clear articulation of ideas and sound judgment (World Bank, 2018). Similarly, *Emotional Skills Development* underpins *Interpersonal Skills* and *Self-Awareness*, echoing findings by Durlak et al. (2011) that emotional literacy enhances peer relationships and self-regulation. From a program design perspective, this interconnectedness suggests that LSBE interventions should adopt an integrated rather than modular approach. Teaching one skill in isolation may yield limited benefits unless supported by complementary competencies.

Emotional Skills Development Gap

The lowest mean score among domains was for *Emotional Skills Development* (ESD), consistent with qualitative reports of its near absence in secondary school curricula. This gap reflects broader socio-cultural tendencies in Pakistan where emotional expression, especially among boys, is often discouraged as a sign of weakness (Haider et al., 2021). Emotional literacy is further stigmatized when conflated with mental health discussions, which remain taboo in many communities (Saeed, 2016).



Neglecting ESD undermines students' ability to manage stress, resolve conflicts, and empathize—skills essential for academic persistence and workplace adaptation (Taylor et al., 2017). Given the growing mental health crisis among Pakistani youth, ESD should be prioritized within LSBE programming.

Cultural Context and Indigenous Approaches

Findings strongly support the integration of indigenous approaches in LSBE delivery. Participants highlighted that community acceptance and relevance are critical for sustainability. For example, embedding LSBE lessons within Sindhi proverbs, folk tales, and poetry not only reinforces cultural identity but also aids comprehension and retention (Aly, 2007). Involving local elders and religious leaders in LSBE advocacy can mitigate resistance to topics like gender equality and emotional intelligence, echoing successful strategies in Bangladesh and India (Vaish, 2008; Svanemyr et al., 2015). However, reliance on cultural forms must be critically balanced to avoid perpetuating regressive norms, especially those restricting girls' mobility and participation. Teacher training should therefore include modules on critically engaging with tradition to foster progressive, inclusive values.

Barriers to LSBE Implementation

Thematic analysis underscored barriers including untrained teachers, lack of dedicated LSBE materials, inadequate facilities, and socio-cultural opposition to perceived “non-academic” content. These constraints mirror national-level analyses of LSBE in Pakistan (Rehman et al., 2023; Government of Sindh, 2018). Teacher capacity emerged as a particularly acute bottleneck: even where LSBE topics are included in curricula, teachers often lack the pedagogical tools to deliver them effectively (UNICEF, 2017). Moreover, the absence of LSBE assessment frameworks means such competencies are undervalued in a high-stakes exam culture. Without integration into formal evaluation systems, LSBE will struggle to gain legitimacy among educators, parents, and policymakers.

5.8 Community Engagement as an Enabler

One of the more hopeful findings is the recognition of community support as an enabling factor for LSBE. Parents and local leaders can reinforce LSBE learning through role modeling, mentoring, and the organization of community-based activities. This aligns with Saeed's (2016) findings that community participation increases school accountability and relevance. Such engagement is also consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4's emphasis on inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning. In rural Sindh, where formal education infrastructure is weak, community-driven LSBE initiatives could fill critical gaps.

Policy and Practice Implications

The study's results hold several implications for policy and practice:



1. **Curriculum Reform** — Karachi and Federal board curricula should integrate LSBE competencies explicitly, drawing on experiential learning methods already embedded in foreign board systems.
2. **Teacher Education** — Pre-service and in-service training must prioritize LSBE pedagogy, cultural competence, and strategies for engaging communities in skill-building.
3. **Assessment Integration** — LSBE competencies should be assessed alongside academic subjects to signal their value and ensure accountability.
4. **Community Partnerships** — Policies should encourage formal partnerships between schools, local NGOs, and community leaders to sustain LSBE delivery, especially in rural areas.
5. **Targeted Interventions** — Address the emotional skills development gap with culturally sensitive mental health and well-being modules.

Comparison with Previous Research

The findings converge with Svanemyr et al.'s (2015) cautionary note that LSBE scale-up in Pakistan has been uneven and hampered by socio-cultural resistance. They also corroborate Durlak et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis showing that LSBE improves both academic and social-emotional outcomes when delivered systematically.

However, this study adds to the literature by:

- Providing empirical evidence on LSBE disparities across school boards in Sindh.
- Highlighting gender patterns in LSBE self-assessment.
- Proposing indigenous approaches tailored to Sindh's socio-cultural realities.

These contributions address gaps identified in Section 2.9 of the literature review, particularly the lack of localized, evidence-based LSBE models in Pakistan.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations:

- The sample is urban-centric, potentially underrepresenting rural experiences.
- LSBE competencies were self-reported, introducing potential bias.
- Cross-sectional design limits causal inference.

Future research should:

- Employ longitudinal designs to track LSBE impact over time.
- Expand sampling to rural and underserved districts of Sindh.



- Experiment with LSBE training interventions to assess causal effects on student outcomes.

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