

What Counts as Sociological Knowledge? Curricular Path Dependence in Undergraduate Sociology in Pakistan

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Abstract

Curricula are institutional maps of legitimate knowledge. They specify what a discipline regards as foundational, what it treats as peripheral, and what kinds of intellectual and practical capacities a graduate is expected to possess. This article examines the undergraduate sociology curriculum in Pakistan through a comparative content analysis of seven BS Sociology schemes in force between 2015 and 2022. The corpus comprises programmes at Government College University Faisalabad, Mirpur University of Science and Technology, University of Home Economics Lahore, University of Sargodha, University of Chitral, University of Sindh, and University of Jhang. Named disciplinary courses were normalized into comparable concepts and analysed through four measures: curricular similarity, methods depth, contemporary thematic breadth, and practice integration. The results show substantial path dependence. The strongest pairwise overlaps occur between GCUF and MUST (Jaccard = .78) and between MUST and Chitral (.75), while the mean similarity across all programme pairs is .52. A stable core of introductory sociology, anthropology, gender, population, health, social thought, development, and urban-rural sociology persists across institutions. At the same time, newer curricula selectively widen the discipline: methods depth reaches five of six dimensions at Sargodha, Sindh, and Jhang, while the University of Home Economics records the broadest contemporary thematic range. The most sociologically consequential pattern is compartmentalized indigenization. Every programme contains an explicitly Pakistani course, yet local knowledge is generally concentrated in one named curricular space instead of restructuring theory, method, or substantive sociology across the degree. The article argues that Pakistani undergraduate sociology by 2022 had become more methodologically plural and

professionally oriented without fully resolving the older question of epistemic location.

Keywords: sociology curriculum; sociology of knowledge; higher education; decolonizing sociology; curriculum analysis; Pakistan; social sciences

1. Introduction

What a university teaches as sociology is never a neutral inventory of topics. A curriculum is a settlement, sometimes temporary and sometimes remarkably durable, about what counts as the discipline, which problems deserve formal visibility, what sequence of knowledge appears pedagogically sensible, and which intellectual traditions become prerequisites for speaking with sociological authority. This makes curriculum an unusually revealing object for sociology itself. It is administrative in form but epistemic in consequence. A course list can appear mundane, yet its repetitions, omissions, sequencing rules, elective spaces, research requirements, and local or global references expose how a discipline imagines its own boundaries.

This question is especially consequential in Pakistan. Sociology has been institutionally present for decades, but assessments of the discipline have repeatedly described an uneasy combination of expansion, weak research cultures, dependence on imported intellectual material, limited professional recognition, and difficulty converting sociological knowledge into sustained public influence (Hafeez, 2005; Inayatullah, Saigol, & Tahir, 2005; Shah, Qureshi, & Abdul-Ghaffar, 2005; Zaidi, 2003). Expansion has nevertheless been substantial. Social-science programmes spread across public universities, new BS programmes appeared beyond the older metropolitan departments, and four-year undergraduate structures became a principal mechanism through which students encountered sociology as a complete disciplinary formation rather than as an elective subject (Haider & Ali, 2015).

A curious problem follows. Institutional expansion does not necessarily produce intellectual diversification. Curricula can travel more easily than intellectual traditions. Once a national template establishes an accepted sequence of introduction, theory, research methods, population, rural and urban sociology, development, health, education, religion, and community studies, later programmes can reproduce this architecture with only modest modification. Standardization is not inherently problematic. A discipline requires shared language and cumulative learning. Yet excessive curricular inheritance can transform historically contingent selections into self-evident necessities. The result is path dependence: universities differ institutionally while teaching versions of a common inherited map. Path dependence here does not imply mechanical repetition. It describes a process in which earlier institutional choices alter the cost and plausibility of later alternatives. Once course titles, credit structures, staffing expectations, textbooks, examination routines, and approval conventions become aligned around an established model, curricular revision occurs on an already structured terrain (Mahoney, 2000). New departments have especially strong incentives to borrow recognizable disciplinary packages because borrowed structures are easier to legitimate than radically reconstructed ones. Over time, resemblance can arise through professional norms, regulatory expectations, imitation under uncertainty, and shared resource constraints, mechanisms close to what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe as institutional isomorphism. The empirical question, then, is not whether Pakistani programmes are identical. They are not. It is whether variation occurs inside a durable common grammar, and whether innovations recompose that grammar or merely attach additional courses to it.

There is a second problem, one that sociology in the Global South cannot avoid. The discipline emerged through metropolitan knowledge formations and has long universalized theoretical categories developed from particular historical experiences (Alatas, 2006; Connell, 2007; Go, 2016). Calls for indigenous, connected, Southern, postcolonial, and decolonial sociologies are therefore partly curricular questions. They concern not only who is cited, but what social worlds organize concepts, which historical transformations are treated as theoretically generative, and whether local empirical material appears merely as an application of already established theory (Bhambra, 2014; Manathunga, 2018; Meghji, 2021; Santos, 2014). In this sense, a course called Pakistani

Society and Culture may increase local content while leaving the epistemic organization of the rest of the degree unchanged.

This article calls that arrangement compartmentalized indigenization. The concept refers to a curriculum in which national or indigenous knowledge is formally acknowledged but spatially enclosed within one or a small number of courses, while theory, method, and the major substantive domains continue to operate through a largely transferable disciplinary template. The issue is not whether a curriculum contains Pakistan. The issue is where Pakistan enters the production of sociological knowledge. If locality is taught mainly as an object of analysis after students have already acquired supposedly universal categories elsewhere, curricular localization remains additive rather than constitutive.

The article investigates this problem through seven BS Sociology programmes that were documented as operating between 2015 and 2022. It asks four questions. First, how similar are the conceptual structures of undergraduate sociology curricula across Pakistani universities? Second, how deeply do programmes institutionalize quantitative, qualitative, statistical, digital, and capstone research training? Third, how far have newer themes such as globalization, environment, human rights, peace and conflict, aging, family transformation, and digital methods entered the required curriculum? Fourth, does local sociological knowledge organize the curriculum or occupy a bounded compartment within it? The answers matter beyond curricular administration. They indicate what kind of sociologist the Pakistani university was attempting to produce at the end of 2022.

2. Curriculum as disciplinary knowledge architecture

The sociology of curriculum begins with a simple proposition: educational knowledge is selected. The question is who selects it, how selections acquire legitimacy, and how boundaries between valid and less-valid knowledge become institutionalized. Young's (1971) sociology of educational knowledge redirected attention from curriculum as a technical vehicle to curriculum as socially organized classification. Bernstein (2000) later showed how classification and framing regulate relations between categories of knowledge, pedagogic actors, and forms of control. Apple (2004) similarly treated curriculum as a politics of official knowledge. These approaches differ, but each makes omission analytically

meaningful. A curriculum is partly constituted by what it makes difficult to see.

Bourdieu's work adds the disciplinary field. Academic institutions do not merely transmit knowledge; they reproduce hierarchies of intellectual legitimacy and convert historically accumulated authority into curricular common sense (Bourdieu, 1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Courses labelled classical theory illustrate the mechanism. Marx, Durkheim, and Weber are indispensable because sociology has organized them as canonical founders, not because the discipline can demonstrate that no other intellectual lineages could have supplied concepts of social order, power, economy, religion, colonial rule, or historical change. Canon formation is therefore simultaneously pedagogical and symbolic.

For undergraduate sociology, some standardization is desirable. Research on sociology majors has repeatedly emphasized cumulative sequencing, explicit research training, theoretical integration, substantive breadth, and capstone experiences (Kain, 2007; McKinney, Howery, Strand, Kain, & Berheide, 2004; Pike et al., 2017). Students benefit when courses connect rather than accumulate randomly. McKinney (2007) found that sociology majors themselves describe learning through connections among ideas, courses, experiences, and the discipline. Persell (2010) likewise identified structural explanation, inequality, contextualization, empirical reasoning, and comparative understanding among the most valued goals of introductory sociology. The problem, then, is not the existence of a core. It is the sociological content of the core and the degree to which it remains responsive to changing social realities.

Curricular redesign research shows how difficult such responsiveness can be. Departmental curricula accumulate faculty interests, inherited requirements, staffing constraints, accreditation expectations, and administrative routines. Even when departments agree that programmes need revision, change is negotiated through existing course ownership and institutional structures (Downey et al., 2019). Curricular path dependence should therefore be expected. The useful question is not whether two universities share Introduction to Sociology, but whether similarities extend deeply enough to reproduce an inherited architecture across different institutional settings.

Globalization intensified another demand. Sociology students increasingly need to connect local institutions with transnational processes, while a curriculum limited to nation-centred examples can obscure relations of migration, global production, finance, media, environmental risk, and knowledge itself

(Giuffre & Sweet, 2017; Sohoni & Petrovic, 2010). Yet merely adding Sociology of Globalization does not necessarily globalize sociology. A programme may attach one global course to a nationally bounded curriculum just as it may attach one Pakistani course to a metropolitan theoretical structure. The curricular location of a topic matters as much as its presence.

The critique from Southern sociology goes further. Connell (2007) argues that metropolitan general theory often converts social experience from the global North into universal explanation while treating the majority world as data, difference, or application. Alatas (2006) describes intellectual dependence as a structure in which concepts, problem selection, theoretical standards, and scholarly prestige flow asymmetrically. Bhambra's (2014) connected sociology contests narratives that isolate European modernity from colonial and global relations, while Go (2016) shows how postcolonial thought can alter social theory rather than merely supplement it. Decolonizing the curriculum, in this literature, cannot be reduced to replacing one reading list with another. It requires attention to the geography of concept production and to the authority through which some histories become theory while others remain cases (Manathunga, 2018; Meghji, 2021).

Pakistani sociology has confronted related questions for a long time. Earlier evaluations identified shortages of locally grounded texts, limited research infrastructure, weak professional organization, and a tendency to rely on textbook sociology developed elsewhere (Hafeez, 2005; Shah et al., 2005). Zaidi's (2003) edited assessment of the social sciences was particularly critical of institutional weakness and the limited cumulative development of several disciplines. Inayatullah et al. (2005) subsequently assembled discipline-specific profiles that documented both expansion and uneven intellectual development. These concerns remain relevant to curriculum because a department with limited faculty specialization or locally produced teaching material may rationally adopt a stable national template. Repetition can be a response to scarcity as much as an expression of epistemic dependence.

There is also evidence of increased research production. Bibliometric work on Pakistan shows growth across social-science fields during the 2009-2018 period, though disciplinary capacity and international visibility remain uneven (Missen et al., 2020). Waheed's (2020) analysis of knowledge production about Pakistan demonstrates a related problem from another direction: representations of Pakistan are shaped within institutional geographies of

expertise, particularly area studies. Curriculum stands at the other end of that process. It determines how future sociologists inside Pakistan are introduced to the categories through which their own society becomes knowable.

3. Data and method

The study uses comparative document analysis and quantitative content analysis. Documents are appropriate data when institutional rules, classifications, and official representations are themselves the phenomenon of interest (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2003). The corpus consists of seven publicly available BS Sociology schemes of study that were identifiable as operating no later than December 2022:

Government College University Faisalabad, 2015 and onward; Mirpur University of Science and Technology, scheme effective from 2019; University of Home Economics Lahore, scheme dated 2020; University of Sargodha, revised scheme approved in 2020; University of Chitral, 2021; University of Sindh, undergraduate prospectus 2022; and University of Jhang, prospectus 2022 (GCUF, 2015; MUST, 2019; UHE, 2020; University of Sargodha, 2020; University of Chitral, 2021; University of Sindh, 2022; University of Jhang, 2022). The cases are not claimed as a census of Pakistani sociology departments. They form a purposive comparative corpus spanning older and newer public institutions, different provinces or regions, and several curricular generations.

Table 1. Comparative curricular corpus

Institution	Effective year	Document	Named analytical units	Capstone/practice
GCUF	2015	Scheme of studies	28	Research project/internship
MUST	2019	Scheme effective from 2019	28	Research project + internship
UHE Lahore	2020	Scheme of studies	34	Thesis option
University of Sargodha	2020	Revised scheme	25	Thesis + internship
University of Chitral	2021	Scheme of studies	27	Research thesis + internship
University of Sindh	2022	Undergraduate prospectus	25	Research thesis + internship
University of Jhang	2022	Prospectus	35	Thesis + internship

The unit of analysis is the named curricular course. Purely university-wide compulsory courses such as English, Islamic Studies, Pakistan Studies, general mathematics, and generic computer literacy were excluded from substantive comparison unless they directly constituted sociological research or data training. Named disciplinary, foundation, major, and clearly sociology-adjacent courses were retained. Unspecified electives such as Elective I were not counted because their content was unknown. Where the same thesis or research project appeared across two semesters, it was retained as a curricular requirement but collapsed into one concept for similarity analysis. This produced between 25 and 35 named analytical units per programme, with a mean of 28.9.

Course titles were normalized before comparison. General Sociology I and Introduction to Sociology were coded as the same concept; Population Studies and Demography were treated as one domain; Sociology of Health, Sociology of Health and

Medicine, and Sociology of Health and Illness were standardized as health sociology. Equivalent normalization was applied to community development, social change, research methods, theory, anthropology, rural and urban sociology, globalization, religion, and capstone work. The procedure follows the logic of manifest content analysis, in which explicit textual categories are coded through a documented rule rather than inferred from presumed classroom practice (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017; Schreier, 2012).

Four measures were constructed. Curricular similarity was measured with the Jaccard coefficient, the size of the intersection between two programmes' normalized concept sets divided by the size of their union. The coefficient ranges from zero, no shared concepts, to one, identical concept sets. Methods Depth is a six-point presence score: general research methods, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, statistics, software or digitally mediated data collection, and thesis or research capstone. Contemporary Breadth is

an eight-point presence score covering gender, globalization, environmental sociology, human rights, peace and conflict, aging or emotions, family or kinship transformation, and digital or software-based methods. Practice Integration is a five-point score indicating internship, thesis or research project, project planning, NGO or community-development training, and entrepreneurship, human-resource, or organizational practice.

A fifth analytic dimension, explicit localization, was deliberately kept simple. A course was classified as explicitly localized only when its title directly identified Pakistan, Pakistani society, or an explicitly indigenous or Islamic sociological frame. Rural sociology or community development were not automatically coded as local because these fields can be taught with little reference to Pakistani scholarship. This conservative rule matters. The article does not infer epistemic localization merely because a course could be locally applied.

The analysis has clear limits. Course titles cannot reveal what an individual teacher actually assigns, whether a class engages Ibn Khaldun, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ali Shariati, Syed Hussein Alatas, local ethnographies, feminist scholarship, or district-level empirical work. Nor can a scheme of studies show pedagogy, assessment quality, classroom language, or students' experience. The findings therefore concern institutionalized curricular architecture, not enacted teaching. That limitation is analytically productive: the study asks what universities formally guarantee a sociology graduate will encounter, regardless of the additional intellectual richness a particular instructor may provide.

A further precaution concerns asymmetry in documentary detail. Some universities publish complete course inventories, whereas others make

only the formal semester structure readily visible. Elective pools were therefore recorded when identifiable but were not allowed to inflate the core comparative indices, since an optional course available to a minority of students is not equivalent to a required component experienced by every major. The coding also distinguished generic computing from sociological digital methods. A compulsory computer-literacy course was excluded unless software or web-based data collection was explicitly tied to social research. These conservative decisions may understate innovation, but they reduce the opposite error of attributing methodological or thematic commitments to programmes that the formal scheme does not guarantee. The study is consequently a comparison of minimum institutional promises: the disciplinary knowledge architecture that a student could reasonably expect to encounter by virtue of being enrolled in the programme, independent of individual teacher initiative.

4. Results

The seven curricula share a recognizable disciplinary skeleton. Introduction to Sociology, anthropology, gender, population or demography, and health sociology appear in all seven normalized concept sets. Social thought appears in six programmes; urban sociology, criminology, internship, an explicitly Pakistan-focused course, development sociology, globalization, community development, and thesis or research-project work also appear in six. Rural sociology, sociology of education, religion, project planning, social psychology, statistics or data training, and social change appear in at least five. The pattern is not random convergence. It is a stable architecture of what undergraduate sociology is expected to contain.

Table 2. Prevalence of selected curricular concepts across seven programmes

Curricular concept	Programmes (n)	Percent
Introduction to sociology	7	100.0
Anthropology	7	100.0
Gender	7	100.0
Population/demography	7	100.0
Health sociology	7	100.0
Explicit Pakistan-focused course	7	100.0
Globalization	6	85.7
Criminology	6	85.7
Development sociology	6	85.7

Curricular concept	Programmes (n)	Percent
Community development	6	85.7
Environmental sociology	2	28.6
Human rights	2	28.6
Peace/conflict	2	28.6
Explicit digital research software/method	2	28.6

Pairwise similarity confirms the strength of curricular inheritance. Across the 21 programme pairs, the mean Jaccard similarity is .52 and the median is .49. The strongest overlap is between GCUF 2015 and MUST 2019 at .78, followed by MUST 2019 and Chitral 2021 at .75. MUST and Sindh also share a high proportion of normalized concepts at .68. These values are

notable because the universities differ in location and institutional history. The older GCUF scheme and the later MUST and Chitral programmes reproduce much of the same sequence of foundation, theory, methods, development, community, population, rural-urban, health, education, religion, and globalization courses.

Table 3. Selected pairwise Jaccard similarities after course-title normalization

Programme pair	Jaccard	Interpretation
GCUF-MUST	.78	Highest overlap
MUST-Chitral	.75	High overlap
MUST-Sindh	.68	High overlap
Chitral-Sindh	.66	High overlap
GCUF-Sindh	.62	Moderately high overlap
UHE-Sindh	.33	Lowest overlap
GCUF-UHE	.36	Low overlap

The lowest similarities involve the University of Home Economics. Its overlap with Sindh is .33 and with GCUF .36. This does not mean UHE lacks a disciplinary core. It retains introduction, theory, anthropology, Pakistani society, gender, health, population, religion, globalization, and research. Its difference comes from curricular expansion into environmental sociology, marriage and family relations, aging, clinical sociology, political sociology, peace and conflict, law and human rights, economics and workforce, emotions, and qualitative research. The programme broadens sociology through topics that are absent from several template-conservative schemes.

Methods training shows a different pattern from thematic breadth. The Methods Depth score ranges from two to five of six dimensions, with a mean of 3.86. Sargodha, Sindh, and Jhang each reach five dimensions. Sargodha combines research methods, two social-statistics components, qualitative research, SPSS, and a thesis. Sindh combines introduction to social research, social statistics, quantitative methodology, qualitative methodology, and a thesis. Jhang includes social statistics, quantitative research methods, qualitative research, Web Survey and SPSS, and a thesis. These are meaningful departures from a curriculum in which research methods is represented by one generic course.

Table 4. Methods, contemporary breadth, and practice integration scores

Programme	Methods depth (0-6)	Contemporary breadth (0-8)	Practice integration (0-5)
GCUF 2015	3	2	4
MUST 2019	2	2	4
UHE 2020	3	7	3
Sargodha 2020	5	3	3
Chitral 2021	4	4	4
Sindh 2022	5	2	5
Jhang 2022	5	5	5

MUST receives the lowest Methods Depth score, two, because its required architecture contains Social Research Methods I and II plus a research project but does not separately guarantee quantitative, qualitative, statistical, or software training by title. GCUF reaches three dimensions through research methodology, research design and sociometry, statistics, and research-project or internship work. Chitral reaches four through introductory research, explicit quantitative and qualitative methodology, and a thesis. The pattern suggests that methodological modernization was occurring unevenly by 2022. Newer dates do not produce a perfectly linear sequence, but the presence of separate qualitative and quantitative courses becomes more common in later programmes.

Contemporary thematic breadth is even more uneven. Gender is universal, which is significant given the field's historical marginality in many classical curricula. Globalization appears in six of seven programmes. Beyond these two domains, diffusion is limited. Environmental sociology is required in only two programmes, UHE and Jhang. Human rights is explicitly required in two, UHE and Chitral. Peace and conflict appears in two, UHE and Sargodha. Aging or emotions is present in two, principally UHE and Chitral. Family or kinship sociology appears as a required named course in UHE and Jhang. Explicit digital or software-based sociological method appears in Sargodha and Jhang. The result is a curriculum that has absorbed globalization and gender much more completely than climate, rights, digital society, migration, or newer forms of inequality.

The University of Home Economics records the highest Contemporary Breadth score, seven of eight dimensions, followed by Jhang with five and Chitral with four. GCUF and MUST each score two. This

difference is important because it demonstrates that curricular path dependence is not absolute. Departments can reinterpret the BS structure by widening the substantive definition of sociology. Yet thematic innovation does not necessarily correspond to stronger methods. UHE's contemporary breadth is high while its Methods Depth score is three. Conversely, Sindh combines strong methods depth with a narrower contemporary breadth score of two. Curricular modernization therefore has at least two independent axes: how sociology researches, and what sociology regards as a contemporary object.

Practice integration is relatively strong across the corpus. Scores range from three to five, averaging four. Sindh and Jhang reach five dimensions, combining capstone work, internship, project planning, community or NGO-oriented material, and organizational or entrepreneurial preparation. GCUF, MUST, and Chitral score four. Even programmes with conventional substantive structures thus contain an applied orientation. This is consistent with the long association of Pakistani sociology with community development, planning, rural change, population, welfare, and NGO-sector employment. The curricular sociologist is not imagined only as a theorist. The degree repeatedly anticipates project work, organizational settings, field engagement, or development practice.

The most revealing result concerns localization. Every programme contains one clearly Pakistan-focused required course or its close equivalent. GCUF, MUST, UHE, Sargodha, Chitral, and Sindh use Pakistani Society and Culture or Pakistan Society and Culture. Jhang places Social Problems of Pakistan in the first semester. At first sight, this is strong evidence of national contextualization. The comparative structure suggests something more complicated. Explicit

locality is highly standardized and remarkably bounded. Pakistan is usually one course among a much larger sequence whose foundational categories are Introduction to Sociology, Social Thought, Sociological Theory, Anthropology, Research Methods, Social Psychology, Development, Population, Rural and Urban Sociology, Health, Education, Religion, and Globalization.

This pattern is what the article terms compartmentalized indigenization. The local is guaranteed, but it is guaranteed in a compartment. A student can complete classical or contemporary theory without the scheme itself requiring a Pakistani or South Asian theoretical tradition. Research-methods titles rarely signal indigenous methodology or locally grounded epistemology. Courses on development, urbanization, health, religion, or gender can obviously be taught through Pakistan, yet the formal architecture does not require that localization. The curriculum therefore acknowledges Pakistan as a substantive object while leaving the deeper organization of sociological universality largely untouched.

5. Discussion

The results complicate two easy interpretations. The first would describe Pakistani sociology as simply stagnant. That is inaccurate. Between the older and newer curricula, there is visible expansion in qualitative methods, software use, environmental sociology, human rights, peace and conflict, family, aging, emotions, entrepreneurship, and more explicit professional practice. Jhang's inclusion of Web Survey and SPSS is particularly notable because it shifts digitalization from a generic computer-literacy requirement into the research process itself. UHE's thematic range similarly shows that departmental context can generate a substantially different substantive profile.

The second easy interpretation would celebrate curricular localization because every programme contains Pakistani Society and Culture or an equivalent course. That conclusion is also insufficient. The location of local knowledge inside the curricular structure matters. Compartmentalized indigenization allows a programme to satisfy a national-context requirement while preserving a distinction between general sociological knowledge and Pakistani particularity. General theory remains general. Pakistan becomes the place where that theory is applied.

Connell's (2007) critique of Northern general theory is directly relevant. If knowledge produced from metropolitan histories becomes unmarked theory while knowledge from colonized or peripheral histories appears as area content, the curriculum reproduces a geography of abstraction. Alatas (2006) describes a similar problem as intellectual dependence: conceptual labour and theoretical authority are imported, while local scholarship supplies data or commentary. Pakistani sociology does not need to reject Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Goffman, Bourdieu, or Giddens to address this problem. A stronger curriculum would change the relations among traditions. It would ask, for example, how Ibn Khaldun, colonial land relations, biradari, agrarian transformation, military-bureaucratic institutions, migration to the Gulf, informal urbanization, religious movements, and postcolonial state formation can generate concepts rather than merely illustrate them.

This is not a call for epistemic nationalism. A curriculum organized only around Pakistan would be as limiting as one that treats European experience as universal. Bhambra's (2014) connected sociology is useful precisely because it resists both isolation and one-way diffusion. Pakistan's institutions have been constituted through colonial governance, global political economy, migration, development regimes, international security, media circuits, and transnational religious and educational networks. A localized sociology worthy of the name must therefore be relational. The curriculum needs to connect Pakistan to global processes while also recognizing South Asian and Muslim intellectual histories as sources of theoretical work.

The strong overlap among several programme pairs also deserves institutional interpretation. GCUF, MUST, Chitral, and Sindh do not merely share a few obvious introductory requirements. Their normalized course sets overlap across the middle and later years of the degree. This resembles curricular isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Once a national or sectoral model becomes legitimate, newer programmes have incentives to adopt recognizable titles because such titles reduce approval costs, simplify staffing, and signal compliance with disciplinary expectations. In resource-constrained departments, borrowing an accepted structure is rational. Curricular sameness can therefore emerge without direct coercion.

The cost is that course architecture may outlive the social conditions that originally justified it. Rural

Sociology remains widely required, which is defensible in a country where rural social organization remains consequential. Urban Sociology is similarly common. Yet by 2022 Pakistan was also experiencing platform-mediated work, algorithmic communication, climate vulnerability, mass higher education, new patterns of migration, digital political mobilization, and transformed gender publics. Environmental sociology appears in only two required schemes; explicitly digital sociological methods in two. Sociology of media is mainly elective where it appears. Migration is largely absent from the required corpus. The curricular problem is therefore not that older subfields have become irrelevant, but that the number of required hours is finite and every inherited requirement carries an opportunity cost.

Methods modernization offers the most encouraging counter-pattern. Separating qualitative from quantitative research creates intellectual space for students to understand methodological pluralism rather than treating research as a single procedural subject. Statistics and software courses make sociological claims more empirically accountable. Thesis and internship requirements connect formal knowledge to inquiry and practice. This accords with curriculum research that emphasizes cumulative research training rather than one isolated methods course (McKinney et al., 2004; Pike et al., 2017; Wilder, 2010). The next step would be integration. Methods should recur inside substantive courses so that students encounter demographic data in population sociology, interpretive work in religion, spatial data in urban sociology, and mixed evidence in development or health.

Professionalization also requires caution. NGO Management, Project Planning, Human Resource Management, community development, entrepreneurship, and internships can improve graduates' employability and make sociology publicly useful. Burawoy's (2005) formulation of professional, policy, public, and critical sociologies is instructive here. Professional and policy capacities are legitimate parts of disciplinary formation, but a sociology curriculum becomes thin if professionalization displaces critical analysis of the institutions in which graduates are expected to work. Teaching project management without teaching the sociology of development organizations, donor power, audit cultures, and policy knowledge would train functionaries more readily than sociologists.

The curriculum should therefore be understood as a knowledge ecology with competing demands. It must preserve disciplinary memory, teach theory, develop research competence, address national institutions, engage global transformations, and prepare students for work. No programme can maximize every dimension. The comparative results show that Pakistani universities were already making different trade-offs by 2022. UHE privileges thematic breadth. Sargodha and Sindh are stronger on methodological differentiation. Jhang combines methods, contemporary themes, and practice. GCUF and MUST preserve a highly recognizable traditional architecture. Chitral sits between inheritance and expansion.

One implication is practical. Reform should not begin by adding courses indefinitely. Course accumulation produces crowded degrees and superficial coverage. A more consequential strategy is curricular recomposition. Classical theory can be taught through connected histories rather than as an exclusively European origin story. Pakistani Society and Culture can be distributed across theory, methods, family, religion, stratification, urbanization, and development instead of functioning as the main container of locality. Globalization can enter rural sociology through migration and agrarian commodity chains, health through pharmaceutical and care systems, and gender through labour and digital publics. Environmental questions can be integrated into development and urban sociology. In this model, localization and globalization cease to be isolated subjects and become properties of sociological reasoning.

6. Conclusion

By the end of 2022, undergraduate sociology in the seven Pakistani programmes examined here displayed both continuity and selective reconstruction. A stable national disciplinary grammar was evident across institutions: introduction, theory, anthropology, population, health, development, gender, rural-urban sociology, research, and community-oriented practice. Pairwise concept overlap was substantial, with especially high similarity among several programmes that appear to reproduce a common curricular lineage. At the same time, newer schemes did not move in one direction. Some deepened methods, some widened contemporary subject matter, and some strengthened professional practice.

The central problem is epistemic rather than chronological. Pakistani content is not absent. It is

institutionally present in every programme. Its usual form, however, is compartmentalized indigenization: Pakistan appears as a named object within a curriculum whose general categories remain elsewhere. That arrangement is administratively tidy and intellectually limiting. It permits local relevance without requiring the discipline to ask whether Pakistani and South Asian histories should alter what counts as general sociology.

A stronger undergraduate curriculum would therefore resist two temptations. One is endless course addition, in which every emerging issue becomes another three-credit subject. The other is symbolic decolonization, in which one local or Southern course is added while the architecture of theory and method remains unchanged. The more difficult task is to reorganize relations among courses so that local evidence can generate concepts, global processes can be traced through Pakistani institutions, and research training becomes cumulative across the degree. Such a curriculum would still teach the canonical discipline. It would simply stop treating the canon as the only place from which sociological abstraction can begin.

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