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The Impact of Postcolonial Literature on Critical Thinking and Identity Formation among Pakistani Students

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Abstract: *The magic of literature can resuscitate brains and rebuild communities. Books can introduce us to new worlds, help us question our convictions and engage in a more profound communication with people & ourselves through the book pages. This research, while using the qualitative method by conducting interviews with literature students and applying thematic analysis, focuses on Post-Colonial literature and its influence on critical thinking and identity formation among Pakistani students. Overall, we found that reading postcolonial literature improves critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of socio-political issues, as well as influences cultural identity and personal connections. This study identifies the urgent need to incorporate post-colonial reading material into syllabi in order to encourage critical thinking, cultural sensitivity and social responsibility among students. Postcolonial literature can offer transformative power to create a more just and fair world through a transformed self.*

Key Words: Postcolonial Literature, Critical Thinking, Identity Formation, Cultural Awareness, Pakistani Students

Introduction

Postcolonial literature has significant academic and personal value by offering an alternative lens through which to view literary works, provoking people to question the authenticity of historical narratives and power structures surrounding such stories while also enabling individuals to relate to their cultural background. What postcolonial literature does in this vein is to help end the decolonization of academic discourse by letting boundaries be transgressed openly and allowing cultural and linguistic diversity (Eijkman, 2009). Academics explore the politics of power, representation and knowledge production across cultural forms (Chaudhuri & Thimm, 2018). Postcolonial and decolonizing theories also contribute important stakes for democratic citizenship education (Jore, 2024). Postcolonial literature helps to highlight cultural and social issues by aggressive comparisons of traditionalist desires for details that are inferior in everyday use (Hazel, 2019). Postcolonialism, which is associated with post-colonial theory, helps to study religion, orientalism, and nationalism (Goulet, 2011). Postcolonial Eco criticism is also relevant for Victorian Studies, framing postcolonial critique of the meeting between humanity and nature (Miller, 2012).

The role of postcolonial literature is revolutionary in influencing critical perspective and resuming education through the deconstruction of Western dominance while encouraging cross-disciplinary scholarship insisting on the critical investigation of social practices (Carter, 2004; McPhail, 2023). Education should be decolonized to produce learners for moral responsibility and social justice causes against colonization (Obiagu, 2023). In the same manner, postcolonial literature enables identity development and ethnic understanding by making learners recognize their place in the larger cultural community and enable comprehension of ethnic identity by appreciating intercultural comprehension (Phinney, 1990; Zhou, 2021). This synergy of postcolonial attitudes toward education defies the dominance of one type of knowledge and leads to the critical analysis of Western scholarship's involvement and re-

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conceptualizing literature and accomplishment (Nazir, [2019](#); Gearon, [2020](#)). A similar argument of postcolonial theory is also significant to social responsibility in terms of attending to the consequences of colonialism and colonialism's other legacies, giving voice to postcolonial subjects, and promoting social justice (McGibbon et al., [2013](#)). Last but not least, postcolonial ecocriticism, which is useful, examines how the natural world and people exist interconnected (Miller, [2012](#); Isiguzo, [2017](#)). Thus, the purpose of this research is to clarify these effects on Pakistani students and to promote the use of postcolonial literature in curricula to promote critical thinking, cultural awareness, and moral responsibility.

In this article, the effect of postcolonial literature on Pakistani students is investigated, and how it enhances critical thinking abilities, develops identity formation, and improves social problem-solving ability by increasing cultural awareness. Its exposure makes the ideas open-ended; it enhances critical analysis and the ability to think critically for a better comprehension of social-political problems. At the same time, it shapes identity and social bonds while providing a window for individuals from once-colonised nations to witness themselves through their own experiences. The article calls on academic institutions to teach postcolonial literature as part of a broader curriculum with objectives like developing critical thought and cultural sensitivity, which in turn may foster social responsibility so that individuals can have the awareness and power to create a more just world.

In order to solve the research problem, this study aims to examine the following research questions: To what extent does exposure to postcolonial literature affect Pakistani students' critical thinking, identity development and critical thinking skills? It discusses that postcolonial literature helps students increase cultural literacy and that the student speaks about socio-political matters more effectively. Thus, the purpose of the study is not only to reveal a vast and diverse field of postcolonial literature but also to underscore the necessity of incorporating postcolonial literature as a part of the educational curriculum to protect multicultural marginalized communities. What this research, therefore, implies is that there should be a push for postcolonialism in learning institutions as a way of enhancing the spirit of voluntarism for the common good of society.

Research Questions

1. How does the postcolonial literature impact the critical thinking skills of Pakistani students?
2. How is postcolonial literature involved in the construction of identity and cultural awareness among Pakistani students?

Literature Review

Postcolonial literature offers this revolutionary outlet for marginalized authors to speak back against dominant narratives and reclaim their histories in terms of resistance, therefore challenging both the colonial legacies that produced them as writers and as oppressed human beings. It promotes global responsibility by developing perspectives that are critical of identity and power, as well as resistance while advancing cross-cultural understanding. It was, as the scholars argue in explaining postcolonial works are sophisticated and anti-realistic political liberalism that these converging elements trouble existing legacies of IPE through their appropriations with imperial subjects for relating to each other (Yousef, [2016](#)). This is a genre that has provided much of the impetus for critiquing colonial pasts and warding off European imperial intervention into Third World cultures (Bartiza & Zrizi, [2022](#)). Postcolonial significant works that address the post-colonial reality by forcing exposure to the non-univocal nature of hybrid subjectivities (Rouabhia, [2022](#)).

Reading postcolonial literature helps students to engage in critical thinking about power relations and requires them (as it does in the analysis of other scientific disciplines) to use a 'set' language for understanding the roots of several issues, present or past. Post-colonial set texts such as *The God of Small Things* (Roy, A. ([2001](#))) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Hamid, [2007](#)) spearhead critical dialogues around social justice issues and cultural identity, forcing students to challenge dominant perceptions based on their own lived experiences. This process is very important because it cultivates analytical thinking and understanding on a deeper level of complex structural issues such as oppression, resistance or cultural hybridity (Dewi, [2018](#); Kaowiwattanukul, [2021](#)). It is left to postcolonial literature (part of a larger set, including essays and interviews), which has garnered no small away praise for its fostering role in the

development of post-colonial criticism. (Dewi, [2018](#)). Furthermore, previous studies have indicated that the employment of literature-based activities (including postcolonial texts) can foster students' critical thinking capabilities and reading skills (Kaowiwattanakul, [2021](#)).

Postcolonial literature serves as a powerful mirror for individuals from colonized countries, giving them an opportunity to recognize themselves in the experiences of others. Themes of displacement, migration and the need to reconcile dual cultural identities make these texts relatable for many readers working through similar situations. It is known that Postcolonial theory deals with the struggle and growth of culture in a more comprehensive manner by dealing with issues like paradox, hybridity (grey area), auto-ethnology, etc. Postcolonial literature can provide a means to call exploitative practices into question, prevent territorial conquests and establish national backgrounds where individuals are from; it enables the study of others or diaspora-like experiences and mimicry in order to get readers to see themselves as not part of whole communities but just one bit (Jabeen, [2024](#); Schneider, [2003](#)).

Postcolonial Literary Theory

Postcolonial literary theory, which was developed by Edward Said, influenced numerous branches of knowledge. Recent examples of postcolonial theory are Said's Orientalism, which established the basis of this subject by commenting on biases and discrimination present in the images of the Orient (Grewgious, [1994](#)). This critical perspective has been used in literary studies and other fields, such as the philosophy of education, in the exploration of the connection between knowledge and power in the colonial context (Daniels & Enslin, [2023](#)).

However, postcolonial theory has spread from literary criticism to the sphere of social sciences, focusing on geography, sociology, anthropology and media studies, among others (Raghuram et al., [2013](#); Ponzanesi, [2020](#)). There are postcolonial approaches to the study of social justice, cultural translation of difference, and the formation of postcolonial urbanisms (Bhati, [2022](#); Kołodziejczyk, [2018](#); Yeoh, [2001](#)). The social theories with postcolonial orientation are quite diverse and interrelated, thus encompassing all the aspects of colonialism and the nature of postcolonial states.

In the sphere of literature, the theory of postcolonialism has offered critical opinions regarding historical discourse and a way of decolonizing these discourses (Shah & Hafeez, [2020](#)). Thus, postcolonial literature sets up voices of marginalized groups and presents other narratives about colonial and postcolonial histories, revealing the history of imperialism and globalization in societies.

Cultural Identify and Diaspora

Cultural identity and diaspora are complex concepts that have been widely discussed in various studies. The body of work produced has been instrumental in explaining the emergence of cultural identities in diasporic population groups. In his works, Hall explores the concept of diasporic cultural identity and analyses the rise of black diasporic subjects in different fields, specifically in Caribbean cinema as well as in literature (Hall, [2020](#)).

Hall's work on cultural studies, ethnicity and identity has been well-received by scholars and academia. He is the leading figure in race and ethnic studies, nationality and nation formation, especially among the black people of the New World. He has been productive in analyzing cultural politics at various epochs, including Margaret Thatcher's and the post-Thatcherism era (Carruthers, [2008](#)).

Another work of Hall, which is considered one of his majors in the domain, is "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," where he explores the interdependencies of culture, identity, and diaspora. This book has been instrumental in the inquiries of transnational cultural studies resulting in discourses on hybridity, creolization and cross-over within the diaspora (Jordan, [2015](#)).

Hall did not only play a part in academia. In the meantime, he is also known as an activist-intellectual, and he brought up a generation of artists from different diasporas, as well as participated in the public discourse on Black culture and arts. His theoretical frameworks of modernity, diaspora, identity, subjectivity, and the politics of culture have opened up emancipatory and anti-assignation possibilities in Black Art (Mehta, [2013](#)).



Reader Response Theory

According to the Reader-Response Theory propounded by scholars such as Stanley Fish, the reader plays an inactive and constructive part in the construction of meanings in a text (Carlisle, 2000). This theory aims to explain how meaning is constructed from the readers' perspectives after reading a particular literature (Rifqi et al., 2022). It emphasizes the interaction between the reader, the text, and the author, focusing on the reader's impact on the literary and aesthetical processes (Spirovska, 2019). In light of Fish's model, understanding a text is influenced by the social relations within an interpretive community (Romero & Harris, 2019).

In addition, reader-response theory has been associated with the enhancement of the reader's power, especially in learning forums that are conducted on the internet and giving the students equal chances to express their thoughts and opinions on the literature being read (Larson, 2009). It was also linked with the idea of interpretive communities since Wenger incorporated Fish's theory based on the tenet of literary and legal hermeneutics directly into this concept (Bentley et al., 2010). Also, the theory provides for the cultivation of critical, thoughtful, and engaged readers (Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021).

GAPS

Even with the huge amount of literature on post-colonialism, there are still lacunae in understanding how it specifically influenced one's critical outlook as well his/her identity construction while studying different subjects by students having various educational backgrounds. The bulk of the previous research has concentrated on broad theoretical frameworks or single case studies in Western educational contexts. Further empirical research is needed to investigate how postcolonial literature affects students in non-Western contexts and in countries like the Philippines, where colonialism had first-hand experience. In an attempt to fill this gap, we argue that Pakistani students' engagement with postcolonial texts honed their critical thinking in depth and identity construction. This research, therefore, aims to offer detailed insights from participant experience, what this means for how the educational value of postcolonial literature is comprehended and thus may inform similar contexts regarding curriculum development.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Approach

This research methodology includes a qualitative phenomenological type of literature, which is used here to investigate the effect of postcolonial Literature on critical thinking skills and identity formation among Pakistani students. This study intends to use phenomenology as it places importance on the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of individuals, thus allowing for experiential analysis of how literature assists in carving their understanding or identity. Qualitative research is designed to explore the depths and have a conversation about people's personal experiences. It seeks to study what meaningfulness is and experience in people's lives within the context of social interaction Fossey et al., 2002). Descriptive qualitative research, as observed in several studies, focuses on capturing the experiences of subjects on specific concepts (Junlapeeya et al., 2023). Through this approach, a deep connection to the stories of participants was established without imposing strong interpretive frameworks (Kinnett-Hopkins et al., 2020). There are many merits to research through the use of descriptive phenomenological analysis as a methodology in order for researchers to enhance their understanding and investigation of lived experiences and hence gain an exhaustive exploration into people's personal encounters (Flanagan et al., 2012). Qualitative research methods - and especially thematic ones that use descriptive labels-are paramount in deciphering the multifaceted mosaic of human experience.

Justification for Using Qualitative Method and Thematic Analysis Tool

The justification for using the qualitative method, in this case, thematic analysis, is valid for this study because it captures the precise changes that postcolonial literature evokes in reader perception and critical analysis. The strengths of Qualitative research are best applied to the study of personal experiences, for it offers more detailed information than quantitative research. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can be described as an approach that facilitates a flexible yet structured identification and analysis of patterns within qualitative data, which suits the purpose of investigating the multifaceted

effects literature can have on people. Earlier research has applied TA effectively to examine the educational and narrative consequences, thereby proving the credibility of this approach in identifying profound and contextually meaningful findings (Braun & Clarke 2006). Since this method allows for careful exploration of the ways postcolonial texts contribute to cultural consciousness and critique, this justifies the use of this approach in this research.

Development and Conducting of Interview Questions

The development of the interview questions was guided by a coherent procedure relevant to Rabionet's (2011) guidelines for the semi-structured interviews. First, a systematic search through academic databases was performed to synthesize the literature on postcolonial literature and derive from them open-ended questions that sought to capture participants' meaning-making encounters with this literary genre. A pilot study was then administered to ensure that these questions were clear, appropriate, and could generate sufficient information. The final interview guide was to prompt specific and descriptive information and to ask additional questions if survey participants' answers were sketchy. The interviews were carried out in comfortable, quiet settings where participants could think freely and express themselves clearly: the more structured but open interview format enabled investigation of added topics that arose in the course of the discussion, thereby providing a full picture of each participant's response.

Selection of Participants

The participants of this study include both males and females from various geographical regions of Pakistan. The study was conducted on eight students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science (BS) English Literature program as the researcher found that insignificant research work has been done to account for real-time scenarios according to intended objectives, and 2 participants were selected from each province: Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & Balochistan. Female and male students were paired off in order to consider gender perspectives. With the goal of including varied academic backgrounds and experiences with postcolonial literature, participants were selected from different universities in Pakistan.

Data Collection Methods

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. We used semi-structured interviews that provided flexibility to dig deeper and engage with participants yet remained focused on the major postcolonial literature, identity formation, and critical thinking themes. Interviews were conversational in nature, with each interview lasting 45-60 minutes and designed to offer participants the opportunity to speak freely about their thoughts and experiences. All interviews were digitally audio recorded with the consent of participants and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

The interviews were thematically analyzed. This method of analysis refers to the identification, analysis and reporting patterns (themes) within data. The data was transcribed and then coded to surface common ideas, concepts, and themes on the effects of postcolonial literature on students' development in critique thought as well as in identity formation. Codes were then organized into thematic categories that we induced from the data. This analysis aimed to capture the breadth and depth of responses to get a full picture of how postcolonial literature impacts foundational thinking — who the global student expat is and what they feel their identity should be.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research, ethical considerations were taken into account. Each participant was also ensured that the study involved had a clear understanding of all procedures included in an interview, and they were well informed on their right to confidentiality and anonymity. To ensure participants were not identifiable when reporting the findings, The study was carried out in compliance with ethical standards for research involving human subjects, including the principles of respect for persons (autonomy),



beneficence and minimizing harm. Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview through a written form.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis Approach Explained

Thematic analysis is a qualitative coding procedure that can be used to disclose themes expressed by the participants of the interviews. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This approach is chosen as it systematically codes data into themes in order to present latent meanings of participants' experiences or perspectives. It is versatile and can be used with a wide range of data whilst also generating detailed reports using your original concept; this reflects how thematic analysis is recognised as being flexible (Bogachenkova, 2023). Coding and theme identification are distinct steps in the general process of analyzing qualitative data when performed well (Skåre et al., 2022). Thematic Content Analysis- Thematic content analysis was used as a method in this study because of its large use in areas like nursing (Yaman, 2023). Also, inductive coding takes shape with thematic analysis and can be used to perform a comprehensive textual data analysis (Harrison et al., 2021).

Introduction to Main themes and sub-themes

This study examines the influence of postcolonial literature on Pakistani students, revealing four major themes and sub-themes. Theme 1: "Exposure to Postcolonial Literature" Unpacks participants' initial reaction and emotional response towards the post-colonial text and their growth of knowledge over time. The Sub-themes include the) Initial Impressions of Postcolonial Literature: The participants discuss their first encounters with postmodern texts in this sub-theme and how they perceived them at once. II) Evolution of Understanding and Appreciation Over Time: This theme involves changes that brought improvement into their interpretations as well as notions over time due to continuous exposure.

The more nuanced implications of postcolonial literature for critical thinking, formation of an identity and worldview are further elaborated upon in the remaining themes and sub-themes. Theme 2: – Critical Thinking and Analysis, showcasing the critical thinking skills of learners for analysing postcolonial literature as well as the role played by postcolonial literature in sharpening their faculty of abstract thoughts. Theme 3: Identity Formation and Cultural Connection. It explores the relationship of postcolonial literature on self-identity, colonial consciousness in participants or personal association with characters/stories. Lastly, Theme 4: "Changes in Worldview and Social Consciousness" shows that participants broadened their perspectives on global issues and power dynamics so they could better understand social justice and inequality. Together, these themes and sub-themes reveal how postcolonial literature can contribute to the cognitive development, intellectual awareness, and moral judgement of students.

Detailed Explanation of Thematic Analysis of Interviews Conducted on the Impacts of Postcolonial Literature on Critical Thinking Skills and Identity Formation

Theme 1: Exposure to Postcolonial Literature

Sub-theme 1: Initial Impressions of Postcolonial Literature

Although numbered among the group of students who knew very little about post-colonial texts prior to this challenge, their first experiences with the work came loaded with a mix of feelings; some fear and unknown territory merged alongside curiosity and attempted deep engagement. Their formative experiences with this genre were to be a critical entry point into the wider body of postcolonial literature. Many readers, like Participant 1, also described connecting with Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* for how deeply it waded into cultural and societal commentary. The first for Participant 2 was Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, which they say transformed them by allowing them to see a sliver of the Afghan personal and historical narratives.

For the rest of us, certain texts resonated more deeply and left their particular marks. Participant 3 found "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid challenging because it made them reevaluate their opinions on identity and belonging. Participant 4 states that the book "The Namesake" by Jhumpa

Lahiri stands out for him due to the nuanced view of what it is like as an immigrant person. The first captivating book Participant 6 read was Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, and she described it as an intricate tapestry woven upon the motif of cultural alienation, much in the same way as a novel that actually opens on this list did for me. Participant 7 was intrigued by Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire" for its political extraction, and Participant 8 enjoyed Mohammed Hanif's satirical take on the power games in Pakistan mirrored through his novel, "A Case of Exploding Mangoes". Not only did these first encounters give him an appreciation for postcolonial literature, but they also helped him envision a world shaped by the kinds of cultural complexity I had begun reading.

Sub-theme 2: Evolution of Understanding and Appreciation Over Time

Participation in postcolonial literature, which most often took place within an academic context, led to the cultivation of this appreciation, thus increasing their education about and interest in such genres. Participant 1 stated that the more she read novels which transgressed societal norms and expanded her appreciation for postcolonial topics, Participant 2 read a lot of books that were contextualized in certain time periods or traditions, so she had a further understanding towards cultural significance. Participant 3 also found deepening their contact with texts like "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" fostered their ability to think critically, and Participant 4 realized how evolving as a reader allowed her to re-appreciate the interrelationship of identity and migration.

As we moved deeper into postcolonial literature, participants were able to develop greater insights and awareness of themes and issues such as these. As a result, Participant 5 expressed feeling more connected to global narratives of struggle and resilience and Participant 6 indicated that she had gained some appreciation for the differing viewpoints about cultural displacement or belonging. Participant 7 recognized politically oriented aspects in the stories from the cultural experience, and the last one, Participant 8, became aware that she had learned more about nationalism and sociopolitical change. As postcolonial fiction was thought about with better contemplation, it offered better understanding insights into these progressively more complex cultural actualities as depicted in the books and also made them more tender to constantly return to this space type.

Theme 2: Critical Thinking and Analysis

Sub-theme 1: Specific Critical Thinking Skills Used

In the case of postcolonial literature, for instance, one would expect them to engage in critical thinking, such as close reading and placing texts better in their context or modifying hypotheses as modified texts are demonstrated to be well anchored. Participant 1 stressed the role of attention and contextualization – especially when it comes to decoding the socio-political plea embedded in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Consequently, history was also underlined by Participant 2 during the reading of the novel *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. Participants 3 and 4 reviewed the created identity & tradition in Mohsin Hamid's "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" and Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake".

They also used critical thinking to interpret the symbolism in various postcolonial works. For example, Participant 5 performed critical thinking, which allowed her to understand the gender dynamics in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, while Participant 6 practised contextualization that helped him grasp the socio-economic themes of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. Participant 7 practised close reading to unpack the Politics of Kamila Shamsie in *Home Fire*, and Participant 8 analyzed satire by critiquing the power structure through Mohammed Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. In using this critical thinking, they identified that there is a lot more going on in postcolonial literature and thus are again nudged to be mindful of the themes associated with colonialism coming up as it does.

Sub-theme 2: Role of Postcolonial Literature in Honing Critical Thinking Abilities

The participants recognized the powerful role of postcolonial literature in shaping their appeal to analysis and point by means of writing. As the gardener knows how to sow for crops or fruits, the narrative provides an ideal vehicle with which to practice literary analysis and critique. Additionally, Participant 1 expressed positive experiences with empathy and perspective-taking following engagement in texts such as "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy; the theme of empathy was also identified in relation to Text D



selections, where Participant 2 describes having increased understanding through broader goals discussions themed on ‘Thinking Globally’, discussing the text ‘The Kite Runner’ by Khaled Hosseini.

Comment was also added to the importance of postcolonial literature in enabling critical thinking, an experience not previously incorporated into their understanding. For Participant 3, one of the books was Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Reading this book closely, she learnt to see identity from different points, whilst Participant 4 said Jhumpa Lahiri's book *The Namesake* took her ability to critically analyse migration and Identity themes and drew the above approach. Participants 5–8 likewise emphasized that a number of postcolonial texts enriched their understandings of gender, feminist critique on cultural appropriation, social criticism and satire – illustrating the strong transformative ability between learning critical theory through literature.

Theme 3: Identity Formation and Cultural Connection

Sub-theme 1: Influence on Self-Perception and Cultural Awareness

The exposure to and understanding of postcolonial literature gave the participants a lot more insights into who they were as individuals in relation to their cultural heritage. Participant 1: *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy was a strong contributor to their grasp on cultural identity in relation to caste and societal standards. Participant 2 also claimed that Khaled Hosseini’s ‘*The Kite Runner*’ broadened their experience of seeing the world from other perspectives but did not greatly influence empathy for a different culture as peace-inciting forces driving person enough; likewise, Participant 3 believed Mohsin Hamid’s ‘*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*’ caused some exploration of personal cultural origins.

More participants talked about the impact postcolonial literature had on their cultural awareness and identity. Participant 4: Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* opened me up to a new wave of understanding cultural diversity and how identity develops. For example, Participant 5 claimed that Khaled Hosseini was the reason they became more compassionate towards people in other cultures, as ‘*A Thousand Splendid Suns*’ made them aware of suffering. Participants 6–8 also revealed that the postcolonial texts discussed themes of cultural alienation, assimilation and national identity, which in turn developed a sense of self and awareness of their own culture.

Sub-theme 2: Personal Resonance with Characters or Narratives

Students often found windows of identification with characters or stories in postcolonial literature that allowed them to empathise more deeply with the author and expand their cultural awareness. For Participant 1, this was reflected in their ability to relate to the challenges of societal norms from ‘*The God of Small Things*’, and for Participant 2, it lay within his own reflective engagement with historical trauma depicted in ‘*The Kite Runner*’. Participant 3 connected themes of cultural displacement in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Participant 4 resonated with immigrant experiences within *The Namesake*.

Participant 5 was struck by the women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* – they seemed so resilient and asked when we would be getting married (sometimes soon), while Participant 6 found that themes of cultural alienation played well into *The Inheritance of Loss*. Participant 7 had a stronger ‘pull’ with the political and familial narratives in *Home Fire*, whilst Participant 8 valued the satirical critique of power within *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Ultimately, those books were so personal to my family and myself that I couldn't shake them. It allowed me to truly empathize with the different characters in each book from a postcolonial perspective, showing how literature could tell stories which transcended borders but carved out respect as well.

Theme 4: Impact on Worldview and Social Awareness

Sub-theme 1: Expanded Understanding of Global Issues and Power Dynamics

Postcolonial literature helps students to better appreciate complex, contextual approaches of understanding rather than simplistic us vs. them dynamics when thinking about global issues and power positions in the world at any given time. Reading gave participants insight into the many global concerns, such as caste and societal power, in *The God of Small Things*: ‘It shows me through a female’s point of view how women suffer different stages based on their cast system’ (Participant 1), historical/political

situation with Afghanistan in "Kite Runner" so it may help to understand why people do what they are doing today because everything is connected and it exposed reality about current refugee crisis for example," said Participant 2 stated that the story of the book "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" provoked complex feeling when thinking home identity should be unapologetically regardless whatever your past experiences were that related to questions asked by labour market/ UK border agency...what does 'home' mean? Participants also valued immigrant experiences and cultural transitions as shown in "The Namesake" (Participant 4), the sociopolitical struggles with Afghan women depicted by "A Thousand Splendid Suns" (Participant 5), and socio-economic disparities were highlighted through tarnished lifestyles delineated by two generations of Indian characters portrayed in "The Inheritance of Loss" for Participant 6.

Additionally, participants indicated that postcolonial literature extended their comprehension of cultural and political imperatives in "Home Fire" (Participant 7) and deconstructed dominant narratives on state power in "A Case of Exploding Mangoes," both novels. In addition, these texts helped broaden students' understanding of global issues and focused on the power structures that exist in our world. This process allowed participants to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex interplays between culture, politics, and identity, which is essential for new ways to engage with this global world.

Sub-theme 2: Increased Awareness of Social Justice and Inequality

Reading postcolonial literature awoke people to these social wrongs and helped enrich their perspective of injustices overall, orienting them in the complex history/gravity of injustice that has healed hearts outgrown by long-held beliefs/ habits. Participant 1 read "The God of Small Things" and gained a more nuanced perspective on gender caste systems. The Kite Runner, for example, increased Participant 2's empathy for social and political struggles -- The Reluctant Fundamentalist encouraged Participant 3 to think about worldwide inequality. Reading "The Namesake" gave Participant 4 a better understanding of immigrant identity and social justice, while for Participant 5, reading "A Thousand Splendid Suns" made them even more determined to support gender equality and work related to this cause. Participant 6 realised more about socio-economic inequality from "The Inheritance of Loss", too.

The results were similar to previous research in that participants felt more empathy for social and political struggles, were triggered to think about global inequality, and were inspired to critical reflection on the basis of our recent understanding of political justice and power. A nuanced appreciation of the intersections between cultural, political and social justice illuminated Participant 7's way into "Home Fire. Furthermore, the examination of political justice and power relationships in Participant 8, thanks to "A Case of Exploding Mangoes", showcases how postcolonial literature can stimulate development at a personal level, further demonstrating that works like this have practical implications. Studying postcolonial literature gives us insight into the nuances of social justice and encourages activism to work for a fairer world.

This paper provides a clear account of the method used for the thematic analysis in relation to how postcolonial literature has an intellectual impact on the critical thinking and identity development of Pakistani students.

Table 1

Themes and responses

S.No	Theme	Sub-theme	Question	Response
1	Exposure to Postcolonial Literature	Initial Impressions	Can you recall the first time you read a postcolonial literature text?	Connected deeply with "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy for its cultural commentary.
2				"The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini transformed their view of Afghan narratives.



S.No	Theme	Sub-theme	Question	Response
3				"The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid challenged views on identity and belonging.
4		Evolution of Understanding and Appreciation Over Time	How has your understanding and appreciation of postcolonial literature evolved over time?	Reading novels that transgress societal norms expanded my appreciation for postcolonial topics.
5				Deepening contact with texts like "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid fostered critical thinking.
6				Feeling more connected to global narratives of struggle and resilience.
7	Critical Thinking and Analysis	Specific Critical Thinking Skills Used	In the case of postcolonial literature, what critical thinking skills do you employ?	Attention to contextualization helped decode socio-political themes in "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy.
8				Analyzed symbolism in Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake" to understand themes of identity and tradition.
9				Applied critical thinking to understand gender dynamics in Khaled Hosseini's "A Thousand Splendid Suns".
10	Identity Formation and Cultural Connection	Influence	How has postcolonial literature influenced your cultural awareness and identity?	"The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy deepened understanding of caste and societal standards.
11				Postcolonial literature, such as "Home Fire," deepened understanding of cultural issues and societal expectations.
12				"A Case of Exploding Mangoes" by Mohammed Hanif educated on nationalism and sociopolitical transformations.
13		Personal Resonance with Characters or Narratives	Can you describe a personal connection felt with postcolonial literature?	Related to challenges of societal norms depicted in "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy.

S.No	Theme	Sub-theme	Question	Response
14				Themes of cultural displacement in "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid resonated with experiences.
15				The political and familial narratives in "Home Fire" by Kamila Shamsie drew in, sparking deeper reflections.
16	Impact on Worldview and Social Awareness	Expanded Understanding of Global Issues	How has postcolonial literature broadened our understanding of global issues?	"The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini deepened my understanding of historical and political contexts in Afghanistan.
17				"The Namesake" by Jhumpa Lahiri illustrated immigrant experiences and cultural transitions.
18				"The Inheritance of Loss" by Kiran Desai depicted socio-economic disparities and cultural complexities.
19	Increased Awareness of Social Justice and Inequality	Impact on Gender and Caste Systems	How has postcolonial literature increased awareness of social justice and inequality?	"The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy provided a nuanced perspective on gender and caste systems.
20				"A Thousand Splendid Suns" by Khaled Hosseini highlighted the socio-economic disparities and struggles of Afghan women.
21				"Home Fire" by Kamila Shamsie illuminated intersections of cultural, political, and social justice issues.
22		Awareness of Global Inequality	Awareness of global inequality through postcolonial literature?	"The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid prompted deeper reflections on global inequality.
23				"The Inheritance of Loss" by Kiran Desai provided insights into socio-economic inequalities.
24				"A Case of Exploding Mangoes" by Mohammed Hanif critiqued state power structures, enhancing political awareness.



Discussion and Findings

Thematic analysis of the responses from participants has yielded some essential findings about how postcolonial literature impacts critical thinking skills and identity formation in Pakistani students. We have synthesized our findings to investigate the consequences for academic curricula and personal growth and how post-colonial literature might work in transforming lives.

Exposure to Postcolonial Literature

For many participants, their first encounters with postcolonial literature opened up new horizons and provided them access to wider pallets of historical narratives. Similarly, Nazir (2019) argues that postcolonial literature also disrupts fixed ways of reading and questioning traditional and preconceived notions, which have been acting as agencies of power for a very long time. The texts frequently responded to socio-political issues, which helped participants read them with time for a better understanding and appreciation. As such, working postcolonial literature into academic curricula can actually help to expand students' intellectual landscape and provide a complete sense of cultural awareness (Dewi, 2018; Kaowiwattanakul, 2021; Grewgious, 1994).

Critical Thinking and Analysis

Interacting and interpreting postcolonial works supports playful, fine-tuned thinking in students. Utilizing methods such as close reading, contextualization, and critical reflection, they approach complex themes while complicating the waters of dominant narratives. In that regard, Dewi (2018) and Kaowiwattanakul (2021) suggest how postcolonial fiction encourages conversations on socioeconomic divides and counting cultural identity; it promotes analytical skills as well as ensures extensive knowledge about subjects like suppression rebellion and trans-acculturation. Inserting diverse literary texts into educational curricula is critical for encouraging a more expansive and challenging intellectual space (Jabeen, 2024; Schneider, 2003; Raghuram et al., 2013).

Building Identity and Connection to Culture

The postcolonial literature that they had read came up in the conversation, particularly its re-influence on their sense of cultural identity and, to some extent, emotional connection with characters or plot lines. The themes of the stories, which primarily resonated with anything related to diaspora, migration, and cultural subjectivity, were necessary aspects that dominantly exist within postcolonial literature. Jabeen (2024) and Schneider (2003) state that postcolonial literature is a mirror where individuals from ex-colonized nations can find their own stories that are parallel to theirs. Yielding in new areas can lead to students getting a better understanding of their own cultural history and gaining empathy for other, different cultures that are not theirs through reading facets or post-colonial literature. Using such literature in curricula is a way of affirming student identity and simultaneously allowing for the broader recognition of human diversity across the globe (Hall, 2020; Carruthers, 2008; Mehta, 2013).

The findings indicate that postcolonial literature should be included in school curriculums to enhance students' ability for critical thought and cultural insight, the authors write, which would send them on a path toward acting as socially responsible citizens. This is where its ability to inspire and channel empathy becomes revolutionary-moving people beyond (or before) mere sympathy into reflection and self-examination that moves them towards action for a changed world in which we all belong.

Conclusion

The results of this research on the effects of postcolonial literature on students' critical thinking in Pakistani students are positive. Postcolonial literature enables the students to gain more insight into several diverse social/political issues like colonialism, power relations, and justice. This is so because postcolonial literature exposes the students to different modes of address that interrupt and possibly contest Western discourses on these matters and hence engages them intellectually. Studies indicate that postcolonial literature enables students to understand different and multiple aspects of the world and also helps facilitate critical thinking skills. This is particularly pertinent in the context of Pakistan; the majority of the time, the students are conditioned to think in a certain way and are seldom introduced to the

diversity of opinions. Thus, it can be claimed that by embracing postcolonial literature, students can gain a deeper insight into Pakistani society and culture with all its subtleties and variations.

Concerning the explicative and critical analytic value, the study also further underscores the function of postcolonial literature. If students read postcolonial literature, it is likely that they will be able to challenge conventional thinking and come up with creative solutions to problems. This is because postcolonial literature critically interferes with the status quo and with conventional knowledge and makes students question power and justice. On the same note, postcolonial literature assists students in transforming their manner of comprehending identity and cultural creolization. Students understand how to manage a multicultural existence and appreciate other people's points of view. This is especially true in view of the differing cultural antecedents to which the students are subjected in Pakistan, and they may not be clear about their cultural orientation.

Turning to the second research question, the results of the study on the effects of the postcolonial literature on Pakistani students' identity are also valuable. Postcolonial literature helps people from pre-colonial societies to look into a mirror and recognize their own reflections. Students are able to identify with the characters of the literature and know more about their own culture. Issues of diaspora, migration, and cultural subjectivity are close to the heart of students; they help them cultivate multicultural perspectives and respect towards other cultures. Students also gain a less specialized acceptance of the diversities among the human beings they interact with. This is peculiar, especially in Pakistan, where students may interact with multicultural systems and may have an uncertain cultural identity.

As for the role of postcolonial literature in the formation of student's cultural identity, we must point out that it helps students feel that they belong in literature. Students are rooted within their culture and, therefore, have a better and or clearer understanding of their role in society. This is especially so for students of colour, students with disabilities, queer students and any other members of the school community who are minorities or oppressed in society. Thus, the results of the study under discussion stress the importance of postcolonial literature as a means of developing critical orientation and individualization of Pakistani learners. That is why the integration of postcolonial literature into the academic curricula would help prepare people whom educators want to bring up as responsible members of society, supplied with critical sensitivity and discernment of multicultural context. This can have positive externalities on Pakistani society. It will increase people's indulgence and, hence, social harmony in society.

Recommendations

Thus, various recommendations for future research and educational practice may be found in these findings.

1. Implement Grow Curriculum: Put forth post-colonial literature in the English curriculum as part and parcel included within literary domain for an all-inclusive exposure amongst students.
2. Critical Thinking Pedagogy, teaching critical thinking directly and then applying it with postcolonial texts. This could be a moment, in other words, when students are invited to engage as critical citizens and cultivate the capacities they need for thinking together with others about complex socio-political issues.
3. Culture Competence: Promote cross culture understanding by having discussions on postcolonial literature. However, this might improve their capacity to work with and respect changing cultural norms.
4. Examine Impact on Diverse Student Populations: Investigating how postcolonial literature has an impact altering critical thinking mechanisms and self-identity construction of different types of student groups, e.g. within various educational settings as well as in other cultural contexts.

This study determines and identifies how the impact postcolonial literature can transform education; in terms of enhancing criticality, cultural empathy and social accountability. Understanding postcolonial literature allows educators to train students in the art of global citizenship, for it is a vital skill set they will need as we progress toward a dramatically more inclusive world.



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