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Collaborative Learning in Pakistani Teacher Education: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Peer Interactions in Citizenship Courses

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Abstract

This qualitative research examines experiences of pre-service teachers studying Citizenship Education Courses in a women's university and the meaning-making processes they experience as they work with each other during their learning. This study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to analyse the experiences, conception and sense-making across five pre-service teachers and their experiences in learning through peer interactions in the context of citizenship education. The activities that were decided to be the focus of the semi-structured interviews included the following: instructional activities, lesson planning, microteaching activities, presentation activities, and classroom observation, as well as the specifics of the collaboration by the participants. The review revealed three Group Experiential Themes, namely, navigating the dynamics of relational spaces in collaboration, transformative meaning-making peer dialogue and the embodied growth of pedagogical identity. According to the participants, collaborative learning was the place of vulnerability, as well as development, where disagreements acted as the engine of further knowledge and where peer comments were the mirror of self-reflection of a professional. The results shed light on the phenomenological nature of peer-mediated learning in which the cultural and institutional implications of learning influence the experiential environment of teacher learning. This research adds to the topic of the necessity to design citizenship education courses that consider the complexity of peer interactions and their contribution to the development of critically reflective teachers.

Key Words

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Peer Interactions, Collaborative Learning, Pre-Service Teachers, Citizenship Education, Pakistani Education, Teacher Identity

Introduction

Citizenship education contributes to democratic governance and social development by providing people with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable future generations to engage in active civic engagement (Banks, 2015). In the context of teacher education, pre-service programs have the task of not just imparting theoretical knowledge related to the concepts of citizenship but also developing the required pedagogical skills that can be used by teachers to impart the same concepts to various student groups in an effective manner (UNESCO, 2024). The key aspect of quality teacher education is the development of learning environments in which pre-service

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teachers have the opportunities to critically investigate, challenge, and internalise complex notions of citizenship beyond the surface level to a level of deep and nuanced concepts of democratic values, human rights, and social justice (Oxley & Morris, 2013).

In this situation, collaborative learning becomes especially important because, through interaction with peers, they gain enriching materials by sharing their perspectives, challenging their assumptions, and building knowledge collectively. These collaborative processes are particularly important when teacher educators teach pre-service teachers, because in this case, future professionals can acquire knowledge of content and the necessary collaboration skills (which will partially shape their professional practice in the future). Peers also provide warm and demanding settings in which pre-service teachers can explore instructional strategies, obtain constructive mentoring, and discuss teaching issues with their peers.

Although the importance of collaborative learning is widely acknowledged in the context of higher education, there has been little empirical investigation into the lived experiences of peer interactions in Pakistani citizenship education courses. The current research on citizenship education in Pakistan tends to focus on curriculum content or teaching methods at the expense of paying adequate attention to the experiential aspects of peer-mediated learning (Westheimer & Ladson-Billings, 2024). In addition, the specific cultural and institutional environment that forms peer relations in Pakistani teacher education programs, particularly in single-gender universities, demands more phenomenological research (Halai, 2024). The extent to which these contextual factors affect the collaborative learning experience of pre-service teachers and their emerging sense of citizenship education is an important knowledge gap.

This research study uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to understand the way in which the pre-service teachers who are taking the Citizenship Education courses experience and make sense of their peer relationships (Smith et al., 2021). This study highlights the nature of peer-mediated collaborative learning and the perceived impact of collaborative learning on the participants' development of concepts of citizenship within the environment of a specific cultural context, that is, a women's university in Pakistan. This study, thus, contributes to citizenship education literature in Pakistan by highlighting pre-service teachers' voices and subjective experiences, leading to the illumination of the phenomenological aspects of peer teaching in the setting of culturally situated teacher education.

Literature Review
Citizenship Education and Contemporary Pedagogical Approaches
Modern citizenship education has changed considerably, as it is no longer focused on the traditional delivery of facts about civics but rather on more active and critical methods (Aman-Hunzai et al., 2025). Instead of focusing on memorising the governmental system, contemporary scholarship suggests citizenship education, where critical thinking skills may be acquired so as to allow individuals to question and construct their social and political environments (Peterson et al., 2016). This development is a sign of a wider appreciation that good citizenship education needs to not only impart knowledge but also develop the dispositions and competencies that allow one to engage effectively in democratic processes (Veugelers, 2011).

The views of global citizenship have also broadened the context of citizenship education, whereby learners are urged to appreciate how they are all related to other people in various communities and to work together to solve transnational issues (Cooperation & Development, 2016). These changes in the field of teacher education require equipping pre-service teachers with pedagogical repertoires that lead to critical discourses, inclusive learning communities, and the desire to engage with civic issues (Cogan & Morris, 2001). In turn, culturally responsive pedagogy has become one of the most important, in which the integration of various points of view and

experiences is considered so that all students would feel represented and appreciated during citizenship education (Gay, 2018).

Collaborative Learning: Theoretical Foundations and Empirical Evidence

Collaborative learning, in which students cooperate to achieve common learning goals, has received much research interest regarding its ability to achieve better learning outcomes. According to sociocultural theories of learning, people need to socially interact to construct knowledge, which makes collaborative learning a process through which people engage in the joint construction of knowledge by paying attention to multiple views on a certain topic (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). These working conditions help students to experience a variety of opinions, question their assumptions, and come to more intricate and richer understandings than students do when they rely on internal needs.

Research has demonstrated that collaborative learning improves critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills (Slavin, 2014). However, the success of collaborative learning is conditional on several aspects, such as group composition, task type, and teaching scaffolds offered by the teachers. The establishment of inclusive classroom environments in which every learner is not afraid to share his or her ideas and actively engage in group work is one of the important preconditions for successful implementation. In addition, cooperative work with well-defined roles and expectations, which is usually structured, serves to encourage fairer participation compared to unstructured group work.

Peer Interactions and Their Impact on Learning

Peer interactions are a critical aspect of collaborative learning and provide students with a chance to learn with and without each other. Studies have shown that positive peer relationships can boost motivation, belonging, and academic performance (Wentzel, 2017). Peer interactions greatly determine the results of learning: positive, respectful peer interactions in the form of active listening and empathy create psychologically secure spaces where intellectually risky behaviour can be undertaken without fear, while competition and exclusion discourage learning and cause isolation.

Peer interaction dynamics are influenced by culture. Peer feedback fosters self-regulated learning, which encourages students to be metacognitive about the learning processes and transform their strategies (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Peer teaching also enhances understanding of content because one must explain the concepts to other people, thus consolidating and articulating his/her knowledge (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). In any learning setting, the use of discussion forums and collaborative projects can minimise feelings of isolation and promote engagement (Kreijns et al., 2003).

Peer Interactions in Teacher Education Contexts

The literature on teacher education underlines collaborative learning as a method to enhance the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions of pre-service teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It has been demonstrated that offering pre-service teachers a chance to meet and discuss their issues with colleagues, educators with long experience, and reflective practice is critical to achieving teaching competence and confidence (Zeichner & Liston, 2013). Peer coaching programs, in which pre-service teachers observe each other in teaching and offer positive feedback to each other, have been particularly effective in terms of developing self-efficacy and improving teaching practices.

Improved lesson planning or co-teaching also brings the same benefit to pre-service teachers to share knowledge and support innovative teaching methods. However, the majority of current studies have been

conducted under Western conditions, which do not provide an opportunity to generalise them to culturally diverse environments (Tabulawa, 2013). Specific barriers and opportunities for applying collaborative learning to Pakistani citizenship education courses have also been scantily explored, and this is a major gap in the literature that the present phenomenological study fills.

Research Methodology

Methodological Framework: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

This study uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is a qualitative method of research that focuses on the process through which individuals make sense of their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2021). IPA has its roots in both phenomenological philosophy, which attempts to learn the fundamental framework of the experience, and the theory of hermeneutics, which emphasises interpretations in meaning-making (Heidegger, 2010). The idiographic focus is a feature that defines IPA, as it does not aim to make generalisations across groups but concentrates on the experiences of specific individuals in more detail (Larkin et al., 2006). This design would be especially suitable for observing the contextualised, subtle experiences of pre-service teachers who experience collaborative learning in the citizenship education courses.

IPA includes double hermeneutic activities: participants gain meaning from their experiences, whereas researchers seek to gain meaning from the sense-making of participants (Smith & Nizza, 2022). According to this interpretative perspective, researchers inevitably bring their own views and preconceived ideas into the analytical process, but this necessitates reflexive awareness in data collection and analysis (Finlay, 2002). The research project currently follows the traditional principles of IPA, with the primary focus being placed on small samples, a close case-by-case analysis, and a profound understanding of the phenomenological experiences of participants (Reid et al., 2005).

Participants and Sampling

This study involved five pre-service teachers in a Bachelor of Education program in a Women University in Pakistan. A purposive sampling strategy was used to include participants who had a wide range of experiences in the program, if all of them had significantly participated in collaborative learning processes. The inclusion criteria were having completed citizenship education coursework and active engagement in shared pedagogy, that is, lesson planning, as well as microteaching lessons or group presentations. The participants were between 22 and 24 years of age, and they were all female, which is the institutional culture of the women's university, and their socioeconomic backgrounds were diverse, reflecting the characteristics of Punjab in Pakistan.

The five participants who make up the sample size are also consistent with the idiographic ideals and guidelines by IPA. This is a deliberately limited sample that allows both the level of inquiry needed to identify the richness and complexity of individual experiences and also takes care in analysing the convergences and divergences of the cases.

Data Collection

The method used to gather data involved semi-structured interviews, which is the best approach to IPA research because it offers acceptability in gathering descriptive means of experience. This led to the creation of an interview guide that contained open-ended questions aimed at probing the participants' experiences in terms of interaction with their peers, how they perceived collaborative learning activities, and the interpretation that they placed on the experiences through their citizenship education courses. Examples of questions were: "Can you tell me of a particular time you got to know something critical when working with a peer during a group exercise? And "What is the impact of your relationships with your peers on your understanding of the concepts of citizenship education?"

The interviews were conducted privately by the first researcher and in quiet environments within the university campus to ensure privacy and minimise distractions. Each interview lasted for about 45-60 minutes, and every interview was audio-taped with the informed consent of the interviewees. Before every interview, the first researcher developed rapport and explained the purpose of the study and the participants' right to withdraw at any point in time without any ramifications. The interview mode followed IPA norms that ensured the process was responsive and flexible to enable participants to guide the discussion to the areas that they considered to be the most interesting in their experience, as the researcher prompted them to elaborate further and posed questions to understand.

Data Analysis

Audio files of interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were checked repeatedly to help the researchers immerse themselves in the data to ascertain the correctness of the statements. The results were analysed according to the systematic steps by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin on the use of IPA, which included several steps (Smith et al., 2021). Case analysis was conducted, starting with close and repeated reading of each transcript with preliminary observations. The accounts the participants gave were coded through descriptive comments, lingo comments were used to address the metaphors, linguistic comments were used to address the language use, and finally, the meaning was questioned in conceptual comments.

Experience statements were identified following initial notetaking, which elaborated on the major characteristics of the experiences of the participants at a higher level of abstraction. These were then analysed concerning patterns and association, and the Personal Experiential Themes occurred, signifying the phenomenological essence of collaborative learning by the participants. After the idiographic analysis of each case had been done, cross-case analysis tried to establish convergences and differences across the descriptions of the participants, which resulted in a final thematic outline representing not only some common aspects of experience but also differences across the participants.

Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted by adhering to the major ethical principles of high-quality research. All the participants were sufficiently briefed about the purpose of the study, procedures of the study and their entitlement to be part of the study. The process of informed consent continued before the interviews began, and it was explained clearly that the participants were guaranteed the right to remain anonymous, to participate in the interview, and to withdraw from the study before the publication of the study without any consequences. All the research outputs ensured that the participants would be identified using pseudonyms to protect their identities. As IPA had pledged participant voice, transcripts were made available for member checking, in which participants could read through their words and ask to delete anything that they were not comfortable with.

Findings

The interpretative analysis showed that there were three Group Experiential Themes, which defined the phenomenological attributes of the experiences of pre-service teachers in the contexts of collaborative citizenship education: (1) Navigating Relational Dynamics in Collaborative Spaces, (2) Transformative Meaning-Making through Peer Dialogue, and (3) The Embodied Development of Pedagogical Identity. Each of these themes is composed of a number of sub-themes, all of which shed light on the participants' experiences, interpretations, and sense-making of collaborative learning.

Theme 1: Navigating Relational Dynamics in Collaborative Spaces

This overarching theme indicates how the participants perceived interpersonal space of collaborative learning, emotional elements of cooperation with colleagues, conflicts, and group negotiation.

The Vulnerability of Beginning

The initial collaborative learning experiences the participants described were emotional and were accompanied by feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. One of the participants mentioned:

> *It was overwhelming, in fact. I felt as though my peers were providing me with a blank slate on which I feared losing my balance. I strongly thought that I was starting at the base of things in most things.*

The phrase of starting with a clean slate helps to understand that she manages to see collaborative learning as necessitating completely new skills, which are not repeated in her previous education. The emotional focus of the word overwhelming tends to indicate the emotional strength of this shift, and vulnerability is a phenomenological factor of entry into collaborative learning environments.

The same feeling of doubtfulness was expressed by another participant who said, "I felt that I was starting on the ground floor in most things, but it was quite pleasant with the passage of time." According to her, there is a temporal aspect of the collaborative learning process where anything she felt awkward about slowly turned into admiration. The words with the passage of time imply that the comfort of working together on learning appears in the course of extended interaction and not instantaneous comfort, indicating the gradual nature of relational development in the pedagogical situation.

Conflict as Catalyst

However, unlike seeing disagreements as exclusively negative scenarios, they were characterised by participants as learning environments. One participant explained this as follows:

> *After we talked about the statistical approaches, I realised that the disagreement facilitates learning because I was not fully aware of the steps and the order in which they were followed. In particular, I have learned how to bridge communication gaps among groups.*

As shown in this account, such differences in perspectives on methods triggered metacognitive awareness of her own knowledge gaps. The expression fill communication gaps also implies that she was aware that the conflict was usually rooted in miscommunication, but also in situations where people simply did not fit together, which is evidence of the advanced sense-making of the relations. This is based on her linguistic framing of disagreement as a learning process that reflects a redefinition of conflict as an opportunity rather than a threat.

One of the other participants stated, "I found that the argument is also a part of the improvement in the learning process." Her sentence structure, a part of improvement, linguistically incorporates dissent in the larger learning practice instead of locating it as deviant.

This conceptually represents a reflection of collaborative learning as having productive tension as an essential aspect. One more participant explained: "I believe that disagreements are the way to bring the new information into the spotlight and stimulate new creative thought." The active words verbing bring and stimulate agency on disagreements per se, implying that she is not doing so to contain or eliminate conflict but to experience conflict as a generative aspect of her life.

Strategies for Managing Interpersonal Tensions

Participants devised various approaches to managing conflict in cooperation teams. One participant said, "To cope with conflict with peers, several strategies were utilised, such as active listening, common ground, and

compromise to find an acceptable solution." Her relatively formal language implies that her professional discourse of conflict resolution has become internalised, meaning that the pedagogical aspects of her learning went beyond content knowledge to interpersonal competencies.

A more complicated emotional attachment to conflict was experienced by another participant:

> *I suppose that the majority of the time I keep silent, and when I do speak, I express quite strong opinions, which can be accepted by other people.*

The quotation sheds light on the disagreement between a quiet calmness and a forcible insistence, implying uneasiness with a compromise between the two positions. Her statement that being very strong is admissible shows an intriguing paradox of presenting assertiveness as something that might need to be done, but it is a very strong thing to do. Perhaps one does not want to be forced into considering that cultural (or gender-based) processes are happening, where women might need to speak in a certain way that might sound very strong to be listened to in a collaborative setting.

Theme 2: Transformative Meaning-Making Through Peer Dialogue

This major theme can be outlined as the way in which the participants gained their knowledge regarding the concepts of citizenship education and pedagogical practices by dialogic interaction with each other.

Conceptual Clarification through Multiple Perspectives

The participants repeatedly explained how they were able to learn more about the concepts of citizenship because of their exposure to the variety of views of their peers. One participant explained this as follows:

> *Citizenship education involves knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are mandatory and require one to be an active and responsible citizen. It informs people about the political, social, and legal structures of their countries and the values of democracy, human rights, social justice, and global interdependence.*

Although this description can be seen as formalised definitional knowledge, upon being questioned about how she was assisted by her peers in clarifying these concepts, she responded in the following way: "They helped me to understand the lesson planning and importance by drawing the table and mentioning the steps and briefing me about them in detail." The process of abandoning abstract definitions for the practical conduct of drawing the table can show how interaction with peers contributed to the translation of theoretical ideas into practice. The visual-spatial aspect of it (drawing) is an embodied, collaborative sense-making that can not only be explained verbally.

One participant reported a particular instance of a conceptual breakthrough:

> *Yes, when we have to present a PowerPoint, I got the awareness of technology and software working, and I have come to realize that it is actually a real learning process, and I was not wholly aware of the steps and how it works.*

Her narrative shows how group activities with the application of technology stimulated her awareness of her knowledge deficiency. The expression "I have come to realise" is phenomenological awareness when a collaboration has revealed something that she had not realised before. The fact that she emphasizes the words "real learning process" underlines how authentic and meaningful her explanation of how peer-mediated learning, as opposed to other less effective educational experiences, is.

The Reciprocal Nature of Teaching and Learning

Participants learned that talking to others helped them understand concepts better. One of the participants remarked: As the pre-service teacher,

I learned how to control the class activity, division of syllabus and effectively share the knowledge with others, particularly.

Sharing knowledge effectively alludes to the fact that she did not see knowledge as something dead and buried, but as something in motion that needs to be expressed and adapted to be significant. This is in line with constructivist principles, where explaining to others consolidates understanding.

One other participant explained as follows: "I offer guidance that assists in attaining positive outcome and offers a clear understanding." Her explanation of giving directions places her in the role of a learner and teacher simultaneously in collaborative settings, which has enlightened her about the dynamic and mutual relationship of her peers.

The two results she defines, namely, positive outcomes and clear understanding, hint at the idea that she views teaching peers as contributing to both relationships and clarity of thought.

Feedback as a Mirror for Self-Reflection

Participants reported that peer feedback elicited metacognitive thinking and professional self-reflection. One of the participants added, "My fellows and I always attempt to give good feedback to one another, focusing on certain behaviours and suggestions, and using a positive and respectful tone of voice."

Her focus on clearly defined behaviours and solutions shows that she understands effective feedback as something that is actual and practical, not abstract and strictly assessing. The repetitive use of "positive and respectful tone" is a case of relational sensitivity, as it is understood that the quality of feedback depends on the manner in which it is given.

One of the participants replied to the question about receiving feedback with the following statement: "Yes, sometimes it was annoying, but it was positive and helpful most of time." Her open admission of irritation makes known the feelings of emotional depth of feedback-taking, despite its intellectual importance.

Theme 3: The Embodied Development of Pedagogical Identity

This theme summarises the influence of collaborative learning on the participants' emerging professional identities as citizenship educators.

Confidence through Collaborative Practice

Several interviewees explained that peer collaboration had increased their confidence in teaching. One participant retorted in a straightforward manner: "Yes, when we work in pairs and groups, it improves our skills and our confidence." The physical metaphor is boosted, which has all the connotations of confidence that can be attained by means of shared experience, an embodied experience of professional development.

One of the participants elaborated:

In collaborating with peers during the pre-service program, peers learn more about and get a deeper sense of the strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles of their students. Such knowledge would help them design their instructional strategies in ways that address the needs and concerns of the individuals so that the students can have a personalised and effective learning process.

Her move to third-person language linguistically is notable, and it might be a sign that she is generalising professional information, and at the same time, she makes sense of her own experience. The term deeper insights indicates that collaborative learning offers a qualitatively different understanding than individual study may offer, and the focus here is on the epistemological worth of interacting with peers.

Adopting pedagogical approaches from peers

The participants cited certain teaching strategies that they used based on observing and collaborating with other participants. One participant said, "I have taken the constructivist approach since I believe that the learners actively build their own knowledge through experiences and by interacting." The fact that she points out constructivism by name indicates that she has attained metalinguistic consciousness in pedagogical constructions. It is interesting to note that she was introduced to constructivism through experience as part of a group situation, which is, in fact, the very phenomenon she elucidates.

Another candidate said, "I have embraced positive learning methodology and drawn student-prompted questions in my teaching sessions." The change in the phrase "I have embraced" the focus shows a transition from abstract adoption to concrete translation, indicating that she is thoroughly integrated with her pedagogical tools as opposed to a surface acquaintance.

One of the participants described learning about the inquiry-based learning approach, which emphasises student-created questions and investigations. The particular reference to student-generated questions suggests a change in basic assumptions in the role of the teacher in the transmission model to the student asking questions, which she says occurs as a result of collaborative peer-learning experiences.

Preparing for diverse, inclusive classrooms

The participants related their experiences of learning together to being trained to work with different students. One participant reflected on this:

> *I was also taught to pay attention to building inclusive learning opportunities as I came to know various learning styles, embrace other views in the teaching curriculum, and reflect continuously on teaching.*

A description of inclusive pedagogy, including learning styles, multiple viewpoints, and reflective practice, indicates high-level professional thinking. The term "continuous reflection" refers to the idea that she sees teaching as something that involves constant education and not the learning of established methods.

Another participant explained how coming into contact with people with different opinions influenced her feelings:

> *Collaboration helps students to bring together students with various ideas and approaches that would help them to think critically and act towards Pakistan inclusively.*

> *Her mention of inclusive thinking towards Pakistan indicates that the context of her relationship to national diversity and social justice concerns was brought about by collaborative learning in citizenship education. The preposition towards implies orientation or directionality, which means that she views citizenship education as being forward-looking, which defines the future of Pakistan.*

One of the participants was quite honest about her comfort zone, admitting that there were not many people with whom she could share her ideas: "Sharing thoughts, doubts, and opinions is a significant part of any job, and at the same time, it is a challenging part as well because it requires one to be used to doing that." The fact that she provides a meta-analysis on the problem of expression indicates that she is mindful of the fact that learning as a team cannot be achieved without interpersonal risk-taking, which can be culturally or personally uncomfortable. This mere candidness sheds light on the fact that the individualised dispositions and cultural backgrounds of various individuals influence the collaborative learning experience in a dissimilar manner with diverse individuals.

Discussion

The phenomenological complexity of peer interactions in collaborative citizenship education situations is revealed through interpretative analysis. The descriptions given by the participants indicate that learning was collaborative

and integrated in cognitive, affective, relational, and identity-formative ways. Rather than regarding peer collaboration as a pedagogical practice, participants asserted that it really organised how they thought about the meaning of citizenship, their perspectives of themselves as instructors and how they maintained their professional relationships.

The fact that the early collaborative experiences created feelings of vulnerability and anxiety is consistent with the findings of the transition experiences in tertiary education. The responses of the participants who reported that they felt overwhelmed and initiated learning on an empty slate describe collaborative learning as an essential pedagogic process compared to the previous education experience, which may have been a lot more individualistic and potentially based on teacher-dependent learning, as is prevalent in the Pakistani educational system (Halai, 2024). This observation results in the need to assist and provide scaffolding to pre-service teachers as they proceed to collaborative learning opportunities.

The fact that participants reframe conflict as a catalyst and not an obstacle at an advanced level of relationship and epistemological development is significant. These descriptions are reminiscent of Vygotskian views on learning through cognitive conflict and social interaction (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The observation that conflicts lead to metacognitive awareness in the form of awareness of knowledge gaps and communication habits implies that peer interactions become a locus of not only content learning but also meta-learning of learning itself. Nonetheless, the participant who characterised the experience by swinging between silence and aggressive assertion pointed out how power relations, perhaps gendered or culturally contextualised, can complicate collaborative processes, and therefore, given a chance to establish an equitable participatory culture.

The idea of transformative meaning-making in the form of peer dialogue supports constructivist learning theory, which assigns knowledge building as a social process in a central position (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). The descriptions provided by the participants of the idea of dealing with concepts becoming clearer as they talk about them to their peers are correlated with studies of the cognitive advantages of peer teaching (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). The participants in the visual-spatial dimension were drawing tables and preparing slides, which indicates multimodal, embodied dimensions of collaborative learning that cannot be exclusively supported by verbal dialogue alone, with reference to the merits of integrating various forms of representation in collaborative pedagogical tasks (Kress, 2009).

Collaborative experiences were extremely influential in shaping the participants' emerging pedagogic identities. The way they embrace constructivist and inquiry-based styles through firsthand experience in peer learning situations represents the idea of situated learning and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This collaborative learning resulted in an increase in confidence and prepared participants to be in mixed, inclusive classrooms, which has important implications for citizenship education, which is essentially the training of students to be respectful and productive when interacting across differences (Banks, 2015).

The cultural and institutional background of a Pakistani women university was also mentioned as a relevant, albeit implicit, element in the participants' narratives. Although the participants did not mention gender as a specifically articulated anticipation, the patterns of gender communication, the mode of relational navigation, and the emphasis on respectful tone might be regarded as gendered socialisation and the inherent benefits of single-sex learning settings to the voice and agency of women (Malik & Courtney, 2011). Further investigation using comparative designs in the future might also shed more light on the influence of institutional contexts on collaborative learning experiences.

Conclusion

This Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis shows that the impact of peer interaction on pre-service teachers during Pakistani citizenship education programs has phenomenological depth, covering cognitive, emotional, relational, and identity aspects. In this case, collaborative learning was not a neutral pedagogy strategy but a strategy of transformation, whose core effect was the restructuring of knowledge about citizenship concepts, pedagogical identities, and abilities to move between different positions of thought and action. The findings illuminate three essential experiential themes that an experience of relational navigation in collaborative spaces requires: meaning making through dialogic engagement with peers, and embodied construction of pedagogical identity with colleagues through collaborative practice.

These results demonstrate the importance of intentionally designing the collaborative learning encounters that are responsive to and supportive of the emotional, relational, and developmental complexity that members of the learning community experience during the citizenship education programmes. The first weakness is a healthy aspect of making the switch to cooperative learning and offering proper scaffolding. It seems necessary to create a room to engage in productive conflict and educate on useful conflict management techniques. By focusing on teaching-learning and mutual feedback cycles, as well as implementing orderly feedback processes among peers, conceptual and professional identity development can be improved.

This research adds methodological value by showing the applicability of IPA in educational research that occurs in culturally specific situations, and which would be missed by some quantitative or less interpretively oriented methods of qualitative research. Some limitations include the small sample size, which, although suitable for IPA, restricts transferability, and the single-institution setting. Future studies might involve using IPA in a variety of institutional settings, investigating the experiences of faculty members who have engaged in the practice of collaborative citizenship education, or the phenomenological experiences of pre-service teachers in selected collaborative pedagogies.

Finally, this study amplifies the voices of pre-service teachers, respecting the meaning they attribute to their collaborative learning experiences. As they describe it, peer engagement during their citizenship education learning processes not only helps learners acquire content but also develops the relational, critical, and professional aspects needed by teachers who will go on to train future generations of citizen activists and participatory citizens.

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