

## ***Exploring Parents' Perspectives on Culturally Responsive Curriculum in Early Childhood Education***

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### ***Abstract***

*This study investigated views of parents regarding the cultural relevance of early childhood curricula in private preschools. Early childhood education is recognized as laying the foundation for a child's lifelong learning, and the role of parents—as children's first educators—is considered very important in shaping their values, identity, and development. However, many preschool curricula in Pakistan remained disconnected from the cultural contexts of the children they served. This research aimed to explore how parents perceived cultural appropriateness of the curriculum used in their children's early education and to identify areas where alignment with home culture could be strengthened. The study employed a qualitative case study approach involving three private early childhood education centers in Karachi. Purposive sampling was used to select 15 parents from diverse cultural backgrounds. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically to identify recurring ideas and insights. Key findings revealed that parents highly valued inclusion of their cultural values, languages, and traditions in the curriculum. They expressed concern over dominance of Western content and absence of local stories, festivals, and values in the teaching materials. Parents also emphasized importance of developing a curriculum that supported children's holistic development—including identity, self-esteem, and emotional well-being—by reflecting their cultural heritage. Findings suggested that involving parents in curriculum planning could lead to more inclusive and meaningful learning experiences. Recognizing parents as key stakeholders, would foster a stronger home-school connection and ensure that early education promotes cultural pride and understanding. Study recommended integrating local languages, customs, and values into curriculum development, and urged policymakers and educators to adopt culturally responsive practices in early childhood education.*

**Keywords:** *culturally responsive curriculum, early childhood education, parental perspectives, local culture, identity development, private preschool*

### ***Introduction***

Early childhood education (ECE) lays foundation for lifelong learning, social development, and identity formation. It is during the early years that children begin to construct an understanding of the world around them, including their cultural identity and sense of belonging. A culturally responsive curriculum, which integrates learners' cultural backgrounds, languages, traditions, and values, plays a crucial role in shaping these early developmental experiences.<sup>1</sup> Such a curriculum not only enhances student engagement but also supports development of self-worth and respect for diversity. In culturally diverse countries such as Pakistan, many private preschools adopt international curricula that often emphasize Western values, holidays, and characters, while neglecting local languages, stories, and traditions.<sup>2</sup> This disconnect between school curriculum and children's home cultures can hinder child's ability to connect with their learning environment, leading to decreased motivation and a weakened cultural identity.<sup>3</sup> Research indicates that when children's home cultures are validated in school, they exhibit stronger cognitive and emotional development.<sup>4</sup> Parents, as the child's first educators, are vital stakeholders in the learning process. Their cultural beliefs, values, and expectations heavily influence how children learn and behave. When parents feel that the school curriculum is aligned with their home culture, they are more likely to engage with and support their children's education.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, when cultural mismatches occur, parents may feel excluded from the educational process, and children may struggle to reconcile differing expectations between home and school. This research explores perspectives of the parents regarding cultural relevance of the curriculum in private early childhood education centers in Karachi. It seeks to uncover how parents perceive current curriculum's alignment with their cultural values, the gaps they observe, and their suggestions for creating more inclusive and culturally responsive early learning environments. Findings aim to inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers of the importance of involving parents in the curriculum planning process to foster holistic learning experiences for young children.

## Footnotes

1. Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018), 36.
2. Nasreen Hussain and Zeenat Hussain, "Challenges in Adopting a Localized Curriculum in Private Schools of Pakistan," *International Journal of Early Childhood Education* 28, no. 2 (2021): 55–68.
3. Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*, 7th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2018), 124.
4. Lisa Delpit, *Multiplication Is for White People: Raising Expectations for Other People's Children* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 57.
5. Ann Epstein, "The Intentional Teacher: Choosing the Best Strategies for Young Children's Learning," *Young Children* 70, no. 3 (2015): 28–35.

## Background of the Study

In recent decades, early childhood education (ECE) has gained recognition as a decisive phase in a child's development, where foundational skills, values, and identities are formed. A culturally responsive curriculum in early learning settings is considered essential in ensuring that children see their own lives, communities, and histories reflected in what they learn. Such alignment supports children's emotional security, cognitive development, and a strong sense of self.<sup>1</sup> In multicultural societies like Pakistan, where linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity is vast, many early childhood curricula continue to reflect Eurocentric models, often borrowed or adapted from Western frameworks.<sup>2</sup> These curricula may not adequately represent or incorporate cultural identities, values, and languages of local families. This misalignment can result in a disconnect between home and school environments, potentially hindering children's learning, identity formation, and social-emotional development.<sup>3</sup>

Parental involvement is regarded as critical factor in fostering meaningful learning experiences. When parents perceive that their cultural values and traditions are excluded from school content, it can lead to disengagement and a weakened home-school partnership.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, incorporating parental perspectives in curriculum design has been shown to enhance inclusivity, improve student outcomes, and strengthen community ties.<sup>5</sup> Several international studies affirm the positive impact of culturally responsive education on children's learning and development. For instance, Gay (2018) argues that culturally responsive teaching bridges students' lived experiences with classroom instruction, making education more relevant and empowering.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1995) highlights that culturally relevant pedagogy not only affirms children's backgrounds but also supports academic achievement and sociocultural competence.<sup>7</sup>

In the Pakistani context, limited research exists on the subject. While policies acknowledge the importance of inclusive and equitable education, implementation often lags behind, especially in private preschools that may prioritize international curricula over local content.<sup>8</sup> This study seeks to address this gap by exploring parents' perspectives on the cultural appropriateness of early childhood curricula in private preschools and identifying ways to bridge home-school cultural divides.

## Footnotes

1. Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018), 23.
2. Huma Zia and Sajid Ali, "Curriculum Development in Pakistan: An Analysis of the Current Situation and the Way Forward," *Journal of Education and Educational Development* 6, no. 1 (2019): 23–45.
3. Siraj-Blatchford, Iram. "Diversity, Inclusion and Early Childhood Education: A Critical Analysis of Curriculum Approaches in Multicultural Societies," *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 10, no. 2 (2009): 201–12.
4. Epstein, Joyce L. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001).
5. Souto-Manning, Mariana. "A Call for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood Education," *Childhood Education* 93, no. 2 (2017): 103–7.
6. Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, 45.
7. Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," *American Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 3 (1995): 465–91.
8. Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (Pakistan), *National Education Policy Framework 2018* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2018).

### Statement of the Problem

Despite the rich cultural diversity present in Pakistan, early childhood education (ECE) curricula in many private preschools often lack meaningful representation of children's home cultures, languages, and traditions. Parents, as primary caregivers and first educators, know better about cultural values, beliefs, and practices that would help shape their children's development. However, their perspectives are rarely considered in curriculum planning and implementation processes. The absence of culturally responsive approaches in early learning environments may limit children's emotional, cognitive, and social growth, especially when they are unable to see their own heritage reflected in the educational content. This study seeks to explore how parents perceive cultural relevance of the current ECE curriculum, the ways in which it aligns—or fails to align—with their home values and traditions, and how their involvement can enhance the development of a more inclusive and culturally responsive curriculum. Addressing this gap is vital for ensuring that early education supports not only academic learning but also identity formation and cultural understanding in young children.

### Significance of the Study

This study is significant in highlighting the often-overlooked voices of parents in the development of early childhood education curricula. As the first educators in a child's life, parents play a critical role in shaping their children's identity, values, and worldview. By exploring their perspectives, this study contributes to the deeper understanding of how early learning experiences can be made more culturally inclusive and meaningful. In the context of Pakistan—where diverse languages, traditions, and belief systems coexist—there is a need to develop a curriculum that reflect cultural realities of children's home environments. Findings from this research would offer insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers aiming to bridge the gap between home and school cultures. It would encourage a participatory approach to curriculum design, where families are recognized as partners rather than passive stakeholders. Additionally, the study may inform teacher training programs by emphasizing the importance of cultural responsiveness in early education settings, ultimately supporting children's holistic development and promoting equity in the classroom.

### Scope of the Study

This study is focused on the perspectives of parents whose children are enrolled in private early childhood education centers in Karachi, Pakistan. The research is limited to three preschools, and only to the parents of the children who have been enrolled for at least one academic year. This criterion ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to the curriculum and classroom practices to provide valuable opinion.

The study is qualitative in nature and does not aim to generalize findings to all early childhood institutions or all parents in Pakistan. Instead, it offers in-depth insights into a small, purposively selected group. Moreover, while the research focuses on cultural responsiveness in curriculum content and delivery, it does not evaluate academic effectiveness of the curriculum or compare different school systems. These delimitations were set to maintain a clear and focused investigation on parental perspectives, and to keep the study manageable within the given time and resource constraints.

### Literature Review

In many early childhood education (ECE) settings across Pakistan, particularly in urban private preschools, the curriculum often reflects a standardized framework that overlooks the diverse cultural backgrounds of the children it serves. While international curricula may offer global exposure, they frequently fail to incorporate local values, languages, and traditions that are central to a child's identity and social development.<sup>1</sup> As a result, there is growing concern among parents that their children's early educational experiences are culturally disconnected from their home environments.<sup>2</sup>

This cultural gap may lead to a diminished sense of belonging among young learners and contribute to identity confusion or alienation from their roots.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, when the cultural experiences of families are not acknowledged in the classroom, parents may feel excluded from the educational process, reducing opportunities for meaningful home-school collaboration.<sup>4</sup> Studies show that culturally relevant curricula contribute positively to children's learning outcomes, emotional well-being, and social competence, making the lack of such curriculum an urgent issue to address.<sup>5</sup>

Despite its importance, there is limited research in the Pakistani context that directly captures parents' voices regarding cultural relevance of early childhood education curricula. This study seeks to address that gap as to how parents perceive the inclusion—or exclusion—of their cultural values in preschool programs, and what recommendations they have for making ECE more inclusive and responsive to local contexts.

### Footnotes

1. Nasreen Hussain and Zeenat Hussain, "Challenges in Adopting a Localized Curriculum in Private Schools of Pakistan," *International Journal of Early Childhood Education* 28, no. 2 (2021): 60.
2. Huma Rahman and Maria Aziz, "Parental Involvement and Cultural Alignment in Private Early Childhood Education: A Case from Karachi," *Journal of Educational Research* 25, no. 1 (2023): 45.
3. Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*, 7th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2018), 139.
4. Carol Brunson Day and Pamela J. Winton, "Enhancing Home–School Connections in Early Childhood Programs," *Young Children* 72, no. 5 (2017): 24–31.
5. Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018), 43–46.

The concept of culturally responsive curriculum (CRC) in early childhood education has gained prominence as scholars emphasize the importance of aligning educational content with the cultural identities and lived experiences of learners. Geneva Gay defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective.”<sup>1</sup> This framework advocates that education, particularly in the early years, must reflect children’s heritage and languages to foster identity, inclusion, and equitable outcomes.

Studies in early childhood settings highlight that when children see their cultures represented in learning materials, they develop higher self-esteem, stronger social skills, and deeper engagement.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, curriculum that ignores local traditions and languages may alienate learners and contribute to identity confusion.<sup>3</sup> Nieto argues that schools must move beyond token multiculturalism toward pedagogies that affirm cultural knowledge and empower children and families.<sup>4</sup>

Parental involvement is an important element in fostering culturally relevant learning environments. Parents are children’s first educators, and their input offers valuable insights into the cultural norms, languages, and values that shape a child’s worldview.<sup>5</sup> Involving parents in curriculum design enhances the relevance of content and strengthens home-school partnerships. Studies conducted in diverse educational settings have shown that when parents are consulted and engaged, there is greater alignment between school practices and children’s home experiences.<sup>6</sup>

However, in many parts of the Global South, including Pakistan, early childhood education remains largely disconnected from community culture. A qualitative study by Rahman and Aziz (2023) found that Pakistani private schools tend to adopt globalized curricula that prioritize English and Western norms while neglecting indigenous languages, festivals, and values.<sup>7</sup> This disconnect creates tension between home and school environments, leading to reduced parental trust and missed opportunities for culturally grounded learning.

Furthermore, current policies on early childhood education in Pakistan focus more on access and infrastructure than curriculum contextualization.<sup>8</sup> This policy gap limits the potential for inclusive curriculum planning. Researchers call for more localized frameworks that respect cultural diversity and actively engage stakeholders—including parents—in curriculum development.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, existing literature supports the view that culturally responsive curriculum enhances early learning and promotes social-emotional growth. However, there remains a need for further exploration of parental perspectives, particularly in under-researched contexts like Pakistan. Understanding how parents perceive cultural alignment in early childhood programs would greatly help in developing an inclusive, grounded, and collaborative curriculum.

### Footnotes

1. Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018), 36.
2. Sonia Nieto and Patty Bode, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*, 7th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2018), 141.



3. Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 48.
4. Nieto and Bode, *Affirming Diversity*, 129–130.
5. Carol Brunson Day and Pamela J. Winton, "Enhancing Home–School Connections in Early Childhood Programs," *Young Children* 72, no. 5 (2017): 25.
6. Vivian Gadsden, "Parent Engagement and Cultural Relevance in Early Childhood Education," Harvard Family Research Project, 2016.
7. Huma Rahman and Maria Aziz, "Parental Involvement and Cultural Alignment in Private Early Childhood Education: A Case from Karachi," *Journal of Educational Research* 25, no. 1 (2023): 45–47.
8. Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, *National Education Policy 2017–2025: Early Childhood Education Framework* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2020), 19.
9. Nasreen Hussain and Zeenat Hussain, "Challenges in Adopting a Localized Curriculum in Private Schools of Pakistan," *International Journal of Early Childhood Education* 28, no. 2 (2021): 60–65.

## Colonial Legacy

The legacy of colonial education in many Muslim-majority countries, including Pakistan, continues to shape early childhood curricula in ways that often disconnect learners from their indigenous identity. Colonial educational models emphasized secular knowledge and European cultural norms, minimizing local values and native pedagogies. This historical disruption weakened the organic transmission of Islamic ethics, language, and worldview within formal education systems. As a result, modern schooling tends to reproduce Westernized frameworks, sidelining the identity, moral development, and cultural belonging.

## Research Objectives

- To Understand Parents' Views on Cultural Relevance in Early Learning
- To Bridge the Gap Between Home Culture and School Curriculum
- To Promote Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Curriculum Development

## Research Questions

- What cultural disconnects do parents observe between their home environment and the school curriculum?
- How do parents think these cultural gaps impact their children's learning and development?
- What suggestions do parents offer to better align the school curriculum with home cultures?
- What are parents' expectations regarding inclusive practices in curriculum and instruction?

## Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to gain understanding of parents' perspectives regarding cultural relevance of early childhood curricula in private preschools. The case study design was selected to allow for an exploration of real-life experiences, beliefs, and expectations of parents within specific early learning contexts. A qualitative framework enabled participants to express their views openly, helping researchers gather rich, contextualized insights into how curriculum content aligns—or fails to align—with the cultural values and traditions of diverse families.

The research was conducted across three private early childhood education centers located in Karachi, Pakistan. These preschools were purposefully selected due to their structured curricula and demographically diverse student populations. A total of fifteen parents participated in the study, who were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a rich diversity of the perspectives. Inclusion criteria for participants were:

- At least one child enrolled in a private preschool for over a year;
- Belonging to different cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds;
- Willingness to participate in interview.

This sampling method ensured the representation of varied parental voices, enabling a broader understanding of cultural expectations and concerns within Pakistan's early childhood education landscape.

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method for data collection. An interview guide was developed, covering key themes such as:

- Perceptions of curriculum content and structure;
- Cultural inclusivity and representation;

- Use of local languages and traditional stories;

Each interview lasted approximately 25–30 minutes and was conducted either in person or virtually (via phone or Zoom), depending on the parent's preference. All interviews were conducted in Urdu or English, based on participants' language comfort.

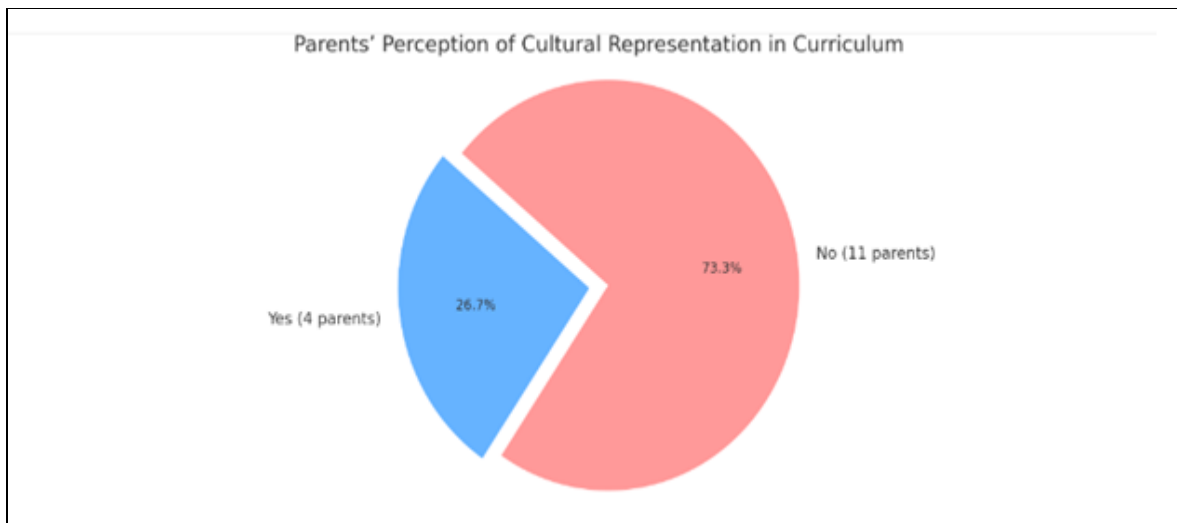
Information collected from the interviews was first written down and translated where necessary. Researchers then analyzed the data using thematic analysis, a method commonly used in qualitative research to identify patterns in people's responses. This process started with reading the interview transcripts several times to fully understand the views and experiences shared by the parents. Important ideas and repeated points were grouped together into major themes that showed common concerns or expectations. Through this process, researchers found several key themes, such as the gap between school curriculum and home culture, limited use of local languages, parents' wish to see their values and traditions reflected in the curriculum, and worries about their children's cultural identity. These themes clearly showed how parents understand and evaluate the cultural relevance of early childhood education and the improvements they hope to see in the future.

### Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical integrity, informed consent was obtained from all participants before the data collection process began. Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential and that their responses would be used solely for research purposes. Anonymity was maintained throughout the study by not disclosing any identifying information. Additionally, the research was conducted in line with established ethical guidelines for educational research, with particular attention to respecting cultural norms and personal boundaries.

### Results of Interviews

- Most parents (12 out of 15) had a general understanding of the term “culturally responsive curriculum,” describing it as education that reflects “our values, traditions, and language.” Out of 15, 3 parents were unfamiliar with the term but understood the concept when explained.
- The parents' perception of cultural representation in curriculum, is depicted in the diagram below:



As mentioned above, out of 15, only 4 parents felt that the curriculum at their child's school adequately reflected their cultural identity. Whereas, 11 parents noted that the curriculum focused heavily on Western content (English rhymes, holidays like Halloween, stories with foreign characters) while neglecting local languages, festivals, and Islamic values.

- 13 out of 15 parents observed disconnects between home culture and school teachings. These included: neglect of Urdu or regional languages, no mention of local traditions, and differing moral values (e.g., dress

codes, discipline). 3 parents mentioned that their child showing confusion or embarrassment about cultural practices at home (e.g., food, language, prayer).

- 10 parents felt that lack of cultural representation affected their child's sense of identity or confidence. Several shared that their children began to prefer speaking English or showed disinterest in local customs and family events.
- All 15 parents expressed willingness to participate in cultural events, storytelling, or giving feedback.
- Out of 15, 9 parents said they had never been invited or involved by the school in such efforts. Whereas, 3 parents shared positive experiences where they were asked to participate in cultural days or cooking activities. They gave following suggestions:
  - Include local stories, regional festivals, and religious/moral values in curriculum.
  - Allow parents to visit classrooms or suggest cultural books, games, or food.
  - Train teachers on cultural diversity and inclusive practices.

### Presentation of Data

The results of this study were drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with a diverse group of parents whose children were enrolled in private early childhood education centers. The data revealed a consistent concern regarding cultural irrelevance of the curriculum and a strong desire for parental involvement. Respondents emphasized that the current curriculum does not adequately reflect their cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds.

**Table**  
**Summary of Interview Results with 15 Parents**

Theme	Findings	No. of Parents (n=15)	%
<b>Understanding of Culturally Responsive Curriculum</b>	General understanding of the concept	12	80%
	Unfamiliar with the term but understood after explanation	3	20%
<b>Perception of Cultural Representation in Curriculum</b>	Curriculum reflects family's culture	4	27%
	Curriculum is Western-biased and lacks local relevance	11	73%
<b>Observed Cultural Disconnects</b>	Noticeable gap between home and school cultures	13	87%
	No significant disconnect observed	2	13%
<b>Impact on Child's Identity and Development</b>	Child shows cultural confusion or reduced interest in home traditions	10	67%
	No noticeable effect on child's cultural identity	5	33%
<b>Involvement of Parents in Curriculum or Cultural Events</b>	Have been invited or included in cultural activities	3	20%
	Have not been invited or involved	12	80%

<b>Willingness to Contribute to Curriculum Development</b>	Willing to participate and share cultural input	15	100%
<b>Suggestions for Improving Cultural Responsiveness</b>	Recommend inclusion of local stories, festivals, values, and parent involvement	15	100%

## Findings

- Study revealed that majority of the parents (80%) had a general understanding of what a culturally responsive curriculum means. They associated it with the inclusion of cultural traditions, religious values, mother tongue usage, and identity-based content. Although 20% were unfamiliar with the specific term, they grasped its meaning when given relatable examples.
- Only 27% of parents believed that their child's current curriculum reflected their cultural identity, while 73% expressed concerns about the dominance of Western content. They pointed out overemphasis on foreign holidays, fictional characters, and the English language, with limited inclusion of Urdu, Islamic values, or local traditions.
- Approximately 87% of the parents observed a cultural disconnect between home and school. They noted absence of regional languages in instruction, lack of recognition for religious festivals like Eid, and differing norms regarding dress and respect.
- Two-thirds of the parents (67%) reported that this cultural gap impacted their children's attitudes and behaviors. Some children felt embarrassed to speak their native language, showed a preference for Western clothes and food, and began rejecting traditional practices such as praying or wearing shalwar kameez.
- While all parents expressed a willingness to engage in school activities and curriculum planning, only 20% had ever been invited to participate. Many felt that their cultural knowledge and opinions were not valued by school administrations.
- Despite this, every parent offered constructive suggestions for improvement. These included incorporating local festivals (such as Eid and Basant), adding folk tales and stories of Muslim heroes, promoting Urdu and mother-tongue learning, and organizing multicultural events with parental involvement.

## Analysis

Findings of the study highlight a significant awareness among parents regarding essence of a culturally responsive curriculum, even if the terminology is unfamiliar. Their understanding, rooted in expectations for inclusion of native language, religious values, and cultural traditions, reflects a grasp of the need for culturally grounded education. However, the mismatch between this understanding and the actual curriculum content points to a communication and implementation gap between the schools and the families.

The low percentage (27%) of the parents who felt their child's cultural identity was reflected in the curriculum underscores an issue of underrepresentation. The dominance of Western narratives and practices—such as foreign holidays, characters, and English-medium instruction—raises concerns about marginalization of the local culture and language. This perceived imbalance contributes to a growing disconnect between home and school environments, as noted by 87% of the parents. Lack of acknowledgment for local languages and religious traditions further widens this divide, potentially affecting children's sense of belonging and identity.

This cultural dissonance is not without consequence. Parents reported that children, particularly in the early formative years, began to distance themselves from traditional practices, favoring Western customs instead. Such behavioral shifts—ranging from language preferences to dress and prayer habits—indicate influence of educational settings on the identity formation. If left unaddressed, this erosion of cultural identity would have long-term implications on children's social-emotional development and self-worth.

Moreover, the findings reflect a lack of institutional support for meaningful parental involvement. Despite a strong willingness from parents to contribute, schools rarely invited or valued their input. This represents a missed opportunity, as parents can serve as cultural co-educators who enrich the curriculum with contextually relevant knowledge and traditions. Their suggestions for improvement—such as celebrating local festivals, incorporating



Urdu and folk stories, and encouraging inclusive events—offer practical steps toward creating a more culturally affirming learning environment.

In sum, the study reinforces need for early childhood education systems to adopt inclusive curricular practices that honor children's cultural identities and build stronger home-school connections. Bridging this gap will require policy-level reforms, teacher training in cultural responsiveness, and proactive engagement with families as partners in education.

## Discussion

The results highlight a significant gap between the expectations of parents and the curriculum offered in early childhood settings. Parents reported a lack of cultural representation in textbooks, visual materials, and classroom activities. The absence of regional languages and Islamic teachings was a common theme. Additionally, parents expressed readiness to contribute to the educational process but reported being sidelined by school administration. These findings align with existing research, emphasize importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in early childhood education. According to Gay (2018), culturally responsive teaching recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. Banks (2020) also supports integrating multicultural content into early education to enhance engagement and identity development. Furthermore, Cummins (2021) argues that the inclusion of the mother tongue in early education improves comprehension and reinforces cultural identity.

The study's findings call for a fundamental shift in curriculum design to include parental voices and cultural diversity. A culturally inclusive curriculum promotes not only academic success but also identity formation and emotional well-being in children. Schools that fail to reflect the lived realities of their students, risk alienating families and weakening educational outcomes.

## Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, several important areas for future research are suggested:

- Investigate teachers' and school leaders' views, practices, and challenges related to implementing culturally responsive curricula.
- Use child-centered methods (e.g., drawings, storytelling) to understand how young learners perceive cultural inclusion.
- Create tools to evaluate cultural inclusiveness of early childhood curriculum and teaching practices.
- Analyze national or provincial early childhood education policies for cultural relevance and implementation gaps.

## Conclusion

This study concluded that parents of preschool children in private institutions overwhelmingly believe that existing early childhood curriculum lacks cultural relevance. They advocate for integration of local languages, religious practices, and familial traditions. Moreover, parents wish to participate in curriculum-related decisions but currently feel excluded from the process.

The data indicate a pressing need for culturally responsive education in early childhood settings. Without inclusive content, children may experience cultural dissonance. Similarly, parental engagement in schooling remains limited. Integrating home culture into the curriculum can enhance identity, promote inclusivity, and improve learning outcomes.

## Recommendations

- Include regional languages, folk stories, Islamic values, and festivals to reflect children's lived experiences.
- Introduce bilingual instruction in mother tongue as well as in Urdu to enhance comprehension and cultural preservation.
- At senior classes instructions in English may be introduced to enhance understanding.
- Create opportunities for parents to contribute to the curriculum through storytelling sessions, culture days, and shared planning.
- Offer professional development focused on diversity, inclusion, and anti-bias education.
- Engage policymakers to include cultural responsiveness in national curriculum frameworks.

- Develop storybooks and visuals representing diverse cultural symbols, languages, and traditions.
- Establish consistent two-way communication between schools and families to align expectations and share feedback.

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