

Analyzing the Impact of Socio-Cultural Status on Critical Thinking among University Students



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Abstract: Imparting the skills of the 21st century in students is the most important task of all academicians. Critical thinking is an integral skill that plays a major role in students' skill development. (Alessandra, et al. 2020). This study aims to predict the Impact of Sociocultural Status on Critical Thinking among University Students in Karachi. Literature reported that the concept of Critical thinking was never addressed from the perspective of socio-culture (Maulana & Putra, 2022) at the tertiary level in progressing countries like Pakistan. This study will be carried on by employing Mix Methodology (Quantitative and Qualitative) paradigm. Sampling was drawn through a purposive Sampling technique Based on 20 students 10 students each from Either institution. The number of respondents for the quantitative paradigm of the study was 80 to collect data. A set of Activities and tasks were designed for measuring the Critical Thinking of Students. Findings suggested a significant difference in CT ability between the Public and private sector students. The study suggests more research on Curriculum mapping.

Key Words: Socio-culture, Critical Thinking, Higher Education

Introduction

The Phenomenon of present-day society with the information explosion, multiculturalism, and complicated and dynamically evolving world need critical diagnosis of problems and their real solution. Societies in developing countries like Pakistan face multiple social and cultural challenges which are still looking for being addressed. Individuals of societies can impact positively by playing a pivotal role in determining potential solutions to problems.

The youth of any country possesses a true potential to influence the challenging situations of their country by employing their social and psychological capacities. The cultural and social background is the driving force of these capacities and contributes to the positive outcome of social upbringing. The critical approach of individuals towards self and society is the

utmost desire of the current era to face the challenges locally and globally.

Thinking Convergenly is approving the status quo whereas thinking out of the box is breaking the cycle of psychological consolation, having the view of the world with new dimensions and adaptiveness to change and discover (Darn, 2006). Exploring whether students think outside of the box, or are simply going with the status quo. Are they adaptive to change and discovery or they are merely receivers of knowledge? while assessing the abilities of students these questions encircle the minds of scholars.

Several studies are carried on and have highlighted the significance of critical thinking with different perspectives and methods but there is limited literature in the context of socio-culture and critical thinking specifically in developing countries. The current research aims to determine the influence of

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sociocultural aspects on students' critical thinking abilities.

Factors influencing the critical thinking of people are psychological, biological, emotional, social and cultural. (Alessandra, 2020). Socio-culture being an independent factor influences the mind (cultivate or develop) of individuals who ultimately reverse to the society for the solutions to problems. The mental ability of an individual to analyze the social Phenomenon and their perspective to address the issues is the prime concern for any society. Developing individuals with a critical thinking approach is vital for producing a productive nation and country (Lashari, Umrani & Buriro, 2021). An individual lacking a certain ability fails to play their role in the betterment of society. Whereas youth is the fundamental group influence on the system of any country (Khan, Lashari & Iqbal (2022).

The results of the research study will significantly benefit the students in terms of cultivating their minds with analyzing skills to face the complex issues of a dynamically evolving world through predicting the influence of sociocultural elements on critical thinking ability. Further, it will help in upgrading societies of developing countries through the participation of more sophisticated learners in dealing with social challenges and deriving realistic solutions to problems.

Several studies are carried on and have highlighted the importance of critical thinking with different perspectives and methods but there is limited literature in the context of socio-culture and critical thinking specifically in developing countries. The research study aims to identify the influence of sociocultural aspects on students' critical thinking abilities.

Objectives

To study the influences of sociocultural Status on students' Critical thinking.

To compare the ability of critical thinking of public and private sector students.

Question

Q1: Does the socio-cultural status has any influence on the Critical Thinking skills of students?

Q2: Is there any significant difference in critical thinking among the students of Public and Private sector university students?

Hypothesis

RH1: There is no significant difference in critical thinking among the students of public and private sector students. ($H = \mu \neq \mu$)

Literature Review

Emerging societies need individuals with the skills which make them deal successfully face the demand and face fears of a dynamically changing society. Conventional methods of dealing with problems do not enable them to respond (Martina, 2022). Rational thinking of individual needs self – conditioning, analysis, and assessment, for casting the consequences, (Alessandra, 2020). In the education discipline, educationist focus on the interconnection, process, and product (Bailin et al, 1999). Therefore, teachers often judge students via the product which they derived after the completion of the task. The mental process of the students is mainly governed by their social culture, which points to both Phenomenon and the product. Lev Vygotsky termed the inter-mental and intra-mental to the social and psychological relationship between individuals and society. (Wertsch, 1993) which means working in a social group and place, people not only work together but also think together which helps them to achieve in bulk rather than n pieces. (Mercer, 2007)

Sociocultural and Students' thinking skills:

Cultural factors According to (Amalia & Wuryandani, 2020), "a lifestyle shared by a group of people and describe as a set of attitudes, values, (including knowledge and techniques, goals and practices that characterize institution, organization or group." Whereas socio-culture is the prime condition for the settled reflection and sources of thinking patterns. and guide how one perceives practically everything (Zhang et al., 2013) However, so-called "thinking outside the box" is sometimes encouraged and sometimes rejected. Sociocultural exposure can influence knowledge, perception, creativity, understanding of science versus religion, and just about anything, everywhere. (Kosturkova, 2020).

We, therefore, behave, think, speak, and eat like others in our society, and many different societies who each form completely different traits & mannerisms, and that includes societal laws & all that is acceptable and that, which is not.

Trust & bonds with other humans and other living creatures, language and communication, mannerisms and demeanour, likes & dislikes, preferred foods even

individual levels of intelligence - learning, comprehension, logic, problem solving, and the use of tools to do things better. Most humans form groups, clans, and societies and mimic each other (assimilate). Safety is strengthened by numbers. "E Pluribus Unum" - United We Stand.

Researchers have confirmed that students with learnt critical thinking skills demonstrated high performance in making assumptions, and conclusions process more intellectually and presenting ideas going out of the box (Alimirzaloo & Hashemnezhad, 2015) Critical Thinking is "A purposeful self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inferences." (Facione, 1990) whereas Socio-Cultural "The interest in understanding how mental processes of individuals are influenced by culture in a society." (Facione, 1990)

Theoretical Background

The study on assessing the socio-cultural impact of critical thinking has a relation with the theories given by Lev Vygotsky and Hofstede. Vygotsky's (1896-1934) declaration was based on the idea that learning occurs in three phases of childhood, cognitive, motoric, and socio-culture. (Mcleod, 2020) Children are influenced by the culture using language as the tool in their learning through socialization between family and well-informed members of the society and their basic source of learning is behaviour and cognitive process. (Mahn, 1999). Vygotsky believed that the origins of thinking relate to society and that cognitive development can not be detached from the instance of social background within which it has been submerged. (Allman,2020) . Hofstede theory of culture elaborates on the influence of the culture of society on the values of its members and the way those values connect to behaviour. Hofstede in his theory highlights five dimensions of culture, the Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), and Long term orientation (LTO). (Traquandi, 2016) The current study discusses the cultural influences on the human mind. Hofstedes Long Term Cultural Dimension states long-term orientation values are preserved whereas short-term orientation values are respected for traditions and societal commitment. Long-term orientations refer to the practices, societies adhere to and internalize as their value. Lev Vygotsky's cultural theory points such societal values which become part of the culture and gradually influence the

cognitive level of the Individual (Vasileva, 2019) which directs the human mind to forth set cultural thinking pattern.

Methodology

This study aims to investigate the impact of socio-culture on the critical thinking ability of students and the assessment of the ability of students belonging to two different groups i-e. public and private. To address the question as per the nature of the study which requires an in-depth analysis of thinking pattern and their comparison, the Concurrent Triangulation Design (Creswell, Plano, Gutmann, Hanson. 2003) is adopted which is used to "obtain different but complementary data on the same topic to get the best understanding of the research problem." (Morse, 1991) also to validate the result derived from employing either approach (Qualitative and Quantitative) in the same time frame. All undergraduate students of universities are the population of this study. Participants for this study were selected from higher education institutions in Karachi city via a purposive sampling technique. 20 students from the social sciences department of Public and private universities were taken as respondents and for the quantitative study n=80, students were taken from both public and private universities. The research instrument for the study was essay writing and a questionnaire. Qualitative data were analyzed through an essay writing assignment adapted (Ennis- Weir, 1985) and a questionnaire was developed by self-developed by the researcher. The quality of admissibility of research is the prime requisite (Burns, 1999). In qualitative, 'Reality is holistic, multidimensional and everchanging.' (Meriam, 1996) this entails the checking of a tool at multiple stages. Validity was ensured through the Triangulation of data and the Content validity of the tool was established through reviews and opinions of experts in the fields. For assessment of the reliability of the qualitative study, the internal reliability of the tool was assessed through peer examination, a method used to apply other researchers' derived results. (Lecompte and Goetz, 1982) and for the quantitative tool, reliability was ensured through Cronbach alpha. This study is primarily under the qualitative paradigm but to strengthen and obtain a detailed understanding of students' critical thinking backed by their socio-cultural backgrounds quantitative approach has been adopted. For the corroboration and confirmation of the result of both quantitative and qualitative, the Convergence

model is used in which "the researcher collects and analyzes both the data separately on the same phenomenon and results are converged." (Creswell 1999). For analysis of qualitative data Enis Weir Critical Thinking, Assessment Essay test was assessed under the standards. Study tools were piloted on the group of students from a sample of respondents. They served both tools quantitative and qualitative. Ambiguous and ineffective questions were omitted from the questionnaire.

Setting and Procedure, Students' Characteristics

This study was conducted in Public and private institutions. The students of the social science department were the respondents. For the qualitative segment, participants comprised (n= 10) whereas for the quantitative there were (n=80). Students belong to two different class systems and ethanoic groups as described as public and private universities.

Data was collected from the researcher in person, Data collection period took one week as there was the time of examinations in universities. Each participant was served tools and sheets to write an essay about a topic related to a social issue. Students have described the purpose and procedure of the study.

CT is the analyzing, inferring, reasoning, judging and evaluating. (Paul, Elder. 2009). It is about the profound competencies and control of the use of these sets of skills. Students' ability to think was judged according to the assigned tasks. For assessment of essay, Enis- Weir critical thinking essay tests, 1985.

Table I

Test Score of CT Essay Test

Competencies	G1	G2
Getting the point	10	10
Seeing the reason	3	7
Stating one's point	5	8
Offering good reason	5	9
Seeing other possibilities	8	7
Responding appropriately	---	5
	3.1	4.6

Table I represents the test score of two groups Group 1(Public) and Group 2 (Private) represent the competency level between both groups as both groups were able to identify the main theme of the topic of the say therefore, they got the same score. At

(Edwards, 2017). This Qualitative tool (essay writing) aimed to measure competence suggested by Enis and Weir such as "a)getting the point, b) setting reasons and assumptions, c) stating one's point, d) offering good reasons, e) seeing other possibilities, f) responding appropriately to and/or avoiding argument." (Ennis, weir 1985)

Data Analysis

The current study 'Analyzing the Impacts of Socio-Culture on critical thinking in Higher Education" intends to predict the influences of Socio-Culture on the critical thinking of students and also compare the critical thinking ability of students of Public and Private Institutions.

The analysis of collected data has been carried out through Qualitative as well as Quantitative techniques. In this research study data was collected from the students of higher education. There were 43 participants from the public sector and 37 students from the private sector from the Department of social sciences (Education).

Qualitative Data

For the qualitative study, the critical thinking Essay test was adapted from the Ennis- weir critical thinking assessment test. Under the prescribed competencies of an essay by Enis-Weir (1985), the test is "Getting the point, seeing the reason, stating one's point, offering a good reason, seeing other possibilities, and responding appropriately." Students responded in their essays with the following:

the same time, students got a varied score in the second theme seeing the reason. Group B (private) mentioned multiple reasons related to social issues and highlighted the interrelated causes and the actual reason behind the phenomenon. Students in group B.

suggested various alternative possibilities for the solutions to the problems. In contrast, they pointed out various issues and suggested solutions but they did

not explain the root causes, and responses and expressed their viewpoint in the essay. Group A show moderate to low competence in developing an essay.

Critical Thinking Essay Test Score

Table 2

Mean Score of CT Essay Test

Essay writing Competency	(n)	Public	private	Mean
	20	3.1	4.6	3.85

The mean score of the CT Essay test shows a satisfactory level of critical thinking essay test by Group B which is greater than Group A. This shows there is a high competency level of students in the private sector as compared to the Public sector.

Quantitative Data

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.717	28

Table 3

Reliability Analysis (Independent sample t-test)

Group Statistics

	Sector	N	M	SD	Std. Error Mean
CS	Public	37	3.6757	.30495	.05013
	Private	43	3.7674	.43477	.06630

Table 4

T-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
CS	Equal variances assumed	.864	.356	-1.076	78	0.028	.09177	.08530	-.26158	.07805
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.104	75.111	.027	.09177	.08312	-.25735	.07382

An independent sample t-test was computed to assess the difference in critical thinking ability of undergraduate students of the Public and private sectors by using SPSS. Findings of Public (M=3.67, SD=0.30) and Private (M=3.7, SD=0.43) $t(78) = -1.076$, $p=(0.285)$ suggest that there is a significant difference in critical thinking ability between public and private sector students. Therefore, we reject the null

hypothesis. ($H = \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$) as the table value (0.028) is higher than the criterion value 0.05 ($0.028 < 0.05$) and will reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between Public and private sector students in terms of Critical thinking ability. ($H = \mu_1 = \mu_2$).

Discussion

The study conducted on the assessment of the critical thinking ability of students with the perspective of socio-culture revealed a considerable difference. The study based on Mix methodology took the sample size required to justify both approaches and to derive data support to findings. Research question "Does the socio-cultural status have any impact on the Critical Thinking ability of students?"

The study findings through essay writings reveal that students of the public sector can identify or point out the problem and suggest multiple suggestions but they show little understanding towards predicting and linking the root causes of the challenges of the social issues for example one of the student highlighted *Overpopulation and lack of education are the main reason of poverty*. Whereas students could describe the relationship between issues and causes. Besides they could demonstrate their broader perspectives by discussing their writing about the country's economic and social challenges. Group B Private students show their competency by highlighting the country's economic condition, institutional dynamics, and their impact on other institutions and finally on individual lives.

Is there any significant difference in critical thinking ability among the students of Public and Private sector university students?

The answer to the question was derived statistically and results show a significant difference in both groups. There is a dire need of teaching students of both institutions the simultaneous standards because this is the ultimate need of the country. Students belonging to different cultures can not influence and alter their backgrounds but the institutions can make a difference by changing the system. Revisiting educational standards help in enabling students to address social challenges and raise their voice against the evil of society.

The current study discusses the cultural influences on the human mind. It relates to Hofstede's Long Term Cultural Dimension which, states long-term orientation values are preserved whereas, short-term orientation values are respected for traditions, and societal commitment. Log term orientations refers to the practice, societies adhere to and internalize as their value. Lev Vygotsky's cultural theory points to such societal values, which become part of the culture and gradually influence the cognitive level of the Individual,

which directs the human mind to forth set cultural thinking pattern.

Summary

The current study 'Analyzing the impacts of socio-culture on critical thinking in Higher Education' intends to predict the influences of socio-culture on the critical thinking of students and also weigh up the critical thinking ability of students of Public and Private Institutions.

The analysis of collected data has been carried out through a Mixed Method Approach, Under which the Convergence model was adopted to carry out the research project. The findings after analysis of collected data through triangulation technique rejected the Null Hypothesis that there was no significant difference in critical thinking between students of public and private institutions and concluded that there is a significant difference in Critical thinking ability between the students of Public and Private Institutions have proved that socio-culture, influences the cognitive level and so the critical thinking ability of students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Socio-cultural influences on critical thinking are evident from the study and its findings have also proved the difference. The students of Public and Private Institutions have proved that socio-culture, influences the cognitive level and so the critical thinking ability of students. Critical thinking is the deliberate, self-activating judgment resulting in decoding and deciphering, analysing, evaluating, and inferences." In contrast, the Socio-Cultural is "The interest in understanding how mental processes of individuals are influenced by culture in a society." (Facione, 1990). The socio-culture being an independent factor, influences the mindset of the individuals in society, and these shared thinking patterns indirectly impact the general issues of society, which are impossible for a nation to be addressed. Educational institutions greatly contribute to the cultivation of the minds of people. The activities both curricular and cocurricular have a strong involvement in shaping the mindset of individuals. Higher education institutions carry on the vision of the country and prepare not only a workforce but also responsible citizens through academic and non-academic activities. The results of the study recommend the need to change the standards of curriculum mapping and design activities that could help impart a certain set of skills among students which help cultivate their minds with analyzing skills to face

the complex issues of a dynamically evolving world. Further, change in curriculum designing will help in upgrading societies of developing countries through

the participation of more sophisticated learners in dealing with social challenges and deriving realistic solutions to problems.

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