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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Life Skills, Pakistan Studies, Textbook, Qualitative Content Analysis	<p>This qualitative research aimed to analyze the integration of twelve core competencies in the Pakistan Studies textbook for Grade Twelve based on the framework of the UNICEF MENA report (2017). The textbook was selected through purposive sampling. In analyzing the text, the approach used was qualitative content analysis with help of NVivo 14 software. The analysis showed that the textbook exhibited a mixed view of these life skills. To some extent, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication & participation are covered through historical analysis of specific instances or a description of governance structures and active citizenship. However, important skills like creative thinking, communication, self-management, and empathy are paid minimum attention. Textbook mainly seems to be information sharing on Pakistani history, politics, and social organization, and process of learning and developing life skills is not very visible. Based on study, it is suggested that curriculum developers make a more conscious effort to ensure that life skills are integrated into content of textbooks; in the form of extra exercises, problem-solving activities, actual conversations about these as the worthy lifelong skills.</p>  <p>2024 Journal of Social Sciences Development</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Today's world is more multifaceted and has become ever-changing. Therefore, youth must develop key life skills to successfully face definite challenges in their personal, academic, or career lives (Saravanakumar, 2020). These soft skills include problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity and communication which are vital in developing individuals who are holistically productive members of society and are responsive to the dynamic current demands of the 21st-century economy (World

[Economic Forum, 2020](#)). United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Middle East and North Africa (MENA) report of 2017 identified 12 core life skills that are fundamental for the youth development: creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, cooperation, negotiation, the decision-making, self-management, resilience, communication, the respect for diversity, empathy and participation. Such skills are admitted internationally as the parts of the balanced education that will ensure students' success in and outside- the classroom ([UNICEF, 2017](#)). Just as in other developing countries, there is now appreciation in Pakistan for incorporating these life skills into the curriculum, and thus these skills have been incorporated in Pakistani textbooks ([Jamil, Ain & Chohan, 2024](#); [Jamil, Jabeen & Moin, 2024](#)).

Due to the centralized and hierarchical approach to the school management and teacher-centered approaches to education dominating the country's education system for many years, the need for change to constructively transform educational processes and student progress is becoming more exigent ([Durrani, Halai, Kadiwal, Rajput, Novelli & Sayed, 2017](#)). This transformation is important in secondary education as students are young adults of nearly school-leaving age and in transit to tertiary institutions & employment. Textbook for Pakistan Studies, Grade 12, has a unique position in Pakistan's secondary education curriculum including debates, and discussions on national issues, historical and political movements. As a core subject for all students in the final year of secondary school, it has a significant social success function by providing students with knowledge about their country history, politics, and daily life ([Chughtai, 2015](#)). It offers analysis of historical events, socio-economic issues, and political developments in Pakistan. It offers opportunity to develop vital skills for life that will benefit students when they are no longer in school. This study aims to discover how many of 12 core life skills identified by UNICEF have been incorporated into the Pakistan Studies textbook for Grade 12.

In the present paper, through the content analysis of this significant educational content, we aim to explore how Pakistan secondary education remediates these important skills. Consequently, the importance of current study emerges from the capacity to contribute to the knowledge that can be useful in the construction of all courses of study and education policy in Pakistan. When the country is trying hard to enhance the education system's quality and relevancy, it is important to identify the current scenario of life skills education in content subjects such as Pakistan Studies. This analysis could help educators, and curriculum analysts better understand how teaching life skills can be promoted more effectively in and through secondary education. It may encourage the students to critically evaluate different perspectives, identify problems, and propose solutions. Moreover, the study will contribute to an international discussion on the education system and effective life skill development to meet future challenges. Thus, considering how these skills have been tackled in the particular national setting will provide an understanding of procedural realities and possibilities of supporting the principles of life skills education in various settings in a country ([Care, Kim, Vista & Anderson, 2018](#)).

Research Question

1. How much of the 12 core life skills outlined by UNICEF are incorporated into Pakistan Studies textbook for grade XII?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Incorporating life skills in education systems has become a concern for the global community, especially for developing countries, including Pakistan. Life skills education has been admitted as an important component in the education system worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, life skills are the capacities for considered and constructive behavior that allows people to manage tasks and stress of life situations (WHO, 2003). This definition has been accepted and has guided educational policy systems in many countries. Care et al. (2018) aimed to find the incorporation of skills within education systems of many countries. They realized that despite many countries embracing these skills, disparities still exist in assessing curriculum practices pertain to classroom. The study focused on the dilemma of policy implementers in transforming policy objectives into classroom policies and practices, an issue well understood in Pakistan. Nasheeda, Abdullah, Krauss and Ahmed (2019) synthesized a systematic review of life skills education programs in developing countries. In their studies, academic scholars pointed out that it is likely to realize useful results from such programs, emphasizing the need for more work to focus on variability of such programs and their adaptation to different cultures.

The process of incorporating life skills into the curriculum has been slow; the practice adopted there depended on that in other countries or the Pakistani government's education policies. The Ministry of Education developed the National Education Policy 2009 with the general objectives of enhancing learners' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. It has been noted, however, that several subsequent studies have established that the actual effect of the policies has been difficult to accomplish. Durrani et al. (2017) explored how the context and practices of Pakistani education implicate social integration and harmony. In their work, where the authors conducted discourse analysis of textbooks and curricula, they noted that although there were efforts to make some parts of critical thinking and plurality respected, were masked by nationalist sentiments. The present study is relevant to analyzing Pakistan Studies textbooks in this context. As a core subject in the secondary school curriculum, Pakistan Studies has been the subject of various research assessments accenting its curriculum. Chughtai (2015) explored previous changes in Pakistan study curriculum and textbooks, pointing out that although efforts were made to change from rote learning to critical thinking, it is slow.

Muhammad and Brett (2015) conducted a study to analyze Pakistan Studies textbooks focusing on national identity. Moreover, Naseer, Muhammad and Jamil (2021) analyzed the Pakistan Studies textbook regarding the integration of critical thinking skills. In the same way, Jamil, Aslam and Ali (2024) analyzed Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 for social studies regarding integration of critical thinking skills development in the textbook. In Pakistani context, different studies have been conducted using the same framework regarding the incorporation of life skills in Pakistan Studies textbook grade IX (Jamil, Arif & Shahzadi, 2024); English textbook grade 5 (Jamil, et al., 2024); Biology grade IX (Jamil et al., 2024), and Physics grade X (Jamil et al., 2024) published by the Punjab textbook board. These studies explored some of life skills incorporated in the textbooks, and few were to some extent. Svanemyr, Baig and Chandra (2015) conducted case study research to scale up life-skills-based education in Pakistan between 2004 and 2013. The findings of study

described some challenges to the conservative operative environment that were addressed in the community over media.

Maqsood, Malik and Jumani (2022) found the positive perceptions about life skills in their study among secondary school students based on the gender and school life skills development. Moreover critical thinking has been focused in different studies with respect to the secondary school teachers' perspectives (Jamil, Anwar & Ali, 2024; Jamil et al., 2023; Jamil et al., 2021); teachers' practices (Jamil & Muhammad, 2019; Muhammad & Qureshi, 2021), the education policy documents focus (Jamil, Aslam & Ali, 2024; Jamil, Bokhari & Ahmad, 2024; Jamil et al., 2024), secondary level arts and science subjects textbooks (Jamil et al., 2024; Jamil et al., 2024; Mehmood & Saleem, 2024; Shahzadi, 2024), the incorporation of critical thinking skills. As for the remaining cases, it should be mentioned that it might also be useful for Pakistan to study cases presented by other countries. About integration effort of 21st-century competencies in Singapore education system, Tan, Choo, Kang and Liem (2017) have made discussions. This work is a good example of how life skills can be introduced methodologically in each country by preparing plans and guidelines, training teachers, and involving learners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative content analysis to explore the incorporation of core life skills in teaching Pakistan Studies in the context of the Pakistan Studies in the Grade 12 textbook. Content analysis is a well-established technique for analyzing different forms of messages carried through written, verbal, or visual means (Krippendorff, 2018). It enables the researchers to make replicable and valid inferences from texts to other contexts in which they are used, making textual analysis suitable for texts such as textbooks (Mayring, 2015). The study relied on the UNICEF classification of 12 Core Life Skills proposed in 2017 as the framework for the analysis. Since the textbook is a part of the purposefully selected contextual environment, it appeared to be important to purposively sample the textbook as the contingent of a part of Pakistan's secondary education system. All the material in the textbook was examined with a focus upon the main text, activities, exercises, and illustrations. NVivo 14 software was used to facilitate qualitative content analysis. It helps analyze and manage qualitative data and enables categorization, coding, and theme development (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019).

FINDINGS OF STUDY

The study's findings are discussed based on the twelve life skills analyzed in the textbook as under consideration.

Creativity

Creativity is an important life skill that has been focused on for twenty-first-century learners. The textbook does not place much emphasis on the creativity. The content mostly focuses on presenting historical facts and information rather than encouraging creative thinking. There are no explicit activities or exercises aimed at fostering the creativity. Anyhow, to some extent, there is implicit incorporation, described as follows: Chapter 5 (p. 59) suggests arranging speech competition in the Activities section, which could potentially involve some creative expression in the following words.

Arrange a speech competition among students on topic of "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Nevertheless, overall, very few exercises or activities are designed to foster creativity throughout the textbook.

Critical Thinking

Previous literature has focused on the critical thinking, which states that it is a core twenty-first-century skill to be developed in cognitive domain and alternatively used as higher-order thinking. In this connection, the textbook under study, encourages the critical thinking, as can be seen in the following:

- ✓ Chapter 2 (pp. 18-19) discusses various political developments in Pakistan history, presenting different perspectives and implicitly encouraging the students to analyze these viewpoints critically.
- ✓ Chapter 4 (p. 56) asks students to compare human rights in Pakistan's constitution with the UN declaration that described the fundamental rights of people, requiring critical analysis and evaluation.
- ✓ Chapter 6 (p. 84-85) prompts students to critically examine problems faced by the tourism industry in Pakistan & suggest solutions, requiring analytical and evaluative thinking. Also, the following example narrates this aspect in these words: Explain the reason of repealing the constitution of 1962. (p. 35)

Problem-Solving

Problem-solving is also an important life skill that needs to be developed by twenty-first-century learners. Therefore, there is a limited emphasis on the problem-solving skills. The textbook includes some problem-solving elements, though not extensively. The following are a few examples from the textbook text:

- ✓ Chapter 5 (p. 69) discusses challenges Pakistan's education system faces and asks students to suggest solutions.
- ✓ Chapter 6 (p. 83) describes problems faced by tourism and ideas for promotion of tourism in Pakistan as short answers in following way:
- ✓ Describe any two problems faced by the tourism in Pakistan and Write two suggestions for promoting tourism in Pakistan (p.85)

Cooperation

Cooperation is a significant aspect of life skills. In the current textbook, some examples highlighting cooperation are narrated under:

- ✓ Chapter 1 (p. 4) discusses Islamic principles of brotherhood and unity, stressing importance of cooperation in society. One of examples is narrated as follows: principle of brotherhood is a vital aspect of Islamic society. The feeling of brotherhood evokes and fosters and love, mutual cooperation and sacrifice. (p. 4).
- ✓ Chapter 6 (pp. 72-73) highlights teamwork and cooperation in sports, discussing how team sports teach cooperation and collective effort. Their confusions and worries are evaded, their faces remain fresh and emotions are satisfied and it helps long way to & develop personality as a whole in harmony. (p. 72).

Negotiation

There is a very limited explicit emphasis on negotiation skills in the textbook content in particular context. In this regard, the concept is touched upon briefly in political process discussions but not in depth.

Decision-Making

Decision-making is important element of life skills. Some examples related to decision-making are incorporated in following examples:

- ✓ Chapter 2 (p. 17-35) discusses key political decisions made by leaders in Pakistan's history, providing insight into high-level decision-making processes.
- ✓ Chapter 3 (p. 36-48) outlines decision-making processes in Pakistan's government structure, explaining how decisions are made at different levels of government.

Self-Management

The textbook has a limited explicit focus on the self-management skills as mentioned in textbook. However, the discussions of citizenship and individual responsibilities implicitly touch on aspects of self-management.

Resilience

In the textbook, resilience is indirectly highlighted through historical narratives as described in the following examples:

- ✓ Chapter 1 (p. 1-16) discusses challenges faced in Pakistan creation and early years, implicitly highlighting national resilience.
- ✓ Chapter 2 (p. 17-35) outlines political challenges and changes Pakistan has gone over, again emphasizing resilience in the face of difficulties.

Communication

Communication is an important skill and aspect focused for the twenty first century learners. In the textbook of the Pakistan Studies grade XII, communication skills are emphasized in the different contexts:

- ✓ Chapter 3 (p. 36-48) discusses communication between different levels of government, highlighting importance of effective communication in governance. In activities section on page 48, it is narrated as follows:
- ✓ Discuss the duties of Municipal Corporation in Pakistan. Show the students proceedings of District Council and make them prepare a report on it. Make two groups of students and make them chart the structures of federal and provincial governments. (p. 48).
- ✓ Chapter 4 is narrated under heading of freedom of speech and in the activities section in following way: Public opinions are given a great honor in Isla. People are given complete freedom to express themselves. Every citizen has right to write and speak (p.53).
- ✓ Arrange a speech competition among students on the topic of "Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Arrange a discussion on the plight of human rights at the national and international level (p. 59).

- ✓ Conduct a dialogue between the students in which they relate the general education system in the Pakistan to professional, vocational, special, Madrassa and the distance education (p. 70).

Respect for Diversity

Respect for diversity is emphasized in different chapters of textbook. Examples highlighting respect for diversity are as follows:

- ✓ Chapter 1 discusses Islamic principles of the tolerance and coexistence, promoting respect for diversity. For example, Tolerance and forbearance are great virtues in the eyes of Islam which save man from hardship and difficulty and become a source of love for others (p. 4).
- ✓ Chapter 4 (p. 50-59) emphasizes equal rights for all citizens regardless of religion, ethnicity, promoting respect for diversity in society. In an Islamic state, religious freedom is given. Non-Muslims are also given opportunities to live according to their own religions (p. 52).

Empathy

There is a limited explicit focus on empathy skills in the concerned textbook. In this linking, the discussions of human rights and social responsibilities indirectly touch on empathy as mentioned in the textbook.

Participation

Similarly, the civic participation is emphasized in the different chapters of the textbook, which are as follows:

- Chapter 2 (p. 17-35) discusses citizens' participation in democratic processes, emphasizing the importance of civic engagement.
- Chapter 3 (p. 36-48) defines the structure of government and ways citizens can participate in the governance.
- Chapter 4 (p. 49-59) focuses on citizens' rights and responsibilities, encouraging active social participation.

DISCUSSION

In the analysis of textbook, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and participation skills are partially emphasized over the negotiation, creativity, self-management, and empathy. It is consistent with findings of other developing countries where women's representation in decision-making positions is sub-optimal. For instance, while conducting the systematic review of life skills programs in developing countries, (Nasheeda et al., 2019) observed that the programs are mostly designed with minimal life skills coverage. Approach of asking critical questions is well underlined in textbook and is a useful strategy for learning and problem-solving (Fadel et al., 2015). However, there is a significant lack of skills like creativity and empathy, which are critical in today's economy and society. This gap implies that what is needed is equal coverage of the competencies needed in life and other life skills education, as each of them interrelates with other. Thus, skills that can be cultivated with help of textbooks, relying on historical events and national-patriotic education, are puzzles that require critical thinking & communication skills. In previous studies about integration

of critical thinking in Pakistan studies and social studies have been focused (Jamil et al., 2024; Naseer et al., 2021).

Care et al. (2018) identified similar tensions in their cross-sectional international survey research on integrating 21st-century skills. They call for constructive designing of skills by which they do not disparage subject matter but make it province of skills. Faced with lack of direct development of the discussed life skills throughout studied textbook, the practicalities of their teaching remain ambiguous. Reflecting on Pakistan teachers' perceptions, Umamah and Hartono (2020) emphasized that teachers appreciate the significance of the life skills without realizing that they feel prepared insufficiently to promote them. It underlines the importance of rigorous training of teachers so that not only are they oriented toward the concept of life skills but also given ideas on how to teach them in the classroom. International experiences are quite useful in this context. Tan et al. (2017) wrote about Singapore's strategic practice of infusing 21st-century competencies into the curriculum and focused on necessity of special professional development to address unfamiliarity of approach and the development of supportive materials. Other such programs could help in context of Pakistan. As highlighted by Kechagias (2011), valuation of life skills is still concern worldwide due to validity and reliability issues.

The call was made to introduce the performance assessment of life skills. In this regard, use of such strategies in Pakistan means a shift of policy and practice in the methods of assessment and change in teacher training. While incorporating life skills, text must be culturally appropriate to Pakistani context. The matters of national identity and Islamic values promote such skills as respect for the diversity and empathy or compassion. Still, it is vital to underline those skills should be developed in such a manner that each person becomes a constructive member of the society while, at the same time, acknowledging differences between individuals. This paper discusses life skills incorporation in Pakistani schools. Researchers imply that life skills education is the most appropriate when it reflects local culture and practices. It should act as a principle for improved integration of life skills in the following Pakistani texts. Thus, result of the study is very relevant to the current educational policy in Pakistan. The current NEP of Pakistan acknowledges the need to prepare students for 21st-century skills; though, present paper indicates contrast between policy and practice manifested in curricula documentation.

CONCLUSION

The qualitative content analysis of chosen Grade 12 Pakistan Studies textbook reveals integration of life skills in the Pakistan Studies textbook grade XII. Although some core life skills, specifically critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and participation, are touched on in textbook in detail, others, like creativity, negotiation, self-management & empathy, receive scant attention. With heavy emphasis in this textbook on history, politics, and nation's ideology, there are numerous ways in which critical thinking and analytical skills could be used or applied. Nevertheless, these are mostly unobtrusive and not designed specifically to promote certain skills as the practice ones. The key shortcoming of emphasizing the facts over skills is that students might not use these skills properly when faced with problems. Secondly, lack of representation of skills like creativity and empathy may demonstrate further problems with education system's approaches to overall student

development. In addition, the study highlights the need to pay particular attention to preparation of the teachers so that they can play a central role in implementing life skills education in schools. There is also indication that where there is potential for skills development in the textbook, other support and/or assistance may be required to help the teachers appreciate and/or tap into this potential in classroom.

Recommendations

- ✓ Undertake a comprehensive revision of the Pakistan Studies textbook to explicitly integrate all 12 core life skills identified by UNICEF.
- ✓ To implement a nationwide teacher training program on life skills pedagogy, equipping educators with the practical strategies for integrating these skills into their daily teaching practices.
- ✓ To develop and implement new assessment strategies that effectively measure the students' proficiency in life skills, moving beyond traditional content-based examinations to include performance-based and authentic assessments.
- ✓ Create supplementary teaching and learning materials that explicitly guide the life skills development, including practical activities and real-world applications of these skills.
- ✓ Ensure consistency between national education policies, curriculum documents, & textbook content concerning life skills integration, determining clear principles and beliefs for life skills education at all levels of the education system.

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