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Policies and Practices of Human Rights Education at Higher Education Institutions in Sindh

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Abstract: *The research study was conducted with the purpose of finding the policies and practices of human rights education within higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sindh, Pakistan. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the investigation involved a multifaceted data collection process encompassing interviews, document analysis, and observational studies. By delving into the existing policies and actual practices of HRE implementation, the study intends to shed light on the current status of its integration across various dimensions, such as curricular frameworks, extracurricular activities, and institutional structures within HEIs in Sindh. Moreover, the research endeavors to elucidate the challenges encountered by stakeholders in the promotion of HRE and to identify effective strategies that facilitate its advancement. Through careful analysis and synthesis of findings, the study culminated in the provision of actionable recommendations aimed at bolstering the effectiveness and inclusivity of HRE initiatives. These recommendations address key areas such as policy refinement, teacher capacity building, optimized resource allocation, and enhanced community engagement. Ultimately, this research enriches the scholarly discourse on HRE within the Pakistani context while offering valuable insights to stakeholders, thus fostering a supportive environment for nurturing human rights awareness and advocacy within the higher education landscape of Sindh.*

Key Words: Human Rights Education (HRE), Policies, Practices, Education Institutions, Sindh

Introduction

Human rights are central to human dignity. Globally, a good number of laws, policies, and bills have been ratified purposefully, which has inclined people towards working on a wide range of areas pertaining to human rights to promote peace and unity in the world.

Pakistan is one of those countries where the active adherence to human rights is confirmed through the lens of the policies that highlight how crucial it is for all the people and society to give rights to the people to the best, be it educational or social rights. Pakistan's adherence to these international instruments reflects its steadfast dedication to promoting and safeguarding human rights within its borders and beyond. By aligning itself with these frameworks, Pakistan demonstrates its acknowledgment of the universal principles enshrined in these documents and its commitment to translating them into tangible actions and policies. Paris Agreement and UDHR. However, despite these commitments, we are appalled to see that HR's condition has been deemed poor. Multi-layered reasons are associated with this notion. One of the reasons could be a lack of awareness. It can also be said that policies are often not turned into reality due to a lack of implementation and the absence of ethical leadership (Ali, 2000; UDHR, 2017).

Other challenges arise from implementation gaps, inadequate legal frameworks, and security concerns leading to emergency measures that may compromise certain rights. Political instability, societal attitudes, and cultural norms can hinder progress, while weaknesses in the judicial system and law enforcement contribute to violations. Economic and social factors, restrictions on freedom of expression, and

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discrimination against minorities further compound the challenges. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also focus on areas that are directly and indirectly associated with sustaining human rights values, yet there is a dire need to address these complex issues and put a concerted effort from the government, civil society, and the international community, involving the strengthening of legal frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and a commitment to promoting a culture of respect for human rights. Ongoing monitoring and collaboration with human rights organizations are vital for sustained positive change (Kate, 2017).

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) report of [2024](#) highlighted that in 2023, Pakistan grappled with a myriad of pressing human rights concerns spanning political, legal, and social dimensions. The misuse of sedition laws against political opponents and journalists further eroded freedom of expression and press freedom, while ongoing religious persecution and violence against minorities highlighted persistent challenges in upholding religious freedom and minority rights. Widespread violence against women and girls persisted unabated, compounded by legislative inadequacies and systemic failures in protecting vulnerable populations, notably during the devastating floods that disproportionately affected pregnant women and girls, exacerbating existing reproductive health challenges.

Similarly, Amnesty International, the State of the World's Human Rights: Report 2023/2024, documented concerns over arbitrary detentions, torture, and impunity for security forces' abuses.

Moreover, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRC) annual report on the state of human rights in 2022/23 echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the worsening state of human rights across the country. It highlighted challenges, including violence against women, discrimination against religious minorities, and the shrinking space for civil society and media. These reports collectively underscore the urgency of addressing the systemic human rights challenges both globally and within Pakistan.

Regarding the rubric analysis of educational policies in Pakistan, it is evident that elements pertaining to human rights are somewhat obscured.

Pakistan's education policy of 2017 meticulously delineates education purpose, placing paramount importance on the cultivation of individuals dedicated to upholding democratic principles and moral values. These values encompass a profound respect for others, unwavering support for freedom of expression, a deep-seated awareness of fundamental human rights, and a genuine openness to embracing new ideas. While the policy acknowledges the importance of imparting concepts related to human rights, it is imperative to assess the extent and methods through which these concepts are actually incorporated into school-level education.

Elements of human rights are appended in the subject of social studies in Pakistan, but the subject of human rights education is not yet introduced at any level due to ideological clashes (Sadrudin, [2018](#)).

It is of paramount importance to instill a deep-rooted respect for human rights in children from the earliest stages of their development. Doing so not only lays the foundation for a strong moral compass but also cultivates the essential skills required for advocating human rights from childhood onwards. This early exposure fosters a profound recognition of the significance of human rights and instills a proactive willingness to contribute actively to their promotion within society. However, existing literature notably highlights a significant gap in the structured and formal teaching of human rights concepts within Pakistani schools (Iqbal, [2005](#)).

Human rights education is given global attention by education systems. Ongoing violence and radicalization among youth, growing gun violence culture, and escalating intolerance among youth necessitate human rights education. It serves as a foundation for developing an understanding of the principles of human rights, fostering a culture of respect, social justice, and inclusivity. This study explores the context of higher education institutions in the province of Sindh, Pakistan, examining their policies and practices in the realm of human rights education. Pakistan, with its diverse educational landscape, faces unique challenges and opportunities in integrating human rights education into its higher education curricula. (Sadrudin, [2018](#)).

Understanding the historical and legal framework that underpins human rights in Pakistan, along with the specific challenges and nuances of the educational system in Sindh, is essential for evaluating the



current state of human rights education. In this context, the study aims to shed light on the effectiveness of policies and practices in shaping students' awareness and commitment to human rights principles.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and human rights violations persist, the role of higher education institutions in promoting human rights awareness and advocacy cannot be understated. This study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on human rights education by providing insights into the unique dynamics of Sindh's higher education landscape and its alignment with the principles of human rights.

This will help to understand the strengths and weaknesses of human rights education policies and practices within higher education institutions in Sindh, with the ultimate aim of suggesting potential improvements and enhancements that can contribute to a more inclusive and rights-respecting society.

Statement of the Problem

Human rights education plays a pivotal role in higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide, with its primary goal being to provide students with a deep and comprehensive understanding of human rights principles, values, and practices. However, within the context of Sindh, Pakistan, there is a pressing need to assess and rectify the existing policies and practices related to human rights education in HEIs. One of the notable challenges is the absence of a comprehensive and standardized framework for human rights education in Sindh's HEIs. This gap has led to considerable variations in curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and assessment practices, ultimately resulting in inconsistent human rights education experiences for students.

Moreover, a significant issue arises from the inequitable access to human rights education, with marginalized groups, including women, transgender individuals, religious minorities, and those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, encountering barriers to such education. This glaring inequity raises concerns about inclusivity and diversity within the human rights education landscape in Sindh.

Another challenge is the static nature of the curriculum in many HEIs, which often fails to reflect the dynamic and evolving nature of contemporary human rights issues. This shortcoming can impede students' ability to engage effectively with current human rights challenges. There is also a gap between policies and practices. For example, HEC has passed educational disability policy and harassment policy, yet these have not turned into a reality.

Practical application of human rights knowledge and skills is fundamental for nurturing active citizenship and fostering social change. However, many HEIs in Sindh do not consistently provide students with opportunities to apply their human rights education in real-world contexts or engage in community-based projects.

Furthermore, Sindh, like other regions, faces socio-cultural and political challenges that can hinder the effective delivery of human rights education. These challenges encompass resistance from conservative elements, censorship of specific content, and political pressures influencing the curriculum. Balancing the global relevance of human rights principles with the local context of Sindh presents a complex challenge. Ensuring that human rights education respects local cultural values while upholding universal human rights standards is of paramount importance.

The overarching problem is the urgent need for a comprehensive and inclusive policy and practice framework for human rights education in Sindh's HEI to save young people from radicalization and intolerance. Such a framework should address these challenges and, in doing so, cultivate a culture of respect for human rights. This research endeavor aims to identify and propose effective solutions, with the ultimate goal of establishing a more effective and equitable human rights education system within the higher education institutions of Sindh (HEC- Graduation Education Policy, 2023)

Research Objectives

- To identify the elements of Human Rights Education in National Education Policy, 2017.
- To understand policies and practices of Human Rights Education through the lens of experts.

Scope of the Study

This study shall be beneficial for higher education and institutional policymakers who are inclined toward incorporating human rights education into mainstream education. This study will also support policymakers by identifying disparities in access, particularly for marginalized groups. Additionally, it delves into the challenges of maintaining a relevant and dynamic curriculum that aligns with contemporary human rights issues. The research aims to propose solutions and recommendations for creating a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and effective framework for human rights education within Sindh's higher education institutions.

History of Human Rights

The history of human rights has many variations. It is believed that it started with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). UDHR is believed to be the first document that focuses on giving rights to all human beings, and these rights are not only confined to economic or social but also all. These texts established a comprehensive framework for human rights protection. Subsequently, over twenty human rights conventions were established, comprising legally binding treaties that further solidify international standards for human rights upon ratification by UN member states. Ratification of a convention entails a state aligning its laws with the convention's provisions and reporting progress accordingly. Certain conventions, such as the Convention Against Torture, prohibit specific inhuman acts, while others focus on safeguarding vulnerable populations. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child addresses children's rights, while the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women aim to combat discrimination based on race and gender, respectively.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) unequivocally asserts: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (United Nations, 2019). This principle establishes "equality" and "dignity" as fundamental human rights values, serving as the universal foundation for the advancement of freedom, peace, and justice.

Throughout history, individuals have advocated for human rights, with milestones including the French and American Revolutions, abolition movements, and liberation movements from colonial domination. Religions have also endorsed human rights principles, emphasizing dignity, compassion, justice, and respect.

Legislation must encompass all aspects of life, including religion and gender-based violence, to safeguard vulnerable individuals' dignity, honor, and identity. Economic and social rights are as crucial as political and civil rights. Therefore, education is essential for advancing human rights promoting critical thinking, imaginative reasoning, and reflective analysis among students.

State of Human Rights in Pakistan

Pakistan's dedication to upholding human rights is evident both domestically and internationally. The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights to all citizens and explicitly prohibits discrimination based on race or language. It pledges affirmative measures to ensure the full participation of women and men in all aspects of life. The Constitution outlines twenty-eight "Fundamental Rights" in Chapter 1, covering vital aspects such as education, equality, freedom of speech, and religion (Human Rights Report of Government of Pakistan, 2012).

Pakistan is a signatory of seven core human rights treaties and agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which underscores its commitment to human rights principles. Additionally, Pakistan has endorsed global development initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting its obligation to promote human rights for all citizens (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022).

However, the effective implementation of rights enshrined in Pakistan's constitution has faced significant challenges due to interference from military governments in the political landscape, and the country has experienced limited uninterrupted democratic governance, with elected administrations



overthrown by military coups multiple times. This disruption has hindered consistent enforcement of constitutional rights and undermined governance stability (Shah, 2014).

Reports from HRCP, HRW, and Amnesty International highlight ongoing human rights violations in Pakistan, including violence, discrimination, and persecution targeting specific groups such as children, women, religious minorities, and transgender individuals. Cases like Aasia Bibi's blasphemy case and the "honor killing" of Qandeel Baloch illustrate the severity of human rights abuses in the country (HRW, 2024; Amnesty International, [2024](#)).

Such reports depict substantial human rights challenges, including extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, attacks on journalists, religious freedom constraints, and crimes against racial and ethnic minorities. Authorities' failure to provide adequate protection or ensure accountability for perpetrators contributes to a culture of impunity (HRCP, 2022).

Despite Pakistan's constitutional commitments and international agreements, the persistence of human rights violations underscores the need for research into integrating human rights education. This becomes particularly significant given Pakistan's economic challenges and ongoing rights abuses (UNDP, 2019; Amnesty International, [2024](#)).

Introduction to Human Rights Education

A comprehensive understanding of human rights emerges when history lessons, such as those on the women's suffrage movement, the civil rights movement, or the Holocaust, are approached as human rights lessons. Teachers play a crucial role by encouraging students to recognize the universal principles of dignity and equality underlying these events. Similarly, advocacy groups addressing issues like hunger through outreach and legislation or shelters providing protection to the homeless or victims of domestic violence serve as practical human rights lessons. Any institution, be it a daycare facility, classroom, or nonprofit organization, promoting respect, fairness, and dignity is instilling human rights values, even if not explicitly labeled as such.

In the mid-20th century, efforts to define human rights education initially focused on cognitive learning within formal school settings. By the 1970s, the concept expanded to include critical thinking skills and cultivating empathy for those who've faced rights violations. However, the emphasis remained primarily on school-based education for youth, with limited attention to personal responsibility or action for promoting, defending rights, or effecting broader social change.

History of Human Rights Education

During the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1980, the inaugural international congress on the teaching of human rights emphasized the necessity for concerted efforts to advance human rights, notably through education. Speakers at the conference advocated for the formal recognition of human rights education and put forth comprehensive models for its integration within educational institutions and broader society (UNESCO, [2020](#)).

Human rights education is a multifaceted field that encompasses several interconnected concepts, including social education, civics education, peace education, citizenship education, and cultural education. These various strands collectively aim to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to become active and engaged citizens in their communities (Shuttleworth, [2008](#)).

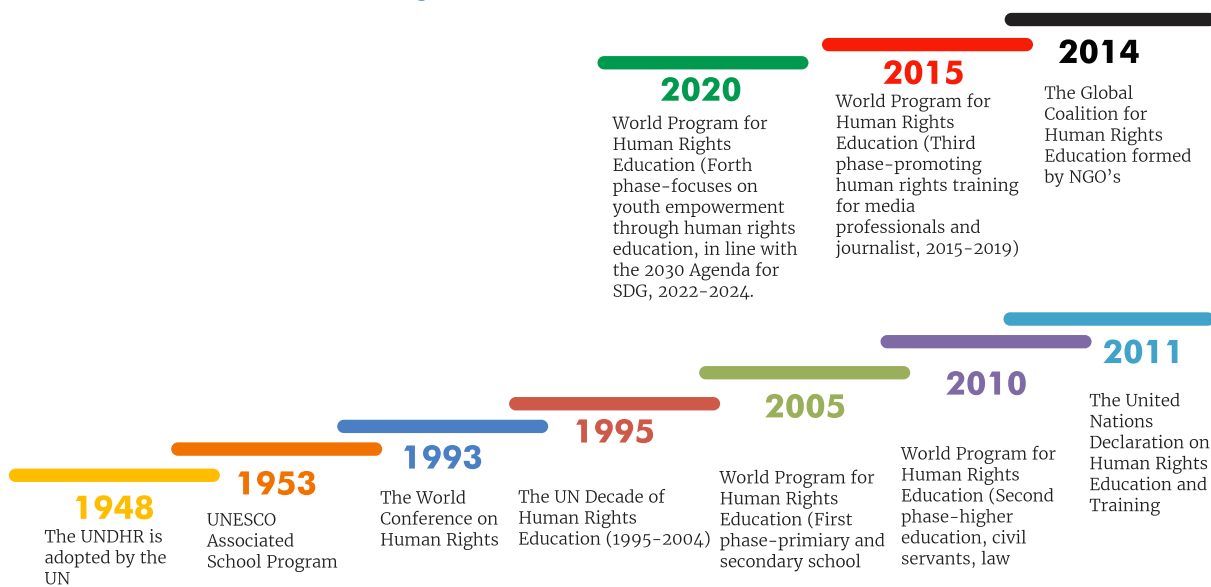
At its core, the human rights education approach seeks to foster awareness about human rights principles and practices, fostering dialogue and information exchange within communities. This is particularly crucial among students and parents, as it equips them with the tools to identify and challenge human rights violations (Tibbitts, [1996](#)). By cultivating a deep understanding of human rights issues and promoting a culture of respect and dignity for all individuals, human rights education lays the groundwork for a more just and equitable society.

The Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 highlighted the crucial role of human rights education in fostering stable community relations, as emphasized in paragraphs 78 and 81 of its declaration. This recognition led to the United Nations General Assembly declaring the years 1995 to 2004

as the UN Decade for Human Rights Education in 1994. This Decade spurred many countries to integrate human rights education into their educational systems and beyond, prompting the development of national action plans and initiatives aimed at mainstreaming human rights education. Overall, these initiatives marked significant milestones in advancing global human rights education, fostering a culture of respect, tolerance, and dignity worldwide (United Nations, 2022a).

Following the success of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, the World Programme for Human Rights Education was launched in 2005 during the 59th session of the United Nations. This program has since progressed through four distinct phases, with the fourth phase commencing in 2020 and scheduled for completion in 2024. Throughout these phases, the World Programme has been instrumental in advancing human rights education on a global scale, fostering a culture of human rights awareness, understanding, and respect.

Chart of History of Human Rights Education



Human Rights Education (HRE) is a pedagogical concept designed to instill a profound understanding of human rights (HR) values through educational channels, presenting a comprehensive and meaningful perspective. The interweaving of the right to education and education about HR has led to some countries prioritizing the former, creating a dichotomy that demands careful consideration, particularly within the African context.

Sadrudin (2019) encapsulates the essence of HRE as a conscious, incessant socio-cognitive, and eco-ethical learning process, empowering individuals about self and others' rights. This involves making rational and civilized decisions by filtering HR ideologies, sociocultural context, and political will. HRE emerges as a critical component for achieving sustainable development, maintaining human dignity, and applying social justice. It fosters openness toward embracing multiculturalism, pluralism, and diversity.

The roots of HRE can be traced partly to the post-World War II era, gaining formal recognition with the Charter of the United Nations in 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The significance of education in promoting HR is explicitly stated in the preamble, Article 19, and Article 26b of the UDHR. However, debates persist regarding the declaration's political objectives and potential ideological filtration.

UNESCO played a pivotal role in advancing HRE, establishing the Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) in 1953 and collaborating with schools globally to conduct grassroots pilot projects. Subsequent international agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), further underscored the foundational role of education in HR principles.



The formal recognition of HRE emerged in 1974 when UNESCO placed it on the agenda of a General Conference. In subsequent years, efforts were recognized through awards for educational institutions, individuals, and organizations that contributed significantly to the introduction of HRE through teaching and training. The International Congress on the Education of Human Rights and Democracy in 1993 and the UNESCO World Conference on Human Rights in the same year called for designing extensive programs on HRE to reach a wider population.

Recognizing the shortcomings and lack of awareness, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the years 1995–2004 as the UN Decade for Human Rights Education. This initiative aimed at creating a comprehensive approach to HR education, imparting knowledge and skills, instilling positive values, fostering critical dialogues, supporting democratic participation, and combating gender inequality.

In 2004, the General Assembly of the United Nations established the World Program for HRE to advance implementation plans across all sectors. The program unfolded in phases, expanding from primary and secondary education to higher education, civil servants, law enforcement officials, and the military. Simultaneously, global initiatives like the Global Coalition for Human Rights Education, formed in 2014, further amplified the mission of promoting HRE. UNESCO Chair for HRE was established in 2011, coinciding with the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training by the General Assembly.

The effectiveness of HRE has faced scrutiny, with researchers criticizing its stages as passive, controlled, and manipulative. The sustainability of the World Program, which focuses on specific groups during each stage, has been questioned, as has the influence of Western organizations implanting HR ideologies onto other nations. The lack of comprehensive field studies, especially in developing nations, impedes the identification of genuine contextual HRE needs.

Despite global acceptance, the growth of human rights abuses over time raises questions about HRE's effectiveness in instilling positive values.

Models of HRE

In the Values and Awareness Model of Human Rights Education (HRE), the focus is on socializing learners into the existing human rights discourse, providing knowledge but lacking a specific theory of change for social transformation. While learners gain awareness, there is limited encouragement for agency or empowerment to take action against human rights violations. This model tends to affirm existing norms without actively fostering behavioral change or empowerment.

The Accountability Model links the theory of change with the individual's professional role. The success of HRE is measured by its influence on learners' knowledge, attitudes, and actions in their specific roles. The aim is to instill a commitment to human rights standards within professional contexts, with the assumption that this commitment will lead to reduced human rights violations. This model emphasizes the importance of a quality HRE learning experience and the disposition of learners to apply human rights goals within their work roles, especially in fields like law enforcement and journalism.

The Transformation Model is characterized by a prominent theory of change. HRE methodologies focus on transformative and emancipatory learning, incorporating critical pedagogy and prompting critical reflection on societal injustices. This approach aims for internal transformation, particularly for individuals who have experienced human rights violations. The theory posits that HRE leading to personal transformation will result in proactive measures to eliminate human rights violations. This model is rooted in the belief that transformative learning can bring profound change at the individual level, fostering a commitment to action (Tibbitts, 2017).

Munir Moosa Sadruddin's Socioecothical Model is an integrative approach applicable to formal, informal, and non-formal educational settings in diverse countries. It emphasizes the importance of assessing the sociocultural context and political will, recognizing ideological practices, cultural values, and potential clashes. The model suggests stages, including evaluating the dynamism of the ecological environment, ethical considerations, and assessing general knowledge and attitudes towards human rights. Importantly, it advocates for the incorporation of local content knowledge, ensuring a socio-cultural fit. The model highlights the need for self-empowerment skills, negotiation, and values that align

with the cultural context. It stresses that teaching HRE alone is insufficient, emphasizing the critical reflection of attitudes and actions in society as the true test of its impact. This comprehensive model acknowledges the complexity of HRE implementation in various educational settings and sociocultural contexts. (Sadrudin, [2019](#))

Practices of HRE- Glimpses

Human Rights Education (HRE) is a global movement dedicated to promoting awareness of the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant treaties, as well as preventing infringements on these rights (Tarrow, [2014](#)). According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, HRE involves efforts such as training, dissemination, and information to cultivate a universal culture of human rights. This approach to education aims to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to identify, defend, and advocate for human rights in their daily lives. Through information dissemination, training, and dialogue, HRE seeks to foster a collective commitment to principles like human dignity, equality, and justice across diverse communities globally. It involves imparting knowledge and skills, shaping attitudes to reinforce respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, promoting understanding, tolerance, and gender equality, and fostering friendship among diverse groups. Additionally, HRE aims to empower individuals to participate effectively in free societies (Quinn et al., [2014](#)).

HRE not only raises awareness of human rights but also facilitates knowledge distribution among parents, learners, and society at large. Its goal is to enhance individuals' ability to recognize and prevent human rights violations, thereby empowering them to promote human rights and become responsible citizens.

Human Rights, as defined by the United Nations, entail freedoms and basic rights entitled to all humans, regardless of sex, race, religion, language, or socio-economic status. These rights are inherent to human dignity and should not be subject to discrimination or arbitrary infringement. HRE aims to achieve a comprehensive realization of rights by establishing a shared understanding of what should be taught, how it should be taught, and by whom, as argued by Struthers ([2015](#)), who highlights the importance of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training as a vital framework for comprehensive HRE.

Gul ([2018](#)) highlights the grim state of human rights in Pakistan, referencing the 2018 Human Rights Watch report documenting violent attacks and discrimination against various groups throughout the year. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive reforms to address pervasive human rights violations in Pakistani society. Education plays a pivotal role in protecting human rights. By prioritizing education, societies can foster understanding, empathy, and respect for human rights principles, promoting social cohesion and harmony. India has taken significant steps towards promoting human rights education, but such progressive developments are noticeably absent in Pakistan, leaving a significant gap in fostering a society that values and protects the rights of all its members.

Osler and Starkey ([2017](#)) argue for the integration of HRE into teacher education programs, equipping educators with the tools to promote human rights, social justice, and sustainable development. Human rights serve as guiding principles for individual and societal values, and it is imperative that these rights are comprehensively understood and upheld by individuals at all levels.

In summary, human rights education plays a crucial role in promoting awareness and understanding of human rights principles, empowering individuals to advocate for rights, and contributing to a more just and equitable society.

Research Methodology and Method

This research study is of an exploratory nature, employing a qualitative methodology and a phenomenological method. The qualitative approach is utilized to delineate or investigate a specific social phenomenon, taking into account its contextual nuances and utilizing diverse data collection sources (Creswell, [2018](#)). Creswell expressed that this type of research is based on metaphors, expressions of assumptions, a global approach, the potential claim of theoretical guidelines, and the examination of areas



that have a gap to help in understanding how people think and believe and how to a social or human issue. In order to scrutinize these issues, qualitative researchers employ an evolving qualitative approach that involves exploration, grounded in the collection of data within a natural setting, attuned to the individuals and locations under investigation. The analysis of data is inductive, aiming to uncover patterns of themes, subthemes, and codes (Van Manen, 2016).

In alignment with the research objective, this study adopts a constructivist research approach to analyze the policies and practices of Human Rights Education (HRE) at Higher Education Institutions in Sindh. Constructivism's focus on understanding the meanings individuals attribute to phenomena aligns with the study's goals. Six in-depth interviews with educationists and HRE experts were conducted, selected due to the limited number of specialists, and to ensure data saturation. Participants were chosen based on their significant experience and expertise in human rights or HRE, using criterion and purposive sampling techniques.

Semi-structured interviews, validated by experts, served as the primary data collection tool, featuring ten questions. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis, a process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. The data was meticulously transcribed and examined manually to classify similarities and differences, ensuring minimal bias by focusing on logically derived data.

Data Analysis

After thoroughly examining both the audio interviews and their corresponding transcripts, a clear pattern emerged within the narratives provided by the participants. These narratives shed light on common themes that played a significant role in classifying the reported policies and practices of human rights education. The identified themes encompassed various aspects, including comprehensive integration and advocacy, challenges in practical implementation, socio-emotional development and social justice, awareness, engagement, and global perspective, as well as innovative teaching methods and resource support. This study is divided into two phases:

1. Interviews pertaining to incorporation of human rights education in national education policy, 2017.
2. Phenomenological interviews about policies and practices through their expert viewpoints

Incorporation of Human Rights Education in NEP 2017

The National Education Policy 2017 in Pakistan was spurred by various national and international developments in education, aiming to meet the demands of global competition and ensure individual and collective well-being through an educated and skilled populace. Key factors prompting this revision included the devolution of social sector ministries under the 18th amendment, the constitutional mandate for free and compulsory education for children aged 5-16, and the adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as Pakistan's own Agenda for Development. However, the implementation of the previous National Education Policy (NEP) of 2009 was halted after the 18th amendment, leading to a significant gap in education policy formulation and implementation.

To address this gap, the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers' Conference (IPEMC) unanimously decided to revise the NEP 2009, with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training taking on the role of coordinator and facilitator for this revision. A team of policy experts, including representatives from all provinces and federating units, was formed to recommend a framework for policy review, resulting in the identification of 18 policy chapters and standardized templates for each. These chapters covered various aspects of education, including goals, objectives, targets, policy provisions, and implementation strategies.

Throughout the policy chapters, elements related to human rights are evident. For instance, Chapter Two outlines the overall goals, objectives, and targets of the education policy, emphasizing the promotion of equitable access to education, which is a fundamental aspect of human rights. Additionally, Chapter Five focuses on literacy and non-formal basic education, highlighting the policy's commitment to expanding access to education for marginalized populations, a key human rights concern. The policy also emphasizes the importance of inclusive education, as evidenced in Chapter Fifteen, which addresses special education and inclusive education, aiming to ensure access to education for children with disabilities and other special needs.

Furthermore, the policy acknowledges the importance of character building and moral education, as reflected in chapters such as Chapter Three on Islamic Education and Chapter 23 on Guidance, Counseling, Character Building, and Extra-Curricular Education. These chapters underscore the significance of holistic development, including moral and ethical education, which aligns with human rights principles promoting the dignity and well-being of individuals.

Overall, the National Education Policy 2017 demonstrates a commitment to promoting human rights through education by prioritizing equitable access, inclusive education, and holistic development. By addressing various aspects of education policy, including literacy, special education, and character building, the policy aims to uphold the principles of human rights and ensure that education serves as a tool for empowerment and social justice.

In the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2017, respondents have provided insights into the inclusion of elements related to human rights. The NEP, a comprehensive document outlining the foundational principles for educational development, touches upon various dimensions, including sustainable development, educational accessibility, and gender equity in education. However, the respondent highlights the gap between policy and practices. Although human rights have remained the main concern of national educational policy, human rights education is not yet appended in the policy, which highlights the gap that should be taken into consideration (Temperman, 2017).

Sadruddin (2019) mentioned the availability of human rights elements in policy and curriculum, but the absence of a separate subject dedicated to human rights education in many educational institutions resonates with the challenges highlighted in teacher education for human rights.

Wu (2023) highlighted that the lack of specific training on human rights education for teachers may indeed hinder their ability to effectively address human rights issues in the classroom.

Pustorino, P. (2023) recognizes the importance of equipping teachers with the tools they need to integrate human rights principles and values into their teaching practices, thereby fostering a culture of human rights within schools and classrooms.

The absence of explicit policies on Human Rights Education (HRE) at the national level is a glaring gap in educational frameworks, despite the presence of elements of human rights within various aspects of education. While the National Education Policy (NEP) may indirectly touch upon values education and socio-emotional development, it lacks a dedicated focus on imparting knowledge and understanding of human rights principles and practices. This deficiency becomes more pronounced when considering that only a handful of universities have taken steps to integrate human rights as a subject into their curriculum (Mallon et al., 2023).

One of the critical aspects highlighted by this observation is the insufficient preparation of teachers in pedagogical practices related to Human Rights Education. Teachers serve as crucial agents in shaping students' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward human rights issues. Without proper training and guidance, educators may struggle to effectively incorporate human rights concepts into their teaching methodologies, thereby limiting the depth and breadth of human rights education in classrooms (Mahdanian et al., 2023).

In conclusion, while elements of human rights may exist within educational frameworks, the absence of dedicated policies and curriculum on Human Rights Education hinders the comprehensive development of students' understanding and appreciation of human rights principles. By prioritizing the integration of Human Rights Education at the national policy level and providing adequate support for teacher training, policymakers can foster a culture of human rights awareness and activism among future generations.

Challenges in Implementing NEP, 2017 Directives on Human Rights Education in Higher Education Institutions of Sindh

Respondents identified challenges in the adaptability of existing curricula to align with human rights education. The directives call for a holistic integration, but existing academic structures may not readily accommodate these changes. Mishra et al. (2023) concluded that overhauling the curriculum demands considerable time, effort, and cooperation from academic stakeholders.



Chattopadhyay (2023) added that the lack of infrastructure and resources poses challenges in transforming policies into practice, hindering the smooth execution of NEP 2017 directives.

Shar (2024) suggested that efforts are needed to raise awareness and provide training on the practical implications of integrating human rights into the education system.

Strategies for Introducing Human Rights Education in Higher Education Institutions of Sindh

The perspectives shared by respondents shed light on the most impactful elements for the successful implementation of human rights education in Sindh's higher education institutions.

Hannum et al. (2023) focus on the emphasis on experiential learning and internships within the human rights field, advocating for bridging the gap between theory and practice. In conclusion, these varied perspectives collectively stress the importance of a multi-faceted approach that incorporates sustainable development goals, promotes tolerance and equity, integrates human rights principles into relevant curricula, recognizes cultural diversity, addresses gender issues, and emphasizes experiential learning to create informed advocates for human rights in Sindh's higher education institutions.

Gostin et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of including culturally relevant content, particularly in a region as culturally diverse as Sindh, to make human rights education more relatable and meaningful.

Ezeibe et al. (2024) advocate for the establishment of dedicated human rights resource centers within higher education institutions. These centers would serve as hubs for research, collaboration, and outreach, providing students and faculty with the necessary tools and support to actively engage in human rights education.

Kester (2023) recommends the integration of a mandatory human rights course into the curriculum, delving into both national and international human rights laws. Additionally, leveraging digital platforms through online courses, webinars, and interactive resources is suggested to enhance accessibility and facilitate continuous learning beyond the classroom.

In conclusion, these innovative policy pointers, ranging from dedicated subjects and interdisciplinary approaches to resource centers, experiential learning, and digital platforms, collectively offer a comprehensive framework for advancing human rights education in Sindh's higher education institutions. Implementation of these suggestions could significantly contribute to fostering a culture of tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity, empowering individuals to stand up against injustice and discrimination.

Innovative Approaches to Incorporate Human Rights Education in Higher Education Curricula

Respondents share diverse and innovative strategies for incorporating human rights education within the academic curriculum at their higher education institutions. This experiential and narrative-based method aims to make human rights concepts relatable and engaging for students. Kim and Coonan (2023) focused on the legal aspect, suggesting that embedding international human rights law into national law is a highly effective means of incorporating human rights education. This approach underscores the importance of aligning legal frameworks with international standards. This forward-thinking approach recognizes the relevance of human rights education in addressing contemporary issues (Tibbitts & Eds, 2023).

These diverse strategies reflect a commitment to incorporating human rights education in a variety of disciplines, ranging from narrative-based pedagogy and legal frameworks to literature, legal studies, and the ethical considerations of emerging technologies. These innovative approaches collectively contribute to fostering a deeper understanding of human rights principles among students, preparing them to engage with societal challenges in a thoughtful and informed manner.

Furthermore, experts and academicians provide insights into innovative methods for engaging students and promoting a deeper understanding of human rights principles within the academic context, offering recommendations for policy considerations.

Nugroho et al. (2024) forwarded that the recommendation is to incorporate such immersive experiences into policies to enhance active learning and critical thinking. The emphasis is on encouraging

interdisciplinary approaches within policies. The suggestion is to encourage the use of technology-driven tools in policies to make human rights education more accessible to all. Shiao et al. (2023) highlight the impact of service-learning projects addressing real-world human rights challenges, proposing the inclusion of community-oriented projects in policies. The suggestion is to promote partnerships between academic institutions and legal organizations, providing students with hands-on experience in human rights advocacy.

Overall, experts' perspectives collectively underscore the significance of diverse and interactive approaches in enhancing human rights education. From experiential learning and interdisciplinary methods to technology-driven tools and community-oriented projects, these innovative strategies can significantly contribute to a more comprehensive and engaging human rights education within the academic context. Policymakers are encouraged to consider these recommendations for a more effective and impactful integration of human rights principles into educational policies.

Enhancing Human Rights Education in Sindh's Higher Education Institutions: Insights into Necessary Support and Resources

The specific support and resources essential for enhancing the integration and effectiveness of human rights education within the academic sphere in Sindh's higher education institutions. Respondents emphasize the need for the development of contextual resources, recognizing the importance of tailoring educational materials to the local context.

Nieman and Hammond (2023) recommended the establishment of a collaborative platform for sharing resources, coupled with funding for the development of context-specific content. This collaborative approach is expected to greatly enhance the effectiveness of human rights education in Sindh's higher education institutions.

The importance of ensuring access to legal databases, international human rights conventions, and contemporary case studies for a comprehensive human rights education. The suggestion involves investing in digital library subscriptions and organizing regular seminars with legal experts to provide students with the necessary resources for a nuanced understanding of human rights. Ridwan and Suhar (2023) highlight the key role of modern technology in effective human rights education and advocate for infrastructure support to make human rights education more engaging and accessible to students in Sindh.

Policymakers are encouraged to consider these recommendations for comprehensive support in fostering a culture of human rights education in Sindh's higher education institutions.

Kasa et al. (2023) suggested implementing mandatory human rights education courses in academic policies to ensure foundational awareness among students, emphasizing the necessity of making human rights a core element of the academic curriculum.

Chaney et al. (2023) proposed the integration of community-based projects into policies to engage students with real-world human rights issues, evaluating legal frameworks and practical applications. This approach emphasizes the importance of experiential learning and community engagement to reinforce human rights principles.

These policy changes, if implemented, would contribute significantly to the enhancement and strengthening of human rights education within the higher education sector in Sindh, fostering a more informed, engaged, and rights-respecting academic community.

In conclusion, the exploration of human rights education within the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2017 in Sindh's higher education institutions provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges, strategies, and policy recommendations from various perspectives.

Conclusion & suggestions

The review of studies on Human Rights Education (HRE) offers valuable insights into the global landscape of HRE initiatives, shedding light on various aspects such as the integration of human rights principles in textbooks, curriculum content, and educational practices across different countries. These studies



contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities in promoting human rights awareness and education in diverse educational contexts.

For instance, Bromley (2011) examined civic education textbooks in Canada to explore the incorporation of human rights and multiculturalism principles within the framework of national identity. The study revealed a shifting narrative in response to the growing emphasis on human rights and multiculturalism, indicating an evolving understanding of national identity that encompasses these principles.

Similarly, Seker and Topsakal (2011) investigated the adoption of organizational democracy among teachers and administrators in primary schools, highlighting the challenges and perceptions regarding the practicability of democratic practices within educational institutions. While the study identified a degree of acceptance of organizational democracy, it also underscored the need for further exploration and support in implementing democratic principles effectively.

In Jordan, Al-Edwan (2010) identified gaps in the integration of human rights principles in elementary-stage social education textbooks, suggesting a lack of proportionate coverage and poor sequencing of human rights topics. This study emphasized the importance of a comprehensive approach to human rights education, advocating for the inclusion of diverse dimensions such as civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

Additionally, Aslan and Karaman-Kepekci (2008) compared the representation of human rights issues in Turkish and French textbooks, revealing variations in the frequency and prominence of human rights content. While Turkish textbooks exhibited a higher emphasis on human rights issues, French textbooks lagged behind in this regard, indicating differences in educational priorities and approaches to human rights education.

In the context of Pakistan, limited research has been conducted on the integration of human rights concepts in school curricula and educational practices. Studies by Hina et al. (2011) and Faria and Dean (2011) highlighted deficiencies in the coverage of citizenship education and social issues in Pakistani textbooks, underscoring the need for comprehensive reforms to address these gaps.

Despite the implicit acknowledgment of Human Rights Education (HRE) within Pakistan's policy frameworks and national curriculum, substantial barriers obstruct its effective implementation. These obstacles include a lack of commitment from decision-makers, ambiguous guidelines for implementation, inadequate professional development opportunities for teachers, and a dearth of supportive materials in classrooms. To surmount these challenges, there is an urgent necessity for comprehensive research focusing on teachers' comprehension and application of human rights concepts in Pakistani educational settings (Naeem et al., 2019).

By conducting such studies, valuable insights can be gained into the current state of HRE in Pakistan, including the challenges faced by teachers and the systemic barriers hindering effective instruction. Furthermore, research findings can furnish policymakers, educators, and stakeholders with evidence-based recommendations for improving human rights education in the country. These recommendations may encompass reforms in curriculum development, teacher training programs, resource provision, and policy formulation tailored to the specific needs and contexts of Pakistani schools.

The analysis of the education policy 2017 reveals the incorporation of key human rights concepts such as dignity, social justice, and democracy. However, the policy lacks explicit references to critical issues such as the rule of law and human rights violations, including slavery and torture. This omission, whether intentional or not, underscores a lack of sensitivity and seriousness among policymakers regarding the inclusion of complex human rights issues in the curriculum. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure a comprehensive human rights education in Pakistan.

Moreover, the insights gleaned from research on HRE in Pakistan can contribute significantly to the broader global discourse on human rights education. By identifying common challenges, effective strategies, and innovative approaches, Pakistan's experiences can inform and enrich efforts to enhance HRE worldwide. Thus, investing in rigorous research on teachers' understanding and practices of teaching

human rights concepts is not only essential for advancing HRE within Pakistan but also holds the potential to catalyze positive change on a global scale.

This study has analyzed the landscape of human rights education in Pakistan, highlighting the need for comprehensive advocacy at all levels of the education system, from policy formulation to practical implementation.

The study addresses an area previously under-researched in the Pakistani context. Human rights are often perceived as a Western agenda among the general populace, seen as concepts imported from the Western world. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers themselves understand the true essence and spirit of human rights and use positive, contextually relevant examples to promote these principles within Pakistan.

While there are more barriers than opportunities, the task, though challenging, is not impossible. Consistent efforts are needed to build on existing opportunities and positives, bringing human rights education to the forefront of the Pakistani education system.

Overall, the review underscores the importance of continued research and advocacy efforts to promote human rights education across educational systems, with a particular focus on addressing contextual challenges and advancing inclusive and rights-based pedagogical practices.

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