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Producing Global Locality among Elite Female Students: A Constructivist Grounded Theory of Global Citizenship Education in Pakistan

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Abstract: This study examines how Global Citizenship Education in elite schools in Punjab, Pakistan, creates locality as an exclusive social formation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using Constructivist Grounded Theory and held on Zoom, with 30 female participants. Theoretical analysis identified three theoretical perspectives: Crafting Distinction through Global Pedagogies, Negotiating Bounded Cosmopolitanism, and Sustaining Elite Locality through Educational Capital. The results indicate that GCE is not a universalising project but a context-generative process that creates a particular kind of local subject, the elite Pakistani, who is both global and simultaneously very different from non-elite local audiences. This process leads to what Appadurai refers to as a privileged neighbourhood, which depends on global discourses to uphold local hierarchies. From a theoretical perspective, it can be deduced that citizenship education under elite conditions serves as a form of boundary-making labour that is effective in creating exclusive kinds of locality in the name of global inclusivity.

Keywords: Global Citizenship Education, Constructivist Grounded Theory, Elite Schools, Production of Locality, Punjab, Pakistan, Privileged Subjectivity, Educational Capital

Introduction

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has become a revolutionary pedagogical system in schools worldwide, placing students as part of an extended global community and developing the skills necessary to respond to transnational issues (Andreotti, 2014; Oxley & Morris, 2013). GCE has been supported by international organisations as a tool for promoting peace, human rights, and sustainable development in various educational settings (UNESCO, 2015). The incorporation of GCE in institutions of higher learning in the context of postcolonial cultural space, especially South Asia, is framed as the result of a complex interaction between the issues of building national identities, the long-term ramifications of colonialism, and the desire to become a part of the global community (Pashby et al., 2020).

The elite schools of Pakistan, which also exist in a stratified educational environment, have grown to be a way of academic excellence and social separation, as well as setting the bench of global citizenship (Dean, 2005, 2008). These schools cater mostly to the upper and upper-middle classes and offer international curricula, such as Cambridge and International Baccalaureate curricula, that offer unique international educational and professional opportunities (Muhammad, Qureshi, & Farooq, 2025; Muhammad, Qureshi, & Rauf, 2025; Rauf & Muhammad, 2025). They tend to have a rather complex landscape to navigate because the female students in the said spaces are both placed in the role of future bearers of the national culture and as citizens capable of travelling the world for career-related reasons.

Although considerable research has been dedicated to the theoretical frameworks, pedagogical practices, and outcomes of GCE (Goren & Yemini, 2017), critical gaps in the comprehension of the functioning

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of GCE in elite educational settings in the Global South remain. Previous studies have largely been engaged in the conceptualised GCE as a form of universalising project that crosses the boundaries of location, but have reached minimal focus on research in which discourses of global citizenship widely generate certain forms of locality and local privilege (Andreotti, 2014). Scholars have observed the links between cosmopolitanism and inequalities that have continued in postcolonial societies (Rizvi, 2009), but little has been done to understand how elite institutions adopt global pedagogies to build identities that are specifically local and class-based. In addition, although feminist scholarship has been used to discuss how gender constructs citizenship education in Muslim-majority settings (Muhammad, Qureshi, & Urooj, 2025; Naseem, 2006; Naseem, 2004), there is less literature on how elite female students negotiate and construct the meaning of global citizenship in their specific socio-spatial neighbourhoods. What practices do such young women involve themselves in as they come to terms with the rhetoric of global citizenship by being universalised and at the same time embedded in very localised networks of privilege, familial necessity, and cultural imperative?

This study attempts to fill these gaps by addressing the following research question: How do elite female students in Punjab, Pakistan negotiate and construct the meaning of global citizenship in their educational settings? It examines the following sub-research questions: (1) What do the participants do and experience while trying to make sense of GCE in their lived reality? (2) What are the mechanisms behind such processes that create certain types of localities that make elite and non-elite educational experiences different? (3) How are global pedagogical discourses related to the generation of privileged, local subjectivities?

This study theorises GCE as a locality-producing process instead of a deterritorialising act by basing the proposed concept on the concept of "production of locality" developed by Appadurai (1996), where neighbourhoods are produced in the form of lived social forms. The Constructivist Grounded Theory approach was used in the study (Charmaz, 2024) to construct a theory based on the experiences of the participants, while providing an understanding that the nature of data and analysis is produced by the interactions.

Next, the paper reviews pertinent literature on GCE, elite schooling, and locality production, and expounds on the methodology, presentation of emergent theoretical categories, and implications that elaborate on the understanding of citizenship education as work of making boundaries in stratified postcolonial spaces.

Literature Review

Global Citizenship Education: Frameworks and Contestations

GCE is seen as comprising various pedagogical orientations, including neoliberal orientations that emphasise global economic competitiveness and critical approaches to social justice and structural inequality (Bosio & Schattle, 2021; Pais & Costa, 2020; Shultz, 2007). Oxley and Morris (2013) point out that conceptual multiplicity in the discourse of GCE is present, since they designate eight different conceptions of global citizenship in their cosmopolitan, advocacy, critical, and environmental dimensions of it. The UNESCO framework focuses on cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural levels to foster learners' ability to respond to global issues responsibly (UNESCO, 2015).

However, critical scholars believe that mainstream GCE tends to reproduce colonial knowledge structures and strengthen Global North epistemologies to the detriment of Indigenous and local knowledge (Pashby et al., 2020). Andreotti (2014) differentiates between soft GCE, which is concerned with empathy, charity, and individual responsibility, and critical GCE, which questions the system of power, privilege, and systemic inequalities in society that generate global issues. This difference is especially relevant in elite educational settings, where soft approaches to GCE can almost involuntarily support the privilege of classes by casting students as benefactors rather than participants in systemic injustices (Sant et al., 2018).

Elite Schooling and Social Reproduction in Pakistan

The Pakistani educational system is highly stratified, as elite English-medium schools are pivotal in reproducing class privilege and transnational mobility (Rahman, 2004). These schools, which usually run Cambridge or International Baccalaureate programmes, are seen as producers of cultural capital, where mastery of English, knowledge regimes of the West, and cosmopolitan dispositions are used as markers of status (Pierre & Richardson, 1986). Studies show that in Pakistan, elite schools form parallel worlds that exist outside government schooling systems, creating social distance between classes (Khokhar & Muhammad, 2022).

Elite female education is an even more complicated phenomenon since families must negotiate between the need to attain modern educational qualifications that secure an elite marriage market and the responsibility to preserve cultural authenticity and moral propriety (Bokhari et al., 2025; Daraz et al., 2023; Saher et al., 2025). In Punjab, which is the richest and politically strongest province, elite schools are concentrated in urban centres such as Lahore, where they are valued by serving families with transnational affiliation, professional aspirations, or investment in reproduced intergenerational privilege. Although there is a rhetoric of excellence and merit, institutions are entrusted as gatekeepers to naturalise inequalities as well as offer symbolic and material resources to uphold social boundaries (Malik, 2012; Sajid et al., 2024).

Locality, Globalisation and Educational Contexts

Appadurai's (1996) theorisation by of locality as primarily relational and situational, not scalar or spatial, provides generative possibilities for describing how educational institutions give rise to particular kinds of social life. Locality does not occur as a pre-determined setting, but rather as a deliberate practice that creates so-called neighbourhoods as actual social entities that reflect specific values, relations, and meanings. Locality production involves the ongoing struggle against its possible dissolution, to which both material (spatial organisation, ritual activities) and discursive (categorisation, boundary-making) work can be applied, creating local subjects with the capability of reproducing the neighbourhood (Appadurai, 1996). In modern times, characterised by the transnational migration of media, capital, and people, local production would be more complicated as neighbourhoods would need to establish themselves relative to the rest of the world in ethnoscapes (Appadurai, 2004).

Educational institutions are important local production sites, as they socialise students into certain ways of being, knowing, and relating, which make them certain types of subjects. Elite schools are particularly noteworthy in this regard, as they might be referred to as the so-called production of privileged localities, suggesting an arbitrary space of bounded social worlds that make students appear both global and local in their respective class privileges (Mitchell, 2003). Elite educational spaces generate distinction by creating the subtle pedagogies of taste, comportment and aspiration that naturalise privilege as merit. In postcolonial scenarios, such a locality-making work becomes entangled with the historical processes of colonial education, according to which English-medium instruction and the Western curriculum have served to produce collaborative local elites (Abdi, 2020; Lahiri-Roy & Belford, 2021; Viswanathan, 2014).

Gender, Islam, and Citizenship in Pakistani Contexts

The Pakistani model of female citizenship exists within intersecting frameworks of national ideology, Islamic discourse, and patriarchal social relations, which position women as carriers of cultural authenticity and family honour (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1988). Particularly contradictory are the statuses of elite women, who need to attain educational qualifications and professional skills, preserve gendered decency, and meet the demands of the family.

Studies on elite female education show that by developing cases of "modern yet modest" subjectivities, schools can accommodate tensions between Western education forms and Islamic and Pakistani cultural values. The global citizenship discourse has entered this field as another scheme which also needs to be negotiated because universalistic statements regarding human rights, gender equality, and individual autonomy are met with a localised perspective on proper female behaviour, family duty, and religious affiliation (Khoja-Moolji, 2014).

Critical feminist scholarship cautions against interpreting elite Muslim women's participation in global discourses by using simplistic modernisation narratives. It is necessary to focus on how women actively participate in appropriating, challenging, and changing global and local structures in the creation of their subjectivity (Abu-Lughod, 2015). In the elite schools of Punjab, female students work through these mixed positionalities when pursuing GCE, moving across multiple and even conflicting demands in constructing meanings of citizenship, belonging, and aspirations.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses the Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) method introduced by Charmaz (2024) as a systematic way of creating theory through the use of qualitative data, including flexibility in interpretation and reflexive consciousness of the researcher's positionality. CGT supports the aims of this study to learn the processes through which elite female students formulate meanings of GCE because this approach prioritises actions, meanings, and social processes over static descriptions of experiences (Morse et al., 2021). In contrast to other grounded theory approaches based on objectivism, CGT recognises that a researcher actively constructs a theory when they are engaged in interpretation in relation to participants and data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019). The simultaneous data gathering and analysis nature of CGT allowed data to be refined repeatedly through interview question improvements and theoretical sampling choices grounded on emergent analytical insights.

Philosophical Paradigm

This study works under a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), according to which reality is socially constructed, and knowledge is formed when a researcher interacts with participants. Epistemologically, it assumes that the process of data collection and analysis occurs as a co-construction of the experiences and relations between the researcher and the participants, but it is not an objective fact that should be discovered (Charmaz, 2024). The responses in interviews are not the unmediated experience of the participants, but narratives created in particular interactional situations, which can be characterised by rapport, power, and purposeful situations.

CGT ontologically presupposes the presence of multiple realities and a world of the obstinate and continuously evolving situation, when the actions of people influence local contexts but are limited by material and social frameworks (Charmaz, 2024). Hence, the information provided by the participants is taken as one that shows how participants actively build meanings and negotiate their educational worlds, in that the consequent theory is one of various other possible ways of approaching GCE in elite schools and not an absolute truth(Charmaz, 2024).

Participants and Sampling

The first step in purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) was identifying the participants who are eligible as per the careful selection criteria: (1) female students or recent graduates of elite English-medium schools in Punjab, exposed to GCE, enrolled in a school curriculum or co-curricular activities or the institutional culture; (2) willingness to share the experience of being to discuss educational experiences via Zoom interview. The exclusion criteria were attendance at government schools or non-elite private institutions that did not offer

international curricula. Initially, educational networks and snowball recruiting brought 20 participants aged 16-25 years in education who attended elite educational institutions in Lahore, Islamabad, and other Punjab metropolitan areas.

Based on CGT principles, theoretical sampling was used to narrow recruitment in favour of theoretical categories, namely, finding participants with diverse experiences of international travel, transnational family ties, and occupational involvement in social services to saturate theoretical categories on boundary-making and privilege negotiation. The participants were families that were represented by the upper and upper-middle classes, whose parents had professional occupations (doctors, lawyers, business owners, military officers) and had access to international media, opportunities to learn English, and transnational mobility at home.

Data Collection

Data were collected through intensive interviews (Charmaz, 2024), focusing on open-ended questions, active listening, and following participants' leads to develop meanings and actions. Zoom interviews were semi-structured and addressed the participants' experiences with GCE, their views on citizenship and belonging, their opinions about how their schools teach them, how they negotiate their local and global identities, and their aspirations.

The geographic spread required the virtual format, ensuring access to participants throughout Punjab metropolitan areas with the introduction of technological access and privacy aspects, as well as the development and building of rapport in online environments (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The first questions of the interview were general questions (asked about their school, what it means to be a global citizen), and the following ones were about the language and ideas of specific participants. Later interviews based on the emerging analysis posed narrower questions of theoretical categories as the processes of differentiating between elite and non-elite education or negotiating familial and community norms on gendered behaviour. All interviews were recorded, transcribed professionally, and reviewed for accuracy.

Data Analysis Procedures

The structure of the analysis was based on the CGT analytical sequence offered by Charmaz (2024). Preliminary coding was done line-by-line with the help of initial transcripts and using gerunds to connote action and process (e.g., distinguishing elite knowledge, performing global awareness, managing family expectations). This coding stayed close to the data and initiated conceptual abstraction. Significant initial codes were used to synthesise groups of data employing focused coding and comparing the incidents across and within transcripts in comparison to the constant comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

During the analysis, memo writing expanded on possible categories that emerged, defined their characteristics, described how the categories were related to each other, and raised analytical questions that informed the next phase of data collection. Theoretical sampling targeted new participants and topics of interviews to narrow down categories, including interviews with students who had little international travel experience, after we had identified that travel experiences influenced boundary constructions. Categorising and synthesising memos provided theoretical connections that showed how categories related to form a coherent theoretical framework. The analysis was repeated until theoretical saturation was attained, meaning that the data collection did not discover any new properties of the category (Charmaz, 2024).

Use of CAQDAS Software

NVivo 15 was used to facilitate the analysis of qualitative data. The software facilitated the initial and focused coding organisation, which made a systematic comparison of the coded parts across the transcripts and individuals. NVivo query features improved the constant comparative analysis methodology by locating all

cases of a given code for detailed analysis. Analytical memos were archived and sorted in the software, with the relationships between the memos and the pieces of data in place. The visual mapping tools developed a diagram of interactions between categories, facilitating theoretical incorporation. Although NVivo made it much easier to manage and retrieve data manually, the interpretive analysis was still a researcher-centred process, and the software did not influence or determine the analytical outcomes—it was merely an organisational tool (Bazeley & Jackson, 2019).

Trustworthiness and Rigour

Based on the criteria for assessing CGT studies developed by Charmaz (2024), credibility was ensured by maintaining long-term interaction with participants, contact with a substantial amount of data with 30 interviews, systematic comparison of cases, and logical links between data and theoretical categories. Novelty is evident in the originality of conceptualising GCE as locality-producing work instead of a deterritorialising force. The goal of resonance was sought through member checking using a purposely chosen cohort who confirmed that the resultant categories summarised the complicated nature of their lived experiences while revealing taken-for-granted assumptions about elite education previously. The study's usefulness is found in the fact that it contributes to the phenomenon of citizenship education functioning in stratified settings and provides educators and policymakers with interpretations that can be used to reconsider the GCE implementation process.

Ethical Considerations

This research study adhered to established ethical guidelines throughout its design and implementation. The informed consent process explained the emergent process of inquiry, which meant that the topics of the interviews could change during the analysis. The written consent forms included information on free participation, withdrawal, confidentiality, and data storage. Since the size of elite education communities in Punjab is small and identifiable, specific attention was paid to preserving anonymity, that is, participant numbers instead of pseudonyms, the elimination of concrete institutional names, and the aggregation of demographic information. Researcher reflexivity recognised the principles of power in the co-construction of data, especially in the academic practice of interviewing young women about their experiences of education and remained conscious of how participants can also perform particular identities in research encounters (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

Findings

It was found that there are three theories that explain the process of creating privileged locality in elite Pakistani schools and are interrelated: Crafting Distinction through Global Pedagogies, Negotiating Bounded Cosmopolitanism, and Sustaining Elite Locality through Educational Capital. These classifications indicate that instead of producing universal world citizens, GCE is a context-generative work that generates a particular elite Pakistani educational space, at once assuming that it is a global citizen, yet having strict local borders between elite and non-elite groups.

Crafting Distinction through Global Pedagogies
Performing Cosmopolitan Competence

The participants narrated how they actively developed what they called "global awareness" and "international perspectives" through curricular and co-curricular activities. These performances served not only as knowledge acquisition but also as distinction-making efforts that tagged elite educational spaces as qualitatively different from mainstream schools. One participant explained this as follows:

> *We do not just get to know Pakistan or Asia. We study global issues—climate change, human rights, and international relations. Our teachers always tell us that we need to think outside*

our borders, to see ourselves as a part of the bigger world. That is what makes our schooling extraordinary compared to normal schools. (Participant 7)

This transnational thinking took the form of embodied cultural capital, which manifested itself in classroom discussions where the participants were conversant with international affairs, English language media, and Western theoretical perspectives. The participants reported participating in Model United Nations, routine exchange programmes, and service projects that made them cosmopolitan participants, having been informed about information on global issues. Elite global pedagogy acquires its meaning in opposing itself with the so-called regular schools, which act as an external point of definition of a localised space in which the elite students of Pakistan exist simultaneously as both Pakistanis and transcended (through cosmopolitan education).

Naturalising Hierarchical Knowledge

The formation of this distinction entailed the subtle naturalisation of elite knowledge into the universally valuable and the implicit devaluing of knowledge related to non-elite localities. Participants talked about their programmes being called international standards and globally recognised by positioning Cambridge and IB qualifications as being objectively better than programmes that are cultural products with narrowly focused class interests:

The Cambridge system prepares you for anywhere on the earth. It is not restricted to Pakistan, as it is with the matriculation system. You learn how to think critically, analyse, and develop research skills as well, which are appreciated everywhere. This is why Cambridge students are favoured by the best universities; we are not only trained to local standards but also international standards. (Participant 14)

The discourse of this participant reveals how global pedagogies create a sense of locality by placing the local (matriculation system, government school) in a confined and restrictive manner, and elite education in a placeless and universalising manner. However, at the same time, this was also a globally oriented education that was highly localised in particular elite districts of Punjab and only accessible to families who had the economic and cultural capital to pay their school fees, English-language fluency, and cosmopolitan dispositions.

Boundary-Making through Service

Social service activities, which are the most prominent within elite schools' GCE programmes, are powerful boundary-making processes. Participants discussed going to low-income communities, teaching in government schools, and raising money on behalf of non-profit organisations. Instead of intersecting the borders of classes, such encounters may have solidified them by making elite students benefactors and non-elite populations as recipients.

We also conducted a donation exercise on behalf of a public school in an impoverished neighbourhood: Things, stuff, books, and uniforms. The children were thrilled by receiving the stuff. It opened my eyes to the fact that I am very lucky and have a lot of privilege. One should also contribute to the less fortunate. (Participant 23)

Although the participants tended to show actual empathy and awareness of privilege, the structural relationship did not change. Service also gave rise to locality by establishing two different neighbourhoods: the elite space of giving and the non-elite space of receiving, with boundaries being sustained in these very acts of crossing. GCE provided the vocabulary (privilege, giving back) that treated existing inequality and, at the same time, justified it as a basis for charities rather than a structural intervention.

Negotiating Bounded Cosmopolitanism

Managing Multiple Belongings

The participants had to deal with intricate work with multiple identities, negotiating between seemingly conflicting ideas of being Pakistani Muslims, Punjabi daughters, and global citizens. The bounded cosmopolitanism depicted by this negotiation was a form of belonging that asserted universal values, although specific cultural and religious obligations were maintained. One of the participants described this process sequentially as follows:

> *I am a Pakistani. Well, that is who I am: my religion, my culture, and my family. But, as a global citizen, I am also interested in people all around the world, I know other cultures, and I am capable of working in international environments. I do not have to choose between being Pakistani and global. I can be both. (Participant 11)*

This logic of both/and differs from the traditional cosmopolitan ideal of overcoming local attachments. Rather, the participants created a particularly elite sense of belonging that employed discourses of global citizenship to expand the possibility while retaining local moorings. The regular Pakistani was created as an implicit counterpoint, as someone who is presumably stuck in local thinking while elite students achieved synthesis.

Policing Boundaries of Appropriate Globality

Bounded cosmopolitanism necessitated the continual policing of boundaries to decide which global forces were to be regarded as sophisticated cosmopolitanism and which forces were threatening Westernisation. Participants talked about how they got around family and community scrutiny regarding outfits, conduct, and gender decency, saying they belonged to the globe:

> *I make daily decisions regarding what is acceptable and what crosses the line. I can talk about world politics, I am able to have friends outside my country over the Internet, and I can plan to study in a foreign country. But there are limits. I cannot dress too Western, challenge religious practices, or be career-oriented like the latter. Being a global citizen does not imply that one should abandon who they are. (Participant 18)*

Such a creation of a particular neighbourhood of elite Pakistani femininity differentiated the participants not only from non-elite local women (who were not educated in cosmopolitan institutions) but also from Western women (who did not possess adequate Muslim modesty). GCE offers means to build this distinct locality, which presents patterns of adapting to the opportunities of modernity and preserving the claims to cultural authenticity.

Strategically Deploying Global Discourse

The participants were found to exercise advanced strategic use of global citizenship discourse to justify aspirations that their family or community would otherwise not tolerate. International systems offer vocabularies that are acceptable for claiming mobility, career ambition, and freedom:

> *In discussing studying abroad, I also position myself as a global citizen, as I will gain international experience, which will lead to Pakistan's development. This is what I prefer to say instead of being blunt about needing to go abroad or being independent. My parents will also be able to support that notion because it is not about personal desire, but about assisting humanity, advancing the world, and not personal needs. (Participant 26)*

With this strategic work, we are able to see how GCE goes about creating a locality, which is non-universal deterritorialisation, and offers elite actors the means of discursive resources to manoeuvre their specific social worlds. The resultant neighbourhood is one where there is a meshwork of global rhetoric and local embeddedness, achieved through complex translational labour that participants continually perform.

Sustaining Elite Locality through Educational Capital

Securing Intergenerational Privilege

Students felt motivated to identify elite education as a strategy for gaining future status in Pakistani elite circles and international careers. GCE serves as high-status cultural capital that can be transformed into economic and social capital:

> *Cambridge students are famous for having advantages. Foreign universities are favoured, Pakistani universities give us more weight, and the international curriculum is recognised by employers. My education is not only about the process of learning but also about opening doors and creating opportunities that would not have been possible otherwise. It places me in a different position in society. (Participant 9)*

This awareness of the exchange value of educational capital proves the dynamism of the perpetuation of elite localities between generations. Parents invest substantial resources to create children who can reproduce elite status. GCE is involved in this reproduction because it offers credentials (Cambridge certificates, IB diplomas) as well as dispositions (cosmopolitan awareness, English fluency) that mark carriers as easily recognisable elite.

Constructing Transnational Belonging

The locality generated with elite GCE spans not only Pakistan but also transnational elite networks. Participants reported having more affinity with international elite counterparts than with non-elite Pakistanis:

> *Talking to friends from school or friends I met within the framework of international programs, we can understand each other even when they belong to absolutely different countries. We share our education, worldviews, and plans. I feel more comfortable around them than I do with relatives who attend Urdu-medium schools. We simply use different languages; we do not think alike. (Participant 16)*

This neighbourhood of transnational elites crosses national borders but is also circumscribed by class, which creates what Appadurai (1996) describes as an ethnoscape-a landscape of people making up the changing world of mobility and connection among elites. GCE generates this locality through the process of socialising students into a set of shared structures, values, and aspirations, which makes them members of a transnational elite class.

Gatekeeping Through Informal Credentials

Along with formal certificates, elite GCE resulted in informal credentials that are seen by individuals with advanced cultural competency. The participants described subtle indicators of elite education, including particular references, speaking styles, and cultural knowledge:

> *It takes minutes to know whether a person has attended an elite school after chatting with them. It is not just English fluency. It is the way they cite things, what they consider or believe to be common knowledge, and how they present themselves. We possess these shared markers that describe us to each other. It is almost like a code. (Participant 21)*

These informal qualifications served as potent gatekeeping systems that allowed the recognition of elites but could not be deciphered by outsiders. Elite education, therefore, acted in this sense according to what Bourdieu (2018) calls habitus, in the form of dispositions which naturalise social distance. GCE helped in bringing about this kind of habitus by promoting years of socialisation towards specific modes of knowing, speaking, and being.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The theoretical categories used in this study demonstrate the fact that GCE is a locality-producing work in elite Pakistani schools, but not a process of deterritorialising universalism. Based on the concept developed by Appadurai (1996), the results show that elite institutions deliberately engage in deliberate practices that create a specific neighbourhood, which is a bounded social world with cosmopolitan dispositions, transnational relations, and class privilege. This neighbourhood is not an alternative to locality but a specific type of locality that employs global discourses and pedagogies to generate distinctly local effects: The maintenance of boundaries between elite and non-elite groups, the establishment of intergenerational privilege, and the establishment of transnational class affiliations.

Crafting Distinction through Global Pedagogies demonstrates the way GCE works as what Appadurai calls "colonising" work, the claim to an organised power on the social space to create specific kinds of subjectivity. Elite schools colonise the definition of being a "global citizen" by imbuing it with class-specific meanings, skills, and dispositions that place elite students as inherently cosmopolitan and make the non-elite populations as bounded locals.

Negotiating Bounded Cosmopolitanism demonstrates a dialectical connection between locality as context and locality as production. The participants are placed within current contexts (Pakistani Muslim femininity, Punjabi family structures) and also create new contexts in the process of their strategic applications of the global discourse. This is in line with Appadurai's observation that "local subjects engage in the social activities of production, representation, and reproduction...they contribute...to the creation of contexts that might exceed the existing material and conceptual boundaries of the neighborhood" (1996, p. 185).

Sustaining Elite Locality by Educational Capital casts light on how neighbourhoods replicate themselves across time using processes that generate **"reliably local subjects"** (Appadurai, 1996, p. 181). Elite GCE serves as an initiation ritual, whereby specific dispositions are set upon the bodies and consciousness of students so that they can identify each other, and boundary adherence is maintained even while claiming universal belonging.

Relationship with the Existing Literature

These results not only expand but also challenge the existing literature on GCE in various aspects. Although critical GCE scholars have noted contradictions between cosmopolitan universalism and the persistent nature of inequalities (Andreotti, 2014), this paper defines how GCE has actively created inequality by doing locality-making work. The categories indicate that elite education does not merely fail to break privilege despite its well-meaning intent; rather, global pedagogies are technologies for maintaining privilege by positioning elite students as already-global subjects (Pashby et al., 2020).

The findings complicate scholarship on elite schooling in Pakistan (Muhammad, Qureshi, & Rauf, 2025; Rauf & Muhammad, 2025; Rauf et al., 2025), given the finding that elite reproduction is not done through closed boundary management but through sophisticated interactions with global discourses. The country is not in a state where Elite Pakistani students are torn between tradition and modernity (Nisar, 2025); they willingly create hybrid forms of locality, which are very strategic in their use of both global and local frameworks to the maximum benefit. This is consistent with postcolonial literature that focuses on agency and hybridity rather than victimisation narratives (Bhabha, 2012).

Regarding gender and citizenship, the research validates feminist findings that Pakistani elite women inhabit conflicting statuses where negotiation is a necessity to practice and discloses how GCE offers resources to do so (Emerson, 2018; Hanif, 2023; Zulfiqar & Kuskoff, 2024). Bounded cosmopolitanism emerges as a gendered strategy that allows young women to stake their claims to movement and ambition within

acceptable cultural structures. This adds to the warning of Abu-Lughod (2015) that reading the lives of women in the Middle East through Western feminist teleologies is to fall prey to the trap of simplifying complex phenomena like subjectivities and simplifying complex phenomena like tradition and modernity to a reduction of simple dichotomies.

The theoretical value that the Appadurai framework has contributed to is the fact that locality production does not diminish in the contemporary conditions of globalisation; on the contrary, global mechanisms intensify it. Elite schools operate specifically to create highly localised, limited localities through transnational curricula, international alliances, and global citizenship discourses. This implies that the "fragility" of locality that Appadurai stresses is not due to the deterritorialising powers of globalisation but rather to heightened competition over which localities, elite or non-elite, get resources and recognition.

Implications

This research contributes to the knowledge of how educational institutions are critical sites in the production of locality through contemporary global circumstances. It contests the radical simplification of globalisation-localisation binaries and shows the dialectic inter-penetration of globalisation and localisation. The concept of "privileged locality production" is introduced here, which provides a critical point of purchase to understand elite education around the world because Cosmopolitan or global education does not merely alienate students from their specific cultures and social situations. Instead, it is actively constituted and constituted reinventions of a specific type of locality that is exclusive and privileged.

Empirical evidence suggests that the adoption of GCE with no explicit view to the simultaneous presence of structural inequality can be used to privilege the position of the teacher and other actors in the policy-making process. The critical GCE frameworks should, thus, explicitly challenge how globalised educational paradigms can be manipulated by elite interests, and should create deliberate possibilities for the exploration of the positionalities of students in the local and global power formation. The GCE curriculum in very stratified settings like Pakistan should include a critical study of the educational injustices, thus questioning the role of access to so-called global education as a reproducer of class divisions.

Conclusion

This study explored the way GCE works in elite schools in Punjab, Pakistan, and found that instead of creating universal global citizens, GCE actually serves as a sophisticated locality-producing mechanism. Elite female students build a special neighbourhood with cosmopolitan dispositions through Crafting Distinction through Global Pedagogies, Negotiating Bounded Cosmopolitanism, and Sustaining Elite Locality through Educational Capital. However, they are limited by the privilege of their class. These results respond to the research questions by showing that participants engage in meaning-making work that reconciles global pedagogies with lived realities. This results in distinctive localities that amplify elite and non-elite educational experiences and create connections between global discourses and local privilege, perpetuating intergenerational inequality.

These findings hold theoretical significance in that they redefine GCE as an approach to actualising such situations as context-generative practice and generating specific social worlds. In this way, global frameworks are applied exactly in order to provide local differences within elite schools, showing that globalisation and localisation do not work as conflicting forces; rather, they are mutually constitutive. In postcolonial situations such as Pakistan, this brings to light the way international curricula perpetuate colonial forms of creating collaborative elites in the guise of progressive and inclusive aims. These categories that have emerged as a result of this Constructivist Grounded Theory analysis led us to the interpretation of GCE as a political work of drawing boundaries and maintaining privileges, rather than transmitting the values of cosmopolitanism.

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