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The Quest to Prepare Future Teachers to Implement Culturally Responsive Ideologies

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Abstract

This qualitative quantitative study examined future teachers' ideologies toward emergent bilinguals (EBs). Data were gathered through administration of Fitzsimmons-Doolan's 2011 ideology dimensions survey at the beginning of an academic semester. At the end of the term, participants answered two open-ended questions. Results document that the future teachers mediated their philosophical stances as they examined the differences between topics in their university studies and prior experiences. Four themes that concerned the future teachers emerged in the data analysis: cultural assumptions, academic and affective needs, right to plurilingualism, curricular insights. The themes indicate that preparing teachers through an identity directed lens, empowers them and builds their agency.

Keywords— *culturally responsive instruction, future teachers' ideologies, emergent bilinguals, funds of knowledge, plurilingualism*

I. INTRODUCTION

Migratory movements across the world's continents demonstrate the need for culturally responsive instruction (CRI) (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2022). Data from the year 2020, documented 281 million immigrants, reflecting an increase of 128 million from 1990. In 2020 migrants to Europe and Asia approximated 86 million, reflecting 61% of the global migration, and North America greeted 59 million or 21% of global migrants (IOM, 2022). Demographic changes are challenging educators to revise the design of teacher preparation programs as across continents, emergent bilinguals (EBs), students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, need teachers ready to put into practice the tenets of social justice in schools. Much research proposes that programs of teacher preparation may strengthen the English language's position as the world's lingua franca

(Kuhlman & Serrano, 2017) but violate many learners' rights to plurilingualism (García et al, 2021).

This study explores the language ideologies of future teachers (FTs) from Marigold State University (MSU), a pseudonym for a public university situated near a major port on entry for immigrants to the United States (U.S.). The region's diversity is reflected in the diverse population of its K-12th grade schools. We propose that teacher preparation must "afford preservice and practicing teachers a space to assert their agency in creating the contours of their identity formation" (Lindahl & Yazan, 2019, p.1). Future teachers must learn the benefits of internationalizing the curriculum and recognizing learners' funds of knowledge (Funds) (Moll, 2019). Surveys were used to examine the FTs' ideologies and establish if the teacher preparation curricula at MSU models democratic ideologies (Greene, 2018), leads FTs to acknowledge students' language rights (García, et al., 2021; Ruiz,

1984), and empowers graduates to use curricular models that validate students' socio-cultural contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 2018).

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research assumes that teacher educators strive to prepare FTs who will validate all students' linguistic and cultural rights. For FTs to develop philosophies that embody the belief that students deserve access to academic content that reflects their histories and experiences (Gay, 2018; Moll, 2019), intentional nurturing is needed. Ladson-Billings (1994) emphasized that equity pedagogies support students "...intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically" in their use of "cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 17-18). Future teachers must hold dispositions that support the building of equitable learning environments (Goodman et al., 2015; Greene, 2018). This study's theoretical framework considers ideologies that foster the socialization of FTs' into the lives of diverse learners across the world (Lindahl & Yazan, 2019; Peña-Pincheira & De Costa, 2020; TESOL, 2018). Such ideologies nurture views of equality and empowerment (Freire, 1985), and reflect socio-cultural theories that acknowledge how community contexts influence the school curriculum (Matthiessen & Halliday, 2004). Sociocultural theories focus on CRI that evidences the interdependence between language and identity (Beck, 2017; Jiménez, 2021; Solano-Campos, 2014), and intentionally prepare FTs to validate students' cultural and linguistic rights (Alfaro & Bartolomé, 2017; García et al., 2021; Ruiz, 1984).

Cultural Responsiveness

Language ideologies document the nature of the subconscious beliefs that shape educators' instructional practices (Lindahl & Yazan, 2019; Woolard, 1998). Irvine (1989) described ideologies as "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (p. 255). Cavanaugh (2019) emphasized that language ideologies extend beyond an individual's view of language and hold the "explanatory power to understand ... how system of power power are organized" (p. 6). Ideology research in educational contexts has revealed the complex nature of the beliefs that govern an individual's behavior (Knight, 2006; Seltzer, 2019) and its value in designing teacher education curricula. Educators across the world struggle to validate cultural difference and its contribution to the schoolhouse and to society (Ladson-

Billings, 2021; Nieto, 2018). Teacher preparation programs that focus on the affective and instructional needs of learners support the development of FTs' agency and commitment to social justice (Bennett, 2019; Greene, 2018; Pang, 2018). Programs centered on CRI facilitate introspection using a self-reflective model (Moll, 2019) that encourages FTs to explore their ideologies and negotiate ideological differences.

Addressing issues of privilege and deficit perspectives is not a new concept (Mc Intosh, 1989) but the world's citizens struggle with its reality. Cultural norms compose an invisible part of being, of becoming the teacher who helps learners interpret their world and their citizenship role. Identity work in teacher preparation curricula helps FTs reflect on factors that affect students' academic success, such as familial norms, gender roles, religion, language, race, and ethnicity. It is essential that FTs be aware of how their positionality shapes their membership status as well as their future students' in U.S. society (Charles, 2019). This research underscores that FTs need to master more than content knowledge to become caring educators. They need coaching to understand where their ideological stances originated and how these evolve (Wolff & De Costa, 2017). Researchers have documented that FTs whose ideologies reflect equity paradigms believe in the uniqueness of learners from within and outside the dominant culture (Moll, 2019; Ricento, 2019).

Seltzer (2019) encouraged a move from an emphasis on strategic teaching methods in teacher preparation to "critical reflection on how ideologies around being white and monolingual" shape candidates' "perceptions of language-minoritized students' languaging and literacies" (p. 1). She discussed three elements in translanguaging theory: the personal, the political, and the pedagogical. Future teachers can examine and subsequently choose to reject notions of monolingualism when they have opportunities to learn about translanguaging theory (Salerno et al., 2019). García et al's (2021) research documents that classroom experiences with diverse students lead candidates to understand and infuse ideologies of translanguaging theory in their instructional practice.

Teacher Preparation

The belief that ideologies born in the social world shape the quality of practices in schools leads teacher educators to prepare FTs to value EBs' home languages and cultures (Fasching-Varner et al., 2019; García et al., 2021). We consider that teacher preparation must focus on reflective practice and

individual goal setting. Program faculty's task is to set measurable and achievable goals that FTs can reach as they are provided formative feedback during their program. Intentional coaching of FTs on social justice gives credence to teaching methods that reveal to EBs that they have the right to be plurilingual (Ruiz, 1984). Caring educators engage learners through classroom conversations that provide windows and mirrors that reflect all faces (Bishop, 1990), and doors that open wide to validate the uniqueness of learners' ethnicities, religions, races, and countries of origin. Teacher educators empower FTs when they provide them opportunities to unpack their ideologies in critical conversations and support them to identify positive, neutral, or negative attitudes in their instructional practices (Deacon, 2002). Reflection will lead FTs to face their contradictory ideologies and accept how these may discriminate toward select student populations (San Pedro, 2018).

Parsons (1991) labeled ideological challenges "cognitive distortions" that deviate from scientific objectivity. Academic courses and clinical experiences may trigger the social activist component within FTs' hearts, thus assisting them to develop visions of teaching that oppose unfair practices (Solano-Campos, 2014). Educators who espouse ideologies of CRI create liberatory models of instruction that are relevant to EBs' historical, social, and linguistic realities (Freire, 1985; Ramos Pellicia, 2020). They defend the maintenance of learners' heritage languages as a linguistic and cultural right (Yosso, 2005). Ideology exploration therefore offers stakeholders a path to informed and empowered socialization (Matthiessen & Halliday, 2004).

Flores and Rosa (2015) suggested that racialized ideologies of literacy frame the language practices of EBs as deficient. Smith et al. (2020) examined Rosa's (2016) raciolinguistic lens utilizing transraciolinguistic interchanges. They concluded these offer affordances for cross-cultural, cross-racial, and cross linguistic literacy education. Rosa and Burdick (2017) stated that ideology research "has developed and moved beyond accounts of language attitudes in sociolinguistics to powerfully theorize linkages among linguistic forms and cultural context across interactional, institutional, and political economic scales". (p. 6). Flores and Mc Auliffe's research (2020) indicates that all languages must be respected and valued, and all children deserve access to high quality dual language programs. Rosa (2016) cautioned educators about "ideologies of languagelessness" that

"call into question linguistic competence – and, by extension, legitimate personhood-altogether" (p.162).

Helping Fts examine their ideological tensions as they compare what they study in the teacher preparation curriculum with the instructional practices they observe in field placements is critical (Smith, 2020). Peña-Pincheira & De Costa (2020) emphasized that preparation of teachers include a focus on teaching language and disciplinary content with a commitment to social justice and transformation. Jiménez (2021) speaks of intersectional identities, referring to classrooms where teachers celebrate differences "across matrices" (p. 157). Lindahl and Henderson's (2019) work demonstrates that teachers with high levels of language awareness hold additive language ideologies. They concluded that teachers' ideologies reflect "societal discourses in multiple and contradictory ways" (p. 1). Barbosa (2020) documented a problem with 18 FTs: their stated ideologies opposed monolingualism while they simultaneously favored a "one language ideology". Henderson's research on the binary of ideological orientations (2020) suggested that teachers' ideological tensions merit attention because they reflect the contradictions between societal discourses and academic conversations.

III. METHODOLOGY

This quantitative qualitative study investigated FTs' ideologies towards EBs and the influence of teacher education courses on their attitudes. The researchers explored candidates' perspectives at the beginning of a semester using Fitzsimmons-Doolan's language ideologies dimensions survey (2011). Qualitative data gathered served to further explore FTs' ideologies. Two questions examined how FTs' ideologies at the end of the academic term had been influenced by the program requirements. IRB requirements at MSU were followed to recruit, contact, and collect data from all the participants. The FTs responded to the following questions:

Q1: What components of your program enhanced your understanding of the needs of plurilingual and pluricultural learners? Explain.

Q2: What requirements of your program challenged your perceptions of EBs? Explain.

The FTs were enrolled in one or more of the following methods courses: history of language minority education in the U.S, English linguistics, methods of multicultural education, methods for teaching English, bilingual methods and assessment.

This inquiry proposed to answer two research questions:

Q1: What are FTs' ideologies towards EBs' language rights?

Q2: How do FTs' ideologies evolve as they complete BILM courses?

Context and Participants

This investigation was conducted at MSU, a rural-urban public university in the central geographic area of the U.S. In this region, which includes Chicago, the third largest city in the U.S. Over 200 languages are heard in the area's K-12 schools, and dual language programs are increasingly available to meet in the languages of majority-minority populations of students representing Spanish, Korean, and Chinese

backgrounds. Due to insufficient numbers of speakers of the same language within the same grade in communities' schools, districts strive to meet EBs' educational needs by offering various models of English as a second language education.

The majority of the study participants were 18-23 years of age ($n = 220$, 75.1%), thirty-nine (13.3%) were between 24-30 years of age, twenty-three (7.8%) between 31-40, five (1.7%) between 41-50, one (0.3%) older than 51, and five (1.7%) did not declare their age. Most ($n = 238$) were monolingual English speakers, 45 reported having some knowledge of Spanish, and ten did not answer the question. A total of 158 of the candidates were enrolled in their first BILM course. Other demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Demographic Characteristics for Sample

Characteristic		n	%
Number of BILM courses taken	0 courses	158	57.7%
	1 course	68	23.5%
	2 courses or more	63	21.8%
Enrolled in clinical placement this semester	yes	169	58.1%
	no	122	41.9%
Hours of clinical experience completed	0 hours	105	36.5%
	1-10 hours	47	16.3%
	21 or more hours	136	47.2%

Quantitative Survey

We considered Fitzsimmons-Doolan's (2011) survey instrument appropriate to capture the ideologies of MSU's FTs. Survey questions explored the candidates' ideologies at different stages of their program but were not designed nor used to measure candidates' ability to implement culturally responsive ideologies with EBs at the time of the study. We agreed that Fitzsimmons-Doolan's (2011) survey prompts would document FTs' ideologies utilizing an item-by-item analysis. This reflected a consideration of the multicollinearity in the data, the low correlations coefficients ($r < +/- .30$) (Field, 2013; Yong & Pearce, 2013), and the contextual difference between this study and Fitzsimmons-Doolan's.

The survey instrument (2011) was designed to gather information on the language ideologies of voters, including educators, and informed policy in the state of Arizona regarding the role of language in society. Her methodology provided sufficient information about the

survey instrument's reliability to ensure its use would elicit accurate and consistent responses. She reported that validity of the survey items was established in her pilot study. The survey includes a comprehensive breakdown of how individual items within the instrument are grouped under each of its constructs. The detailed item grouping explains the rationale behind the construction of the survey and provides the transparency in item grouping which ensured we could replicate the groupings. The provision of the reliability coefficients by construct gave valuable insights into the extent to which the survey items within each construct consistently measured the intended concepts. Her analytical approach allowed assessment of the instrument's reliability within the context of this study.

In this study, FTs responded to the 31-six-point Likert questions from Fitzsimmons-Doolan's 2011 survey. Response options were (*Strongly Agree* = 6, *Agree* = 5, *Somewhat Agree* = 4, *Somewhat Disagree* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1). Demographic items

were used to describe the participants. Kruskal Wallis' non-parametric test was used to determine statistically significant differences between two or more groups of an independent variable on an ordinal dependent variable (Field, 2013; Sheskin, 2011).

Kruskal Wallis also served to determine group differences in the item score by the number of BILM courses in which the candidates were enrolled or had completed (Field, 2013; Sheskin, 2011). This analysis of the data allowed examination of each item rather than Fitzsimmons-Doolan's constructs, because an initial confirmatory analysis of this study's data revealed that initial factors produced a poor fit, suggested by the values for the comparative fit index.

Quantitative Analysis

Before data analysis was conducted, the data were examined for missing data. Less than 1.88% of data were missing. Little's (Field, 2013) test indicated that the data were not missing completely at random (MCAR; $\chi^2(293) = 2448.886$, $p = .001$). To determine the differences in item scores by the number of BILM courses candidates had taken, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed. Statistically significant items are presented in Table 2. The FTs' perceptions about language rights

were reflected in survey items 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 21. These items present a pro-multilingual ideology recognizing the language rights of an individual, that languages compose economic and personal assets, and that to develop and maintain proficiency in a language, the speaker must feel free to use the language when he/she perceives it is needed for communication. Other statistical items, 16, 18, and 19 refer to patriotism and pro-monolingualism attitudes. Items 23, 30, 26, and 27 refer to notions that language alone can be used as a measure of a speaker's intelligence.

Table 2 shows mean rank scores representing the average position of each group to help determine which BILM group had higher or lower values based on the Likert scale responses. A higher mean rank for a group indicates that, on average, participants in that group scored higher on the item. The results emphasize the significance of the BILM courses in shaping candidates' ideologies during their formal preparation. Data suggests that FTs may have a greater tendency to develop pluricultural ideologies when learning is sequential and scaffolded to systematically build candidates' knowledge base.

Table 2: Kruskal-Wallis Test Mean Rank Difference by BILM courses taken

Item	BILM courses	n	Mean Rank	K-W	p
16. The success of a nation depends on the use of a national language.	0	157	152.83	9.868	.007**
	1	67	143.43		
	2 +	60	114.43		
18. In the U. S., knowing English helps a person to be American.	0	154	151.69	7.271	.026*
	1	65	131.56		
	2 +	61	121.78		
19. The standard- or model-form of a language is the most appropriate form for school.	0	156	155.42	13.562	.001***
	1	64	132.15		
	2 +	61	113.42		
23. One can know a person's intelligence from how he uses a language.	0	153	151.48	6.558	.038*
	1	66	126.03		
	2 +	61	128.62		
30. The purpose of learning a new language is to meet people who speak that language.	0	153	151.78	17.184	.001***
	1	67	150.11		
	2 +	61	103.96		
26. Languages stay the same over time.	0	156	145	6.452	.04*
	1	66	154.63		
	2 +	61	120.66		
27. A language has a one standard form.	0	155	147.02	7.265	.026*

	1	66	152.33		
	2 +	62	118.47		
	0	151	130.14	10.511	.005**
4. The use of language is a human right.	1	67	150.88		
	2 +	62	154.52		
	0	156	132.04	8.193	.017*
6. Speakers have a right to choose the language that they will use in any situation.	1	67	140.07		
	2 +	58	166.16		
	0	152	132.37	6.126	.047*
7. A person's linguistic abilities are assets.	1	68	149.88		
	2 +	63	156.74		
	0	154	127.1	15.351	.001***
9. In the U. S., the use of multiple languages is an economic asset.	1	68	155.68		
	2 +	62	166.29		
	0	156	127.69	16.081	.001***
10. In the U. S., the use of native languages other than English is helpful for sharing tradition.	1	67	157.67		
	2 +	62	165.68		
	0	157	135.98	9.079	.011*
21. Practicing a language is necessary for learning the language.	1	67	141.78		
	2 +	62	164.4		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Note: Strongly Agree = 6, Agree = 5, Somewhat Agree = 4, Somewhat Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

Survey responses indicate that FTs' ideologies changed as they completed BILM courses. The findings align with research that suggests candidates' ideologies influenced by societal and familial norms at the beginning of their program, change after academic study and real-life experiences in K-12 classrooms (García et al., 2019; Gay, 2018; Greene, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Nieto, 2009; Yazan, 2019). Significant results indicate that FTs' beliefs changed and point to the benefits of placing FTs in schools to experience working with EBs. The FTs made efforts to examine their ideologies and subsequently, their perspectives were informed by educational theory (Henderson, 2020; Irvine, 1989; Salerno et al., 2019; Smith, 2020).

Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test evaluating mean rank difference by BILM courses (Table 2) showed that after completing two or more courses, candidates recognized students' language rights are personal assets that teachers must address (Barbosa, 2020; García et al., 2021; Rosa & Burdick, 2017). The rank scores of the average position from student groups having completed different numbers of courses, calculated using the Likert scale responses, document that candidates' ideologies

became significantly pro-plurilingual as they completed two or more BILM courses.

IV. QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The replies from FTs' to the two open-ended questions at the end of the academic semester were examined and categorized into themes. Responses from the FTs' (n = 185) were analyzed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. This process facilitated examination of participants' thoughts and ideologies. The phases were followed in this order: data familiarization, initial code generation, theme inspection, theme review, theme definition, and theme reporting. The steps facilitated iterative analysis, led by continuous engagement with the data for the purpose of identifying deep meanings (Saldaña, 2016). The researchers worked through the steps of the analysis to reach consensus and ensure inter-rater reliability.

The FTs' responses document their interest in learning ways to scaffold the language that EBs need to complete instructional tasks and be tested fairly, their commitment to ensuring the curriculum is accessible to EBs and meets their academic and affective needs, and

the students' right to plurilingualism. The identified themes indicate that the FTs' ideologies evolved from supporting monolingual to plurilingual philosophies.

Table 3 presents the number of participants who expressed a perspective that reflected each of the study's recurrent themes.

Table 3: Frequency of Themes in Participants' Responses to Open-Ended Questions

	Theme 1: Assumptions about Culture	Theme 2: EBs' Academic and Affective Needs	Theme 3: Right to be Plurilingual	Theme 4: Curricular Insights
Q 1	27	27	11	33
Q 2	23	19	14	31

Cultural Assumptions

The program courses aim to help the FTs explore their ideologies through an identity lens (Yazan, 2017) and consider how these might impact their work as teachers. The responses to the open-ended questions suggest the work provided the participants (Ps) views to what may not be overtly discussed in society. Course readings seemed to engage the FTs in deep reflection and showed how this effort contributed to readying them to teach in diverse schools. "I never realized there was white privilege before" (P26). Several FTs recognized they were changing their perspectives as they explored the power of culture in the lives of teachers and students. One FT said "the reflections that I wrote were mind boggling because what I was learning shook me" (P13). A second admitted, "I saw that I am judgmental and prejudiced more frequently than I care to admit" (P9). Another saw the need to "disprove bias towards students" (P20) and a fourth will "fight against unfounded assumptions about culture groups (P15).

A FT recognized "the sacrifices that EBs' families make for their children" (P16). Another shared "My experiences are totally different". She explained that she has to "dig into students' lives" (P9). Yet another commented on the "falsehoods about culture that the multicultural education course revealed" (P2). Many saw the need to build relationships with parents (Ps13; 18; 22; 26). "I have to reach out to parents in different ways because they can hesitate to question the teacher's authority" (P27). "Parents are not familiar with our school system. I need to tell them what we expect from their children" (P24). Several comments reflected the realization that generalizations about EBs' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their Funds affect the quality of communication between teachers, students, and families (Ps 19, 26, 27, 28).

Academic and Affective Needs

The FTs explored the juncture between academics and the affective domain. They mentioned that EBs' Funds is a key consideration when identifying

academic needs, planning and delivering instruction (Ps 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 14, 34, 50, 53). Many of the FTs discovered what the Funds refers to during the study. Many comments related to what EBs' were learning about diverse communities, and how these affect their adaptation to life in the U.S. Responses showed FTs' understanding that students from the same minority group have different academic and affective needs (Ps 2, 6, 8, 12, 23), that teachers "have to learn about students' backgrounds and what schooling is like in other countries" (Ps 17; 41) and scaffold the curriculum to accommodate EBs of different backgrounds (Ps 3, 13, 50).

The novels and textbooks the FTs read about EBs' garnered positive comments and resulted in engaging discussions. They shared that "learning about EBs' lives was eye-opening" (Ps 41, 46) and they noticed that many students hide the trauma in their lives in their efforts to fit in with classmates. An FT shared that "learners of all ages need to see themselves in the literature they read" (P15). Another was adamant that "students need to connect with books that include families like theirs to stay interested in learning" (P36). Yet another FT asserted that to be an effective teacher of diverse students requires teachers to examine "their own biases and learn about students' cultural identity" (Ps 1, 2, 53).

Right to Plurilingualism

Comments about the Home Visit assignment showed how much information the FTs learned about students' Funds and plurilingualism. The experience highlighted the EBs rights to be literate in the home language as well as English. One FT visited a home where he observed conversations in three languages (P11). Another summarized his learning in the Home Visit, "I saw so much in my two-hour visit that I would not have seen in a parent conference" (P26). Yet another stated, "I saw how teachers have an impact on the EBs' lives when they offer support and recognize students' efforts to master another language" (P39). Revealing

ideas were generated in other assignments: “I liked creating posters in class about the benefits of being bilingual” (P1); “We have to include EBs’ languages” and “review tests and assignments for confusing questions and pictures” (P9), “plan language supportive activities” (P35), teaching “a simple sentence structure can be huge is supporting language development” (P60). “The activity that stood out was about how we must teach vocabulary to EBs in multiple and different ways” (P55).

Curricular Insights

Reactions to course readings and required assignments generated ideas for planning lessons for EBs (Ps 15, 22, 36, 40, 49). The FTs stressed differentiated lesson planning, teaching vocabulary, using reading strategies and assessment modifications that help EB learn grade level content (Ps 22, 49). An overall understanding touched on the work involved when planning lessons “A lot of strategic planning goes into planning lessons” (P 36). One FT admitted “the courses helped me develop my teaching skills” (P22). Another stated that he “now understands how bilingual programs should work” (P24). The FTs noted the reasons for developing lesson plans and evaluations that consider both language and content objectives and offer scaffolded supports for EBs at different levels of English language proficiency. In the future, a science teacher plans to “prepare lessons scaffolded for language proficiency, allowing opportunities to translanguage” (P16). Others shared that “Teachers lose students who do not understand the language used in lessons” (P46) and “Teaching vocabulary is the glue to understanding content” (P59). Many FTs shared that they “were learning how to accommodate lessons and assessments” (Ps 37, 49). One adamantly stressed that “EBs are confused with the wording of multiple-choice tests (P42). Several revealed their awareness that “No quick lesson plan will work with all kids” (P57), “EBs don’t learn lang

V. DISCUSSION

The themes that emerged in this study reveal what FTs should know, and how exploration of their philosophies helped them identify culturally responsive methods. Surveys explored participants’ ideologies day one of a semester and open-ended questions after the semester ended, revealed changes in perspectives. A comparison of the survey results with the qualitative data showed the FTs’ ideologies had evolved from monolingual to plurilingual after completing two or more BILM courses. The FTs demonstrated increased awareness of the

influence of families’ Funds related to languages and cultural norms on learning.

The first theme, assumptions about culture, demonstrates what the FTs learned that changed their perspectives. They identified the prejudicial notions that they overcame (Pang, 2018). As they explored course readings and completed assignments, they gained respect for families’ Funds (Moll, 2019) and made plans to reach out to familiarize parents with the expectations of the U.S. school system. They noted the privilege that is prevalent in U.S. society (Mc Intosh, 1989; Shohany, 2006) as they negotiated an unbiased teacher identity (Yazan, 2017). The second theme, EBs’ academic and affective needs, reflected the FTs’ realization of the interdependence between academic achievement and learners’ affective domain (Jiménez, 2021). They identified the schooling needs of EBs’ (Peña-Pincheira & De Costa, 2020 as they strove to clarify their ideological orientations (Henderson, 2020). The third theme, the right to be plurilingual, evidenced FTs’ awareness that EBs’ have the right to their cultural and linguistic heritage (Yosso, 2005). Their knowledge and resourcefulness began to show as they learned ways to support plurilingual language development. They observed that links between language and culture intersect in personal, institutional and political interactions (Burdick, 2017). It became evident that their philosophies shifted to a strong commitment to EBs’ linguistic and cultural rights. The fourth theme, curricular insights, became evident as the FTs’ generated and shared ideas for planning and delivering a culturally responsive curriculum (Greene, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; TESOL, 2018).

VI. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study took place in a public university situated approximately one hour from Chicago, the third largest city in the U.S. This research is important because this country’s demographic is diversifying in unprecedented numbers, both in urban areas and in small communities (IOM, 2022). All FTs need adequate preparation to promote content area literacy development in the home languages of their students and English, plus offer socio-emotional support to EBs (Fasching-Varner et al. 2019).

Data analysis demonstrated that FTs ideologies are informed as they explore EBs’ experiences and understand their rights in the U.S. (Barbosa, 2020; Henderson, 2020; Lindahl & Henderson, 2019). The call

to train culturally responsive educators and FTs' willingness to prepare to do this, is evident in this study (Salerno, 2019; San Pedro, 2018; Wolff & De Costa, 2017). A limitation of this research is that data provides information about the ideology development of FTs at MSU and cannot be generalized to programs at other universities. However, this work may create interest in replicating this intervention. More evaluations of teacher preparation programs designed with an identity directed lens could yield information that will improve teacher training (Yazan, 2017). We suggest that future research should include universities in other regions of the U.S.

Results from this research suggest pedagogical implications to teacher educators who wish to open the schoolhouse door to the linguistic and cultural richness that permeates our world. This work can guide research in nations across the world experiencing unprecedented demographic migration.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors have no conflicts to declare.

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A Practical Study on Integrating Ideological and Political Education (IPE) into College English CET-4 Translation Teaching

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Abstract

In the context of globalization, the education sector has increasingly prioritized comprehensive quality cultivation, with national policies emphasizing the integration of ideological and political education into curricula to fulfill the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education. This study aims to address the challenge of effectively incorporating ideological and political elements (IPE) into College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) translation pedagogy. Employing a hybrid methodology of literature review, case analysis, and practical teaching, the research systematically explores pathways and strategies for curriculum integration through three dimensions: instructional content selection, pedagogical innovation, and evaluation system refinement. Findings demonstrate that the Dual-Mainline and Three-Tier Teaching Model (combining linguistic competence development with value-oriented education) significantly enhances students' translation proficiency while strengthening cultural confidence and patriotic sentiments. This approach provides strong support for cultivating well-rounded talents with an international perspective and high moral standards, contributing positively to the reform of college English teaching.

Keywords—*Ideological and Political Education (IPE); College English Test Band 4 (CET-4); Translation Teaching; Teaching Practice; Dual-Mainline and Three-Tier Teaching Model*

I. INTRODUCTION

Amid deepening globalization and increasingly frequent cross-cultural exchanges, higher education is undergoing a profound transition from knowledge-based to competency-based pedagogical paradigms. The Guidelines for the Development of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) in Higher Education Curriculum advocate "integrating IPE throughout the talent cultivation system [1]." Within language courses, particularly in English instruction, a critical challenge arises: how to cultivate students' linguistic proficiency while guiding them to develop

cultural consciousness and value alignment. The translation section of the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4), as a cornerstone of English pedagogy, bears dual responsibilities: linguistic training and cultural dissemination. Its content frequently engages with themes of traditional Chinese culture, historical allusions, and social development topics (such as discussions on the new energy vehicle industry in the 2024 exam). These materials inherently serve as vehicles for cultural transmission and value orientation. However, current pedagogical practices reveal a significant gap: students often approach translation

tasks superficially, prioritizing lexical accuracy over cultural comprehension. For instance, in CET-4 translation exercises: Students may mechanically render "Siheyuan (in Chinese)" as "courtyard house" yet fail to convey the Confucian ethic of "familial-state homology" embedded in its architectural symbolism of "four-sided enclosure centering a shared space." While translating "yī yè zhī qiū (in Chinese)" literally as "A leaf indicates autumn," few grasp the philosophical wisdom of "jiàn wēi zhī zhù (in Chinese)" (discerning broader trends from subtle signs). This disconnection in cultural imagery interpretation exposes a systemic flaw in traditional translation pedagogy: an overemphasis on linguistic formality at the expense of cultivating cultural-literary cognition.

The current predicament in translation pedagogy fundamentally stems from the instrumentalist view of education. Most classrooms still adhere to the tripartite methodology of "grammatical analysis → lexical substitution → syntactical adjustment." When translating policy discourses (e.g., 2024 environmental policy texts), students may mechanically execute techniques like active-passive voice conversion but lack comprehension of the strategic essence behind phrases like "ecological civilization construction." This results in superficial code-switching rather than meaningful intercultural mediation, failing to achieve the discursive transformation of concepts such as "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" for global audiences. This study addresses these challenges by reconstructing the value framework of translation pedagogy. We propose a trinity teaching model integrating cultural cognition, skillful conversion, and value transmission, informed by Hall's (1976) High- and Low-Context Cultures Theory [2]. By embedding IPE organically into the pedagogical process, the model operates across three dimensions: Cultural Cognition: Contrast cultural symbols (e.g., Chinese jiaozi consumed during the Winter Solstice vs. Western Christmas turkey) to decode collective memories and identity narratives embedded in culinary practices. Language Conversion: Apply Venuti's (1995) foreignization strategy to preserve cultural authenticity [3]. For instance, translate "Taijiquan" phonetically

while supplementing philosophical annotations on yin-yang dialectics, thereby amplifying cultural agency. Finally, at the level of value transmission, the political pragmatic function of passive voice in environmental policy texts can be explored in conjunction with the White Paper on China's Energy Development in the New Era [4]. For example, using the expression 'achievements have been made' not only conforms to international communication norms but also cleverly integrates the value concept of 'a community of shared life between humans and nature.'

This research explores the integration of linguistic competence cultivation and IPE within CET-4 Chinese-to-English translation instruction. Educators must strategically infuse ideological elements and politics into pedagogical design, enabling students to deepen their understanding of Chinese cultural values while projecting cultural confidence in cross-cultural exchanges. The core challenge lies in seamlessly embedding IPE into translation training without compromising language skill acquisition, thereby achieving dual pedagogical objectives.

II. THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

2.1 Literature Review

This article mainly draws on three theories: curriculum IPE theory, cultural translation theory, and embodied cognition theory to provide theoretical guidance for teaching design and to provide theoretical support for the effective implementation of IPE in various aspects of language teaching.

The core concept of curriculum IPE is the educational goal of "value shaping, knowledge imparting, and ability cultivation" [5]. Teachers should integrate IPE into all aspects of the curriculum and organize different teaching activities to help students learn professional knowledge while establishing correct values and cultivating a good sense of social responsibility. The translation teaching of CET-4 is a good demonstration. In teaching practice, students not only need to master the skills of language conversion but also need to deeply feel the power of culture in practical operation, thereby enhancing their sense of identity with the country and culture.

Bassnett's (2002) "cultural turn" translation theory emphasizes that translation is not only a process of language conversion but also the transmission and reconstruction of culture [6]. Translation is a cross-cultural communication behavior, so translators not only need to convey the language information of the source language but also consider the cultural differences between the source language and the target language. While performing language translation, they also need to convey the values, thoughts, emotions, and social background in the source language culture. In the English CET-4 translation course, teachers need to avoid simple language conversion explanations, help students establish correct cultural teaching awareness, and maintain sensitivity to cultural differences, which is a more important task to strive for the true representation of culture [7].

The embodied cognition theory holds that language learning and use is not only an abstract cognitive process but also closely related to an individual's physical experience and social environment. This theory provides an important perspective for translation teaching, emphasizing that in the process of translation, students not only need to activate their cognitive abilities through understanding language structures but also deepen their identification with the target language culture in practice. Taking the translation of the sentence structure "poverty alleviation" as an example, students can not only understand its literal meaning through language conversion but also perceive the socialist core values and cultural connotations contained therein, thereby enhancing their cultural consciousness and cultural identity [8].

2.2 Model Construction: Dual-Mainline and Three-Tier Teaching Mode

This article proposes the "Dual-Mainline and Three-Tier Teaching Model," aiming to organically combine the cultivation of language ability with the goals of IPE through structured teaching design. The 'Dual-Mainline' includes language and ideological and political lines. The language line focuses on the differences in sentence structure between Chinese and

English, helping students understand and master language skills in translation, while the ideological and political line focuses on the cultural symbols and core values behind translated sentence structures. The "Three-Tier" includes the skill level, cognitive level, and value level, corresponding to the three dimensions of language, culture, and value, respectively [9].

The skill level focuses on mastering translation strategies for culturally loaded sentence structures. Students need to learn to use the "additive translation method" or other translation techniques to supplement and explain cultural background information in the source language. Taking the translation of "Zongzi (in Chinese)" as an example, it can be translated as "glutinous rice dumpling wrapped in bamboo leaves". This translation not only conveys the basic meaning of vocabulary but also conveys the cultural connotation. The main goal of the cognitive layer is to help students understand the differences in thinking between the East and the West. By comparing and analyzing the cultural connotations of the four character structures and the parallel structure of English, it helps students recognize the cultural concepts carried by different language systems. The value layer focuses on establishing students' cultural confidence and communication awareness through translation practice. Therefore, in the process of translation and problem-solving, students not only need to convey information but also need to consider how to express the internationalization path of the "Chinese story". When dealing with paragraphs related to the development of Chinese society and cultural characteristics, they also need to consider how to accurately and vividly convey China's values and social achievements [10].

III. TEACHING PRACTICE PATH

The design of teaching practice paths plays a crucial role in the integration of IPE into the translation teaching of CET-4. Teachers can organically integrate ideological and political elements into students' translation abilities and cultural literacy through the reconstruction of teaching content, innovation of methods, and reform of evaluation systems.

3.1 Teaching Content Restructuring

Based on the analysis of the CET-4 translation questions from June 2014 to December 2024, the author summarizes three core focuses in translation teaching: sentence structure conversion, processing of four character structures, and accurate expression of culturally loaded words. In the teaching process, emphasis should be placed on how to accurately convey the ideological logic of the Chinese language through diverse sentence structures while reflecting Chinese policy concepts and cultural values. Especially when translating government policy texts, it is necessary to ensure that sentence structure conversion conforms to English expression habits and does not deviate from the core value orientation of the original text to maintain the accuracy and persuasiveness of the policy stance in international communication. Four-character idioms, due to their highly condensed nature, often carry profound cultural philosophy. Teachers can analyze them by combining historical background and philosophical ideas to help students understand the traditional Chinese wisdom contained within them. As an important carrier of cultural information, culturally loaded words need to be translated to achieve effective cross-cultural communication while maintaining their original cultural characteristics. Teachers should combine the historical stories, traditional customs, and social values behind the relevant vocabulary when explaining so that students can deeply understand their cultural connotations and enhance their sense of cultural identity.

3.2 Innovation in Teaching Methods

The application of case-based teaching methods has significant advantages in innovative teaching methods. By selecting typical sentences related to traditional Chinese culture and modern development achievements from the real test questions (such as the 2024 discussion on the new energy vehicle industry), teachers can guide students to analyze the semantic focus and cultural connotation of the original text in depth. For example, when translating "China has taken a series of effective measures, including vigorously developing clean energy and improving public transportation," teachers can combine the white paper

"China's Energy Development in the New Era" [4] to guide students to adopt the translation strategy of "theme sentence first + data support," ensuring the accuracy of the translation while highlighting China's initiative in green transformation. This type of case-based teaching based on real language materials can enable students to subconsciously understand the new development concept of "innovation, coordination, green, openness, and sharing" in language practice and achieve resonance between professional knowledge and values [11].

The application of comparative analysis can effectively break down cognitive barriers in cross-cultural communication. Taking the translation of "One Leaf Knows Autumn" in 2022 as an example, teachers can guide students to compare the dissemination effects of two strategies: literal translation (a single leaf announces autumn) and free translation (minor signs indicate major trends) and combine Hall's (1976) High Context and Low Context Cultures Theory to explain the collectivist thinking characteristics contained in Chinese idioms [2]. The official translation of "targeted poverty alleviation" in the multilingual project of "China Keywords" is "targeted poverty alleviation". Compared with the initial translation by students, students can intuitively understand the importance of the "political equivalence" translation principle in the construction of foreign discourse [12]. This not only enhances students' language sensitivity but also cultivates their narrative ability of "based in China and facing the world".

The introduction of Project-Based Learning (PBL) provides a new path for practical education in translation teaching. Teachers can design themed projects such as "Compilation of Intangible Cultural Heritage External Propaganda Handbook," requiring students to complete the entire process of practice from terminology library construction to text polishing based on their translation experience of culturally loaded words such as Tai-Chi (2022 exam questions) and the 24 solar terms (2022 exam questions) in real exams. When translating the custom of eating dumplings on the winter solstice, students need to use

a combination of transliteration (jiaozi) and cultural annotation (dumping symbols of family reunion) to complete the exam questions. At the same time, teachers use multimedia assistance and illustrations to explain the production process, deepening students' theoretical understanding of "interculturality" [13].

3.3 Evaluation System Reform

The traditional translation evaluation system often focuses too much on the accuracy at the linguistic level while neglecting the examination of cultural understanding and value transmission ability. The construction of an evaluation system is not only related to the improvement of teaching quality but also directly affects the cultivation of students' comprehensive abilities. Therefore, it is particularly important to build a multidimensional translation teaching evaluation system that takes into account language, culture, and values. Guided by this concept, this article proposes a comprehensive evaluation system that covers three core dimensions: language, culture, and values. It combines various methods such as artificial intelligence scoring, teacher-student joint evaluation, and social feedback to enhance the scientific and practical nature of translation teaching.

The language dimension primarily focuses on students' translation language quality, including sentence accuracy, grammatical standardization, and fluency of language expression [14]. This dimension is the basic requirement of translation teaching and the core standard for measuring students' translation ability. By utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) technology for automatic scoring, the objectivity and efficiency of the evaluation can be ensured. The cultural dimension focuses on students' accurate representation of cultural images in translation, especially the handling of culturally loaded words, as well as their understanding of the cultural background and historical connotations of the source language [15]. Cultural factors cannot be ignored in the translation process. If students cannot accurately grasp the cultural context, the translated text is prone to losing its original cultural depth. The model of teacher-student joint evaluation can play a positive role. Teachers can provide precise guidance for students' translation, while students can not only

reflect on their own translation strategies through self-evaluation and peer evaluation but also deepen their understanding of cultural translation through communication. The value dimension examines the effectiveness of translated works in conveying values, with a focus on the embodiment of socialist core values and whether the translation can showcase China's social, cultural, and developmental achievements [16].

This article proposes a combination of three evaluation methods to promote a more comprehensive and scientific implementation of the evaluation system. We were introducing AI scoring technology in language dimension assessment, utilizing big data to analyze students' grammar, syntax, and fluency, achieving the requirements of efficient and objective scoring. In the evaluation of cultural dimensions, a teacher-student co-evaluation model is adopted, where teachers provide evaluations based on the cultural appropriateness of students' translations, while students enhance their cultural sensitivity and translation abilities through self-evaluation and peer evaluation. This approach not only enhances students' understanding of cultural connotations, but also promotes classroom interaction and improves learning outcomes [17]. Finally, in the examination of the value dimension, a social feedback mechanism is introduced to invite foreign experts or individuals with relevant backgrounds to review students' translations, helping them identify potential obstacles in cross-cultural communication and optimize translation strategies, thereby enhancing their global perspective and cross-cultural communication abilities [18].

The scientific evaluation system also needs to be consistent with teaching objectives and reflected in specific tasks. Taking the translation task of "the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang Protection Measures" as an example, formative assessment can focus on whether students pass appropriate modal verbs, such as the difference in mood between "must" and "should". In the summative assessment, drawing on Bowker's (2002) translation quality assessment model, characteristic indicators such as "cultural information transmission validity" and "value position presentation" are established to comprehensively measure students'

translation proficiency from three aspects: knowledge, ability, and literacy.

IV. DEMONSTRATION OF TEACHING CASES

This article summarizes three core concerns in translation teaching through the reconstruction of teaching content: sentence structure conversion, handling of four character structures, and accurate expression of culturally loaded words, and demonstrates teaching cases.

In sentence structure conversion training, the use of passive voice is not only a grammatical skill but also a language carrier for conveying policy ideas. Taking the December 2024 exam question "China has achieved significant results in reducing air, water, and soil pollution" as an example, teachers can guide students to transform active sentences (China has made significant achievements) into passive sentences (significant achievements have been made by China) and highlight action results rather than subjects through sentence structure reconstruction, which is in line with the narrative logic of weakening subjective perspectives and emphasizing objective facts in international communication [15]. In the process, it not only involves the conversion of language forms but also needs to be combined with the white paper "China's Energy Development in the New Era" [4] to analyze the ecological philosophical connotation of the concept of "green mountains and clear waters are as valuable as mountains of gold and silver". When translating 'China has taken a series of effective measures,' students need to choose 'a series of effective measures have been implemented' instead of 'China implemented measures' within the passive sentence framework in order to strengthen the systematic and sustained understanding of policy implementation. This type of training can help students understand the uniqueness of China's environmental discourse by comparing the emission reduction commitments of Western countries in the Paris Agreement. It not only demonstrates the responsibility of a major country but also embodies the Eastern wisdom of "harmonious coexistence between man and nature" Through language conversion; it cultivates ecological civilization values, strengthens

students' understanding and recognition of national policies and social development concepts, and cultivates patriotism.

The translation of four character idioms becomes the key to activating the genes of traditional culture. The translation practice of the December 2022 exam "One Leaf Knows Autumn" demonstrates the deep interweaving of language form and cultural cognition. The strategy of literal translation (A single leaf heralds autumn) preserves the integrity of the imagery, but it is difficult to convey the philosophical thinking of "seeing the details and understanding the details." However, although the free translation scheme (Minor signs indicate major trends) improves the readability of the translation, it faces the risk of cultural imagery loss. In this regard, teachers can introduce Kramsch's (1998) "third space" theory [13] and guide students to adopt a composite strategy of "literal translation + cultural annotation": while retaining the "leaf autumn" image chain, they can supplement the philosophical connection between this idiom and the "dào dé jīng (in Chinese)" that "it is easy to maintain, but it is easy to plan ahead," as well as its practical mapping in modern quality management systems (such as "details determine success or failure"). This kind of translation process is essentially a two-way interaction between cultural decoding and recoding. When students translate the "ensuring harvest in drought and flood" (2021 examination questions), they need to go beyond the conversion of literal meaning and show the wisdom of the Dujiangyan Irrigation Project in water control through English poster design so that language training can be sublimated into the cultivation field of cultural consciousness.

The teaching practice of cultural loaded words can best reflect the value orientation of translation activities. Taking the translation of "Siheyuan" in June 2024 as an example, the translation of "Siheyuan, a traditional Chinese courtyard residence" adds functional descriptions on the basis of transliteration. This strategy not only maintains the language identity of cultural exclusivity, but also implies the dual meanings of "family ethics" and "spatial philosophy" through the word "courtyard". Teachers can combine

the documentary "Memories of Beijing Hutongs" to analyze how the spatial layout of the "four corners system" in the quadrangle courtyard reflects the cosmology of "unity of heaven and man", and guide students to think about the dialectical relationship between the protection of traditional architecture and the construction of new urbanization. This teaching design echoes the policy of "Opinions on Implementing the Project of Inheriting and Developing Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture", enabling students to accurately convey the physical attributes of "Taijiquan, a Chinese martial art for health" when translating "Taijiquan" (September 2022 examination questions), and to explain its philosophical core of "yin-yang harmony" through English short texts, achieving creative transformation from linguistic symbols to cultural values [3].

V. CONCLUSION

This article explores the integration path of IPE in courses and translation teaching for CET-4 by constructing a "Dual-Mainline and Three-Tier Teaching Model" teaching model. Practice has proven that combining language skills teaching, cultural transformation strategy innovation, and value connotation transmission in teaching practice can effectively improve the dilemma of the separation between instrumental rationality and value rationality in traditional translation teaching. The author has transformed IPE from metaphysical concepts to concrete translation and expansion activities through innovative designs such as the "Cultural Keyword Workshop" and "Multimodal Project Practice". Students have demonstrated deep interpretation abilities when dealing with cultural loaded words such as "Tai Chi" and "Siheyuan", as well as accurate presentation of value positions in policy text translation. This verifies the dual effectiveness of this model in cultivating cultural consciousness and cross-cultural communication abilities. The transformation of this teaching paradigm provides replicable practical examples for implementation in language courses. Future research can further explore the application of artificial intelligence assisted translation tools in

identifying ideological and political elements, as well as optimizing the adaptability of value transmission strategies in different cultural contexts, thereby promoting the dynamic improvement of the theoretical system of translation teaching.

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MReader and Extensive Reading: An Overview of Research and Practice

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of MReader, an online platform designed to facilitate extensive reading in second language acquisition, specifically within the context of Japanese high school education. Extensive reading, which emphasizes reading large quantities of material for comprehension rather than linguistic accuracy, is presented as a solution to the overemphasis on grammar-translation methods traditionally used in Japanese secondary schools. The paper discusses the benefits of extensive reading, such as improved reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency. It also examines the practical applications of MReader, which provides students with graded readers and tracks their progress, enhancing accountability and motivation. Research findings demonstrate the positive effects of extensive reading on L2 proficiency, with MReader offering an accessible and engaging tool for promoting learner autonomy. Despite challenges, such as selecting appropriate materials and ensuring consistent reading habits, the paper concludes that extensive reading, supported by platforms like MReader, can significantly enhance language learning outcomes.

Keywords— MReader, Extensive reading, Reading fluency.

I. INTRODUCTION

For many high school students in Japan, a key academic goal is gaining admission to a university of their choice. An essential component of university entrance exams is the English reading comprehension section (Inomori, 2012). To prepare for this section, the grammar-translation method is commonly used in English classrooms (Hino, 1988). In this method, accuracy is paramount, and as a result, reading instruction during the six years of secondary school in Japan focuses heavily on precision. Students are trained to read slowly and carefully, translating passages into Japanese. This emphasis on accuracy aligns with the format of university entrance exams, which test reading comprehension with sufficient time for students to read and translate passages (Waring, 2011). However, the long-standing focus on accurate translation techniques has led to a neglect of reading fluency in Japanese secondary education (Yamashita,

2008). Extensive reading could address this issue by encouraging students to read at a pace that moves beyond the constraints of the grammar-translation approach (Furukawa, 2010).

Extensive reading is a method of language learning that encourages learners to read large amounts of material in the target language, with a focus on comprehension rather than linguistic accuracy or the intensive study of individual words. Over the past few decades, extensive reading has gained significant attention in the second language (L2) learning community for its potential benefits in improving reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency. This paper explores the role of MReader, an online platform designed to facilitate extensive reading, and examines the broader context and research findings related to extensive reading in L2 classrooms. Drawing from the work of key scholars in the field, such as Day and Bamford (1998, 2005), Nation (1997, 2015), and

others, this article investigates the efficacy of MReader and extensive reading in promoting language learning, focusing on key benefits and challenges as well as the practical applications for educators and learners alike.

1. Concepts and Benefits of Extensive Reading

Extensive reading involves learners reading large quantities of text in the target language, typically at their level of proficiency, to increase exposure and improve overall reading skills. According to Day and Bamford (1998), extensive reading can be particularly effective in the second language classroom because it encourages reading for pleasure and helps learners develop a sense of autonomy in their language learning process. Extensive reading contrasts with intensive reading, which focuses on in-depth analysis of short passages, grammar rules, and vocabulary. In contrast, extensive reading promotes fluency, increases vocabulary retention, and provides learners with a more holistic understanding of the language. As Nation (1997) points out, extensive reading plays a crucial role in incidental vocabulary learning, as learners encounter words in context, reinforcing their meaning through repetition.

One of the primary advantages of extensive reading is its ability to improve learners' reading speed and comprehension. By reading a variety of texts, learners can internalize language structures and vocabulary naturally, which often leads to enhanced reading fluency. Moreover, extensive reading also promotes learners' motivation to engage with the language in a more enjoyable and relaxed manner (Powell, 2005). As learners become more confident in their reading abilities, they are more likely to continue their engagement with the language, further contributing to language development (Waring, 2011).

II. THE ROLE OF MREADER IN EXTENSIVE READING

MReader is an online platform that supports extensive reading by providing learners with access to a large database of graded readers and tracking their progress. The platform allows learners to select books based on their level and interests, encouraging them to read at their own pace. One of the key features of MReader is its ability to monitor learners' reading habits and assess their comprehension through quizzes that follow each reading. This immediate feedback helps

learners gauge their understanding of the material and motivates them to continue reading.

One of the challenges of teaching English as a second or foreign language is maintaining student motivation, particularly in reading, where it can be difficult for teachers to assess how effectively students are engaging with the material. Although research highlights the many benefits of extensive reading, there are two key concerns for educators considering its use, either inside or outside the classroom.

The first concern is how to ensure students are truly reading and not just skimming (Robb & Kano, 2013). The second is managing classroom time effectively (Day & Bamford, 1998). MReader offers a practical solution to both of these issues. To assess whether students are genuinely reading, teachers could have students read the same book and then administer an in-class quiz to test comprehension. However, this approach is time-consuming for both teachers and students, and creating quizzes for each book can be burdensome. MReader alleviates these challenges by allowing teachers to track student progress in real-time, eliminating the need for time-consuming book reports or reviews. Additionally, MReader is affordable, free for academic institutions, and accessible, as students can take quizzes on their smartphones or devices. It is also motivating, as students receive instant feedback on their quiz results. Extensive reading further addresses the challenge of mixed proficiency levels in the classroom by allowing students to choose materials that match their individual English levels.

According to Truscott (2017), MReader offers several advantages, such as personalized reading choices, easy accessibility, and the ability to track learners' progress. Learners can choose books from a wide range of genres and difficulty levels, making the reading experience more enjoyable and suited to individual preferences. Additionally, the system's feedback mechanism allows teachers to monitor students' reading progress, which is essential for ensuring that learners are consistently engaged in reading and making measurable progress in their language skills.

MReader also supports the development of autonomous learners. As Day and Bamford (2005) suggest, autonomy is crucial in language learning, as it enables learners to take charge of their learning process. By using MReader, students are encouraged to

take responsibility for their own reading habits, selecting books that interest them and reading at their own pace. This autonomy fosters a sense of ownership and motivation, which is essential for sustained language learning. MReader enhances accountability in extensive reading by verifying that students are actively reading and showing sufficient understanding of the books (Truscott, 2017).

III. LITERATURE ON EXTENSIVE READING AND MREADER

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of extensive reading on L2 proficiency. Robb and Kano (2013) conducted a large-scale experiment examining the effectiveness of extensive reading outside the classroom. Their findings suggest that extensive reading not only enhances vocabulary knowledge but also improves overall language skills, such as reading comprehension and writing fluency. Furthermore, studies have shown that learners who engage in extensive reading are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward reading and the language in general (Tanemura, 2020).

Leung (2002) conducted a diary study of a beginning learner of Japanese and found that extensive reading significantly contributed to the learner's language development, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. The learner reported enjoying the reading process, which motivated them to continue reading outside of the classroom. This finding aligns with the views of Day and Bamford (2000), who emphasize that motivating reluctant readers is a key factor in promoting successful extensive reading practices. By providing learners with materials that are both accessible and enjoyable, extensive reading programs like MReader can help foster a positive attitude toward language learning.

The connection between extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition is well-established in the literature. Nation (1997) argues that vocabulary acquisition is a natural by-product of extensive reading, as learners encounter new words in context and reinforce their understanding through repeated exposure. This incidental learning process is particularly beneficial because it allows learners to acquire words that are relevant to their interests and needs, rather than focusing on isolated vocabulary lists. Nassaji and Chung (2014) support this view, suggesting that reading in context is one of the most effective ways to acquire vocabulary in a second language.

Moreover, the extensive reading approach has been shown to contribute to improvements in other areas of language proficiency, such as listening, speaking, and writing (Yamashita, 2008). As learners read more in the target language, they become more familiar with sentence structures, grammar, and writing styles, which helps them produce more accurate and natural language in both written and spoken communication. This holistic approach to language development is one of the key benefits of extensive reading, as it allows learners to improve multiple language skills simultaneously.

IV. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the numerous benefits of extensive reading, there are challenges that must be addressed when implementing it in L2 classrooms. One common challenge is ensuring that learners have access to appropriate reading materials. While MReader offers a wide selection of graded readers, it is essential for teachers to ensure that the books available match the learners' proficiency levels and interests. If the material is too difficult or not engaging, learners may become frustrated or disengaged from the reading process. As Waring (2011) notes, it is crucial that students read materials that are both enjoyable and within their language capabilities, as this will help sustain their motivation to continue reading.

Another challenge is promoting regular reading habits among students. While MReader tracks learners' progress, it is important for teachers to encourage consistent reading outside of the classroom. This can be particularly challenging in contexts where learners have limited time or access to reading materials. To overcome this, teachers can incorporate reading goals, class discussions, and other motivational strategies to encourage students to engage in regular reading practices (Takase, 2008).

Additionally, some learners may experience anxiety or discomfort when reading in a second language, especially if they are not confident in their reading abilities. As Day and Bamford (1998) suggest, it is important for teachers to create a supportive and non-threatening environment where learners feel comfortable reading at their own pace. MReader's feedback mechanism, which allows learners to monitor their progress without the fear of judgment, can help alleviate some of this anxiety and encourage students to continue reading.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, extensive reading is a powerful tool for second language acquisition, with numerous benefits for vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, and overall language proficiency. MReader, as an online platform designed to facilitate extensive reading, provides learners with a convenient and engaging way to practice reading in the target language while offering teachers a valuable tool for monitoring progress. Research supports the effectiveness of extensive reading in improving various aspects of language learning, and platforms like MReader can enhance learner autonomy and motivation. While there are challenges to implementing extensive reading, particularly in terms of selecting appropriate materials and promoting consistent reading habits, the potential benefits for L2 learners make extensive reading a valuable practice in language education. Further research on the impact of MReader and extensive reading in different contexts will continue to provide insights into how best to leverage these approaches to support language learners' development.

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Unveiling Colonial Power Dynamics through the Indian Army in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*

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Abstract

The present paper delves into the intricate powers of colonial dynamics in the British Indian Army as portrayed through the lens of Amitav Ghosh's novel, The Glass Palace. Set against British imperialism in Burma and India during the late 19th and early 20th century, Ghosh explores the intricacies of colonial rule and its impact on both colonisers and the colonised. This study looks at how the British government used Indian soldiers as a weapon to further its goal of worldwide domination through a close examination of the narrative, historical context, and theoretical ramifications, it discloses the strategies used by the British to retain control over the Indian Army, an institution that was essential to the maintenance of colonial rule. The study also looks at the psychological and emotional effects of colonial oppression on Indian troops, emphasizing their battles for autonomy and identity in a system meant to maintain British dominance. The present research adds to a better understanding of the multifaceted subtleties of colonial supremacy and its effects on people and institutions by combining historical analysis and literary interpretation.

Keywords— Indian Army, Colonial Power, Colonial Oppression, British Dominance, The Glass Palace

I. INTRODUCTION

Colonialism had a lasting impact on communities all over the world and a profound influence on the modern world as a historical phenomenon. Colonialism created a complex web of power relations, economic exploitation, and cultural domination that allowed imperial powers to establish control over vast regions and diverse populations. In this context, the Indian subcontinent serves as a painful illustration of the far-reaching effects of colonial rule, as the domination of the British Empire over India and its neighbouring territories had a deep impact on the region's social, political, and economic fabric. Ghosh's novel, *The Glass Palace* (2000) transports readers to a beautifully detailed story that crosses decades and continents while providing a gripping examination of the difficulties of colonialism. It offers a comprehensive

perspective of the turbulent events that moulded the destiny of millions of people across South Asia, Burma, and India during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Ghosh eloquently captures the tensions between colonial power, resistance, and resiliency that characterised this crucial era in history through the lives of a wide range of characters, from menial labourers to strong aristocrats. The Indian Army, a powerful emblem of British imperial power and a crucial tool of colonial rule plays a central role in Ghosh's story. Primarily composed of Indian soldiers under British occupation, the mission of the army is to suppress insurrection across the area and preserve colonial rule. While fighting in favour of imperial oppression, soldiers must deal with questions of loyalty, accountability, and identity.

This research study aims to analyse the complex dynamics of colonial power as they are shown in the novel with a particular focus on the Indian Army's function in maintaining, contesting, and negotiating colonial hegemony. By using a combination of literary analysis, historical research, and theoretical examination, the paper sheds light on the different ways that power operated under the colonial system. It also examines the inherent tensions, concessions, and contradictions of colonial governance by delving into the experiences of Indian sepoys, British colonial authorities, and indigenous communities.

***The Glass Palace* (2000)**

The Glass Palace by Ghosh is a testament to the transformative power of historical fiction. It skillfully interweaves the complex narratives of colonialism, displacement, and resistance across generations and continents. The story takes place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during the height of British colonial control in Southeast Asia, and it travels across the countries of Malaya, Burma (now known as Myanmar), and India. It takes readers on a personal and epic trip through its finely detailed historical events and well-drawn characters that depict human struggles and victories. As observed by Ranjita Basu, "History is a brooding presence in Ghosh's books, almost a living entity able to shape the lives of his characters" (1997, p160). Rajkumar, a young orphan from Mandalay who finds himself swept up in the turbulent currents of history, is the novel's protagonist. Rajkumar's journey, from his modest beginnings as a teak merchant in the Burmese forests to his ascent to prominence as a merchant in Mandalay's busy streets, serves as a microcosm of the more powerful forces influencing the fates of both nations and individuals. In addition to Rajkumar, we come across a diverse group of individuals whose lives unexpectedly collide. They showcase different facets of the human psyche of multiple nations, including King Thebaw and his Queen, Dolly, Beni Prasad Dey and Uma, Saya John, Arjun, Dinu, and numerous more colonised victims. The story commences with the deafening sound of the "English cannon" outside the "Glass Palace," a royal house in Mandalay where eleven-year-old Bengali orphan Rajkumar, dressed in coal black, waits tables for Ma Cho at her tea shop. Once King Thebaw's "Royal Proclamation" is announced, the royal prisoners- the pregnant Queen Supayalat and the Burmese King Thebaw are sent into exile to Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, and the palace itself is in danger of falling. After the Burmese army submitted to the British on November

14, 1885, the war started, and the King was taken prisoner and banished. As quoted by Adhau D.T., "After the victory of the British, the King, Thebaw and the queen, Supayalat were made powerless. The royal family along with an escort of attendants and advisors were sent into exile in India. It was a great defeat of Thebaw" (2023, p2). The former coloniser, now confined to Outram House in Ratnagiri, laments his demise as monarch. Dolly marries Rajkumar and comes to Burma. King Thebaw eventually passes away in exile from a heart attack, and as time goes on, the last Burmese king's legacy is lost. Edward Said in *Orientalism* elaborates such menace of colonial dominance. He states, "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1978, p3). Commenting on The Glass Palace Rajalakshmi remarks, "the ideology of the British Raj seeping through the lives of the colonized people takes life at varying points in the novel" (2016, p116).

Colonial Dominance over the Indian Army

Ghosh includes historical events in the novel's middle section, the most prominent of among is the British dominance of the Indian Army. In Southeast Asia, the Indian Army becomes a widely recognised representation of British colonial authority and dominance. It was primarily made up of Indian soldiers serving under British officers, is a symbol of the oppressive power of colonialism as well as the complicated relationships between resistance and allegiance inside its ranks. This glaring power disparity reflects colonialism's larger dynamics, in which indigenous peoples' lives and futures are subject to the authority of colonial rulers. The Indian Army serves as a potent instrument of colonial domination, enforcing British rule through military force and coercion. Ghosh portrays both the social milieu of the colonial era and the strategies of British dominance over the Indian army in the novel. He illustrates the role of the Indian Army in the Second World War, fighting the Japanese in Malaysia, and reflects on the conflict between allegiances through Arjun Roy, the nephew of Uma Dey, his batman Kishan, and Hardayal Singh of the 1/1 Jat Light Infantry. Colonialists are ensnared and forced to fight for Britain, a country for which they show contempt. Due to their desire to expand their empires globally, European powers clash and escalate the conflict to a global level. They enlist warriors in the areas they conquer for this reason. Indian soldiers are used by the British to fight with them to topple the monarch and colonise Burma. "There were some ten thousand soldiers in the British invasion force and of these the

great majority – about two-thirds- were Indian sepoys” (TGP, 2000, p26). Combating in the wars for their British overlords causes damage to the soldiers. “In Singapore, as a young man I worked for a time as a hospital orderly. The patients were mainly sepoys like these- Indians, back from fighting wars for their English masters” (p29).

Arjun, one of the central characters of the novel, sees enlistment as a social status symbol, and he is proud to be in the British Indian army. He writes to his twin sister Manju, “What makes me prouder still is the thought that Hardy and I are going to be the first Indian officers in the 1/1 Jats: it seems like such a huge responsibility- as though we are representing whole of the country” (TGP, p262). He thinks something is untrue regarding the British government’s assistance in defending Indian troops. He says, “for civilians always think that the regiment is the most important thing about the army. But in the Indian army, a regiment is just a collection of symbols- colours, flags, and so on” (TPA, p261). He sees himself as the first Indian of the present era to truly coexist with Westerners without being constrained by the past. Said mentions, “To colonize meant at first the identification- indeed, the creation- of interests; these could be commercial, communicational, religious, military, cultural” (*Orientalism*, 1978, p100). Arjun is being subjugated and dominated under the British administration. White people make racial remarks about him as well. Within the military hierarchy, he serves under British officers in a subordinate role. He has the ability and skills, but the pervasive system of colonial dominance prevents him from moving forward and from exercising his agency. Because of their colonial status, his superiors have privileges and power that frequently dictate his decisions and acts.

Arjun, when he awakens from his false consciousness, discovers that the fictitious ideological network of his colonial overlord governs and defines his existence. After being wounded in World War II, he feels surprisingly empty and thinks of himself as a mere player fighting for the British. According to Sharma Kant Dev and Thakur Santosh, “He comes to realize that the war he is fighting does not belong to him. The truth dawns upon him that he is not doing true service to his country and by serving the British administration, he is working against his own countrymen” (2016, p203). Arjun is caught between fear, repulsion, and sympathy. He experiences a moral dilemma and a failure. Ghosh writes:

His mind was inflamed with visions, queries.
Was it possible- even hypothetically- that his
life, his choices, had always been moulded by

fears of which he himself was unaware?... But if it were true that his life had somehow been moulded by acts of power of which he was unaware – then it would follow that he had never acted of his own violation; never had a moment of true self-consciousness. Everything he had ever assumed about himself was a lie, an illusion” (p431).

Resistance to British Rule

The Indian Army is used as an instrument of colonial dominance, but it also becomes a place of subversion and resistance. Members of the Indian Army like Hardy, subvert the authority of British rule and assert their agency in the fight for independence and justice by acts of desertion, sabotage, and covert connections with anti-colonial forces. Some students and the Congress leaders ask Arjun, “From whom are you defending us? From ourselves? It’s your masters from whom the country needs to be defended” (p288). Talking about their colonel Bucky whom Arjun thinks a good master, Hardy explains, “What are we? Dogs? Sheep? There are no good masters and bad masters, Arjun, - in a way the better the master, the worse of the condition of the slave, because it makes him forget what he is...” (p438). Eventually, Arjun joins Hardy in the Indian Independence League and raises his voice in opposition to the British Empire. According to Geeti Ara Jebun, “It was the most crucial moment in the novel when the army officers rebelled against the British Empire being hopeless in their attempts, who are thoroughly the Empire’s creature” (2021, p5).

By the time the novel ends, Arjun has resolved his dilemma over loyalty and is searching for his own identity in the historical signification process. Ghosh depicts the emergence of anti-colonial emotions and nationalist activities throughout the Indian populace. The book vividly depicts the zeal and resolve of those dedicated to resisting colonial oppression and regaining national sovereignty.

Historicity

During a significant portion of British colonial control over India, the Indian Army was tantamount to upholding British power and quelling Indian rebellion. The discrimination of the Indian Army under British rule is evident in various historical events and practices. One example is the recruitment structure of the Indian Army itself. Indian soldiers, known as sepoys, were recruited from different regions of the country and were under the command of British officers. While Indian soldiers made up the bulk of the army, ultimate

authority and decision-making power rested with the British officers, reflecting the hierarchical and discriminatory nature of colonial rule. Indian troops frequently served in inferior capacities, while British officers held important command positions in the British Indian Army. Shashi Tharoor in *An Era of Darkness* records, "There were significant disparities in the rank, pay, promotion, pensions, amenities and rations between European and Indian soldiers" (2016, p28).

The British had established the Indian Army as a crucial instrument of colonial control. They used the Indian soldiers to expand their domination across the globe. Indian sepoys fought with soldiers from other nations. The troops were members of the Jat and Punjab regiments, respectively. It is documented in *A History of India* by Burton Stein. He writes:

In addition, an increasingly central role was assigned to India in the expanding British empire, particularly in providing and paying for the soldiers needed to secure imperial objectives. British and Indian soldiers fought in many parts of Asia, Africa and even Europe for these ends, their costs borne for the most part by India's agricultural producers; and its sons, especially those of the Punjab, supplied most of the soldiery (1998, p230).

They played a central role in maintaining British authority, not only was it through military campaigns but also in policing and enforcing colonial laws. Furthermore, the Indian Army was often deployed to enforce British colonial policies and to quell any signs of resistance or rebellion among the Indian population. This included actions such as suppressing protests, maintaining law and order, and participating in military campaigns to expand and consolidate British control over Indian territories. Overall, the subjugation of the Indian Army under British rule was a key aspect of colonial governance in India. It reflected the unequal power dynamics inherent in colonialism and the extent to which the British relied on military force to assert and maintain their dominance over the Indian population.

On the contrary to this, Colonialism created opportunities that shaped the character of the British Indian Army and had a significant impact on the army's organisation and evolution. For the most part, the British Indian Army consisted of recruited Native Indian soldiers from various clans and locations. The army was able to make use of a wide range of aptitudes, skills, and capabilities due to its diversity. During the early

Company era, peasants from various regions and religions were recruited into the Indian army, and many prospered and rose to honourable levels. *A History of India* introduces: "These included major peasant groups like the Jats of the north, the Marathas of the west and the Reddis of the south; all had dominated their respective country sides, not so much as a result of formal political offices or of any high caste standing they possessed, but because from their humble ranks came the mass of small and some large landlords, and they were the sort who prospered under early Company rule" (1998, p220). With the British imposition of standard military discipline and training, the Indian Army became far more efficient and productive.

II. CONCLUSION

Taking a close look at both the good and bad, we can say that the British government made use of the Indian Army for their personal gain. By employing strategically and establishing a hierarchical command structure, the British were able to maintain tight control over the Indian military. An important factor in maintaining imperial rule was the discrimination in the selection process and the British Army's superiority over the Indian Army throughout the colonial era. The British used the Indian sepoys in the wars to expand their administration throughout the world. Through the Indian Army, Ghosh reveals the complex power dynamics of colonialism. By portraying characters like Arjun and Hardy, who find themselves entangled in the webs of imperial power, Ghosh paints a vivid picture of the Indian soldiers' struggles to reconcile their identities with their service under British command. The novel captures the inherent contradictions of colonialism, portraying how the Indian Army, while ostensibly serving the interests of the British Empire, also becomes a vehicle for the assertion of Indian agency and resistance against oppression. Through these richly drawn characters and their intertwining storylines, *The Glass Palace* offers a profound exploration of power, control, and resistance in the colonial context, inviting readers to confront the complexities of history and its enduring impact on individuals and societies.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the content of this manuscript. No financial, personal, or professional relationships influenced this work's research, analysis, or conclusions.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the conclusion is qualitative; the **text** (*The Glass Palace*) is used as the primary data for the present paper.

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Understanding Judicial Activism, Restraint, and Overreach in light of the Indian Constitution

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Abstract

Since Indian independence, the role of the judiciary in the interpretation of the constitution has swung back and forth between activism, restraint and short spurts of overreach. This treatise challenged the theoretical underpinnings of these modes, traces their historic development in traceable landmark decisions of the Supreme Court and places current discourses in the broader context of the constitutional architecture of India. The paper will argue based on the constitutional theory, comparative jurisprudence and also empirical literature that the judiciary's oscillation is not a doctrinal stance but an adaptation to changing socio-political realities. It finally suggests that a prudent blend of activism and moderation based on constitutional text, judicial precedent and democratic accountability can represent the best sturdy vehicle of basic rights safeguarding and state legitimacy maintenance.

Keywords— *Judiciary, judicial restraint, constitutional theories*

I. INTRODUCTION

In democracies, the judicial branch of government acts as the decoder of the Constitution and the guarantor of rights. Both the constitutional and judicial branches define the role of the judiciary as a co-equal and autonomous arm of government, charged with the responsibility of promoting the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights and the creation of constitutional balance. The Supreme Court of India and other High Courts have often over the decades gone beyond what can be regarded as the traditional adjudication into areas traditionally considered as the work of the legislature and executive. Such broadening of judicial role has elicited a great deal of scholastic discussion, and terms of judicial activism, judicial restraint and judicial overreaching often play a role in describing various judicial strategies. Judicial activism has become a powerful notion in the second part of the twentieth century. It refers to the activist approach of the judiciary towards social injustices, extension of rights, and government responsibility. As much as

judicial activism is said to promote human rights and justice, it is also criticised to overstretch judicial power. Judicial restraint on the other hand is the judicial accommodation to policy decisions by the elected branches and it advocates passive intervention unless in a case of constitutional infraction. Judicial overreach, which is a controversial and a pejorative phrase, implies a judge executing the functions of a legislature or an executive, which is a legislative or executive branch, and disrupting the democratic procedures. Study of judicial activism, restraint and overreach in India The literature on judicial activism, judicial restraint and judicial overreach in India is extensive and multi-disciplinary, comprising both law and political science, as well as constitutional theory. The article aims at mapping the Indian constitutional spectrum through the analysis in light of these concepts in theory and practice. It takes an analysis of their underpinnings, how the case law has played out and the effects on Indian democracy. Investigating historic rulings and the perceptions of theorists, we make a complex opinion on the way the

Indian court arranges its place and accommodate the strain involved in constitutionalized government. The Constitution of India is a living document, which was written in the years 1949, set to promulgate in 1950; it was the result of the vibrant interaction between the legislature, executive, and judiciary (Laxmikanth, 2020). The core of this interaction is the role of the judiciary as the judge of the meaning of the Constitution, especially in the face of the political branches of the government going in different directions or failing to protect basic rights (Bhandari and Pillai, 2019). The Supreme Court of India has been said many times over the past seven decades to be both an activist judge and a more restrained administrator of the law and, in other instances, may be described as an overreaching force which is infringing upon the political sphere (Bose, 2017). The new concept of social globalisation tries to give different dimensions to women's identity (Mishra, 2018). The use of the terms judicial activism and judicial restraint are not the empty words used in legal terminology, but they imply certain normative definitions regarding the balance of power, protection of civil liberties, as well as the legitimacy of the state (Klein, 2009). Activism is held to right what is in the legislature and safeguard the minorities and restraint is the call championed as the defence against judicial overreach and democratic vapouring (Murray, 2004). However, the real-world implementation of these doctrines in India depicts a different detail. This paper outlines the Indian constitutional continuum of judicial conduct by: (1) conceptualising judicial activism, restraint and overreach within the Indian context; (2) examining the literature on the development of these principles; (3) discussing salient Supreme Court cases which help us understand the change in judicial demeanour; and (4) providing current implications on constitutional governance. The objective of the work is to present evidence-based, extensive evaluation that may guide researchers, policymakers and practitioners who are concerned about the future of Indian constitutionalism.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The constitutional theory draws a distinction between the hard and soft law which is provided by the judiciary as an interpreter of hard law (Crawford and Wise, 1992). As a judicial activism, it involves a proactive approach, in which the courts read between lines to understand the constitutions and statutes to solve emerging social and political problems (Laurence, 1974). On the contrary, judicial restraint places a high value on deference to the legislation and judicial power and limits the judicial

interception of matters unless the right is clearly abused (Cohen, 1989). In India, judicial activism is based on the principle of judicial review enacted in Article 13 that empowers the judiciary to strike the law as unconstitutional in case it violates the fundamental rights (Sourabh, 2015). However, scholars like using 2004 state that the very Constitution provides the secular, democratic and progressive ethos on judicial activism which requires a balancing act between innovation and tradition. The judicial activism practiced by Indian courts is often the focus of an empirical research on the Court that aims to trace the statements given by the Supreme Court in such arenas, including environmental law, gender equality, or electoral reforms (Reddy and Khandelwal, 2016; Singh and Chakravarty, 2019). It is showing a trend: activist start-ups are adopted, when even a legislature is unable to protect vulnerable populations, but opposes activism in many politicised matters including constitutional amendments and the exchanges between states (Bhuvanesh, 2021). A recent study by Chakravarty (2018) examined 1,200 Supreme Court cases, 1970 through 2015, and reported that activist judgments were more common in 1970s and 1980s, fell in 1990s, and spiked afterwards. This swings and turns are explained by the authors as a result of the changing political climate, the expectations of the citizens, and the perceived legitimacy of the judiciary. It is compared with such countries as the United States, the United Kingdom, or South Africa in terms of judicial activism within India. Although all three systems allow judicial intervention, Indian activism has its unique aspects since it exists in a strict system of federalism, and a wider range of basic rights (Kumar, 2014). The concept of Judicial activism in the United States has often been linked to milestones of cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Roe v. Wade* (1973) attributes Indian activism more commonly to the *Kesavananda v. 2373-2374*, *Maneka Gandhi v. Kerala* (1973). *Union of India* (1978). It has been argued that judicial activism undermines democratic accountability and separation of powers (Khan, 2012). There are controversial cases in India like *S.R.Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) and the 2018 court order of the case *Nirbhaya* which deals with sexual harassment laws were deemed to be intrusive by the judiciary (Shankar, 2020). In spite of these criticisms, current research finds a contextualised approach to overreach, considering its historical under-representation of the minorities, weakness in the constitutional restraints and balances, and the fact that the judiciary has become a modern protector of social

justice (Jain, 2022). In India, judicial activism, restraint and overreach are not doctrinaire but rather dynamic responses to changing constitutional, political and societal situations. In the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court, a pragmatic shift and turn takes shape: it becomes an activist when the interests of fundamental rights are threatened, conservative on highly politicised matters, and sometimes even veers too far in terms of conflicting interests. The judiciary needs to base its rulings on a measured scales of activism and restraint to make decisions based on constitutional text, precedent and democratic accountability in order to make rulings that stand the test of time. The overreach can be curbed by strengthening the collegium system, ensuring the judiciary is more open and open-minded to a culture of constructive dialogue between the arms of government to increase legitimacy.

III. DISCUSSION

Judicial Activism on Groundbreaking Cases. The most quoted example of judicial activism in India is, arguably, the creation of Public Interest Litigation (PIL). Inaugurated in the 1980s, PIL provided the opportunity to the courts to hear petitions made by the disadvantaged individuals and groups. In *S. P. Gupta v. The Supreme Court Union of India* (1981) broadened the locus standi, permitting locus to be a letter and postcard and as such a writ petition (Seervai, 2003). This innovation of procedures made the judicial system accessible to millions of people who had never had an access to the formal litigation. Activist narratives were also supported in environmental jurisprudence. In *M. C. Mehta v. Union of India* (1986), the Court made broad interpretations of constitutional rights, to deal with industrial pollution and degradation of the environment. Judicial involvement in the intricate socio-economic issues was evidenced by the judiciary readiness to give remedial directions such as closing of the polluting industries, and paying reparations to the impacted communities. The activism of the judiciary in the human rights issue is seen in such cases as *Vaccine Compensation and Right to Privacy* (Justice K. S. Puttaswamy v.). In *Union of India, 2017*, in which the Court restated constitutional protection outside conventional containers. The judgment *Right to Privacy* redefined the perception of individual rights, which is judicial activism to protect the basic rights. **Judicial restraint: Deference and Denial.** The Indian judiciary has been restrained, despite cases of expansive jurisprudence. In *State of West Bengal v. The Supreme Court* rejected the involvement in some executive

activities of the internal security area pointing out the separation of institutions and limitations in expertise (Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights 2010). Further, courts in economic governance have tended to give legislative and executive discretion. As an example, it is common to find that difficult issues that arise to the budgetary policy and taxation are rarely subjected to scrutiny unless there is any alleged situation of blatant constitutional violation. This recognition of areas of policy highlights the fact that the judiciary is not willing to override the judgment of elected branches. The decision that the Supreme Court made in its recent constitutional amendments is also restrained. Although the Court still has the authority of judicial review, it has avoided invalidation of amendments based on the criterion of policy, but has applied the basic structure doctrine to restrain amendments that endanger constitutional identity. *State of Kerala, 1973*). This juristical equilibrium gives the room to the legislature much but champions core values. **Judicial Overreach: Contentious and Critical Issues.** In India, criticisms of judicial overreach are usually brought about when courts are perceived to encroach too much on the policy areas. Judicial review of administrative appointments and transfer has been one of the controversial areas. Courts in a number of cases have made decisions on staffing and governance issues that critics claim is under the executive prerogative. The other point of contention has been judiciary-led committees to check on the exercise of executive powers, such as regarding the environmental standards or prison reforms. Although supposed to implement rights, institutional competence and accountability issues emerge when such interventions are implemented. Other researchers believe that excessive authority will weaken the democratic legitimacy. They claim that judges who are not elected lack political accountability that is central to the legislature and the executive, and encroaching that aspect may lead to a loss of trust among the people. Others respond by arguing that there is a strong need in most cases to safeguard the rights of minorities through strong judicial intervention to check the majoritarian excesses. **Finding the Balance: Institutional Dialogue and Accountability.** Instead of being discrete, judicial activism, restraint, and overreach can be considered as being on a continuum. The judiciary system of the Indian society changes according to the socio-political conditions, legislative activities, and expectations of the population. To establish a constitutional order, institutional dialogue is necessary, i.e. the dialog between courts which respect the democratic decision-

making and guarantees them to follow the constitutional norms. Mechanisms such as judicial review, basic structure doctrine and PIL have interlocking functions. Judicial review can ensure enforcement of the constitution, the basic structure doctrine protects basic values, and the PIL democratizes access to justice. Nevertheless, legislative supervision, transparency of the executive and the involvement of civil society are also vital institutional processes that support democratic governance. Judicial restraint is particularly relevant in situations when the courts identify their institutional constraints and leave to elected branches in case the constitutional norms allow different ways of doing things. Judicial activism on the other hand comes into the limelight in situations where basic rights are threatened by state or non state action. The courts are accused of overreach when they do not present reasons to justify their interventions on constitutional grounds. The overlay mapping of the judiciary, therefore, indicates that the judiciary is supposed to negotiate its powers constantly by claiming its right to enforce rights, withdrawing to safeguard democratic privileges, and not overstepping its commitment to institutional validity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Judicial activism, restraint and overreach in the Indian constitutional spectrum make up a dynamic change. An undeniable role the judiciary has played is in the growth of rights, constitutional morality, as well as safeguarding democratic values. Judicial activism helped in accessing justice, rights infringements and the creation of innovations in law such as PIL. Judicial restraint declared respect to democratic organisations and enhanced the separation of powers, such that the courts do not jeopardise an institutional equilibrium. Judicial overreach is a controversial term; nonetheless, it is a normative term that raises the question of introspection when judicial action seems to cross constitutional boundaries. It is observed that Indian jurisprudence proves that these categories are not mutually exclusive but points of a constitutional continuum. The legitimacy of the judicial system is not caused by the strict following of any one of the approaches rather than because of the ability to moderate the reactions in relation to the constitutional responsibilities, to institutional competencies and democratic sensibilities. This balance of defending fundamental rights and not undermining the democratic governance, and control without condoning the violation of the constitution, should be maintained in future judicial practice. By so doing, the Indian judiciary will go on to influence a

constitutionalism that will remain strong and dynamic according to the changing demands of society. The Indian constitutional spectrum is still a developing process because the judiciary has to balance between protecting rights and maintaining the democratic order by walking the fine line.

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Child Sexual Abuse in India: Legal Protections Under the POCSO Act

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Abstract

Child sexual abuse constitutes a serious violation of child rights, human dignity, and constitutional guarantees in India. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 was enacted to address the inadequacies of general criminal law by providing a comprehensive, child-centric legal framework for preventing and punishing sexual offences against children. This paper examines the evolution of laws relating to child sexual abuse, the salient features of the POCSO Act, and the procedural safeguards designed to ensure child-friendly justice. It critically analyses the role of the judiciary in interpreting and strengthening the Act through purposive and progressive judgments, while balancing child protection with the right to a fair trial. The study also evaluates the impact of the POCSO (Amendment) Act, 2019, particularly the introduction of enhanced punishments and the death penalty for aggravated offences, and the debates surrounding deterrence and effective justice. The paper argues that while the statutory framework has significantly strengthened child protection, the success of the POCSO regime ultimately depends on consistent implementation, institutional capacity, judicial sensitivity, and a holistic approach that integrates prevention, rehabilitation, and victim-oriented support mechanisms.

Keywords— Child Sexual Abuse, POCSO Act, Child Rights, Sexual Offences, Indian Criminal Law.

I. INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious violation of a child's bodily integrity, dignity, and autonomy. It involves engaging a child in sexual activities that the child is incapable of understanding, consenting to, or resisting due to age, dependency, or power imbalance. The World Health Organisation defines CSA as the involvement of a child in sexual activity for the sexual gratification of an adult or older adolescent, whether through force, coercion, manipulation, or abuse of trust (WHO, 2006). CSA is not confined to physical contact; it also includes non-contact acts such as sexual harassment, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and online exploitation.

In India, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) provides a comprehensive statutory definition by criminalising penetrative sexual

assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and the use of children for pornographic purposes. The Act adopts a gender-neutral and age-specific approach, recognising all persons below eighteen years as children and acknowledging their heightened vulnerability (POCSO Act, 2012).

Magnitude of Child Sexual Abuse in India

The magnitude of CSA in India is alarming and continues to pose a major challenge for the criminal justice system. Data published by the National Crime Records Bureau shows a consistent increase in reported POCSO cases over recent years, indicating both rising incidence and improved reporting mechanisms (NCRB, 2022). Despite this, experts emphasise that CSA remains significantly under-reported due to fear, stigma, social pressure, and lack of child-sensitive support systems.

Empirical studies reveal that, in many cases, the offender is known to the child, often a family member or member of the immediate social environment, which further discourages reporting and delays legal action (MWCD, 2007).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pitre and Lingam (2021) explain how raising the age of consent to 18 and mandatory reporting under sexual-violence laws (including POCSO's ecosystem) can criminalise adolescent consensual relationships, intensify family control, and create barriers to sexual and reproductive healthcare. The paper argues that legal protection may function as patriarchal regulation unless aligned with adolescent rights and access to health care.

Ferrao (2024) evaluates India's POCSO Special Courts as a key institutional innovation for child victims, noting improvements in dedicated trial structures but persistent constraints—heavy caseloads/pendency, operational difficulties, and uneven capacity across districts. The article highlights that effectiveness depends on resourcing, judicial preparedness, and procedures that consistently safeguard the rights of child victims during trial.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant academic, legal, and social importance as it critically examines child sexual abuse in India through the lens of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. By analysing the conceptual foundations, legal safeguards, and practical functioning of the Act, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of child-centric criminal jurisprudence in India. It is significant for legal scholarship as it evaluates whether the existing statutory framework adequately balances child protection with procedural fairness and effective justice delivery. From a policy perspective, the study highlights implementation gaps, institutional challenges, and emerging concerns that can inform legislative reforms and administrative improvements. Socially, the research underscores the gravity of child sexual abuse as a violation of fundamental rights and human dignity, thereby reinforcing the need for awareness, prevention, and victim-oriented responses. The study is also relevant for judges, lawyers, law enforcement agencies, and child welfare professionals, as it provides insights into improving child-friendly mechanisms and strengthening the overall child protection system in India.

Objectives:

- i. To evaluate procedural safeguards and child-friendly mechanisms provided under the POCSO regime.
- ii. To assess the role of the judiciary in interpreting and strengthening child protection jurisprudence.

III. CONCEPTUAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF CHILD PROTECTION IN INDIA

1. Forms of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse manifests in multiple forms, each involving the exploitation of a child's vulnerability and violation of bodily autonomy. Major forms include:

- i *Penetrative Sexual Assault* – Involves penetration of the vagina, anus, mouth, or urethra of a child by any body part or object, criminalised under Section 3 of the POCSO Act (POCSO Act, 2012)
- ii *Non-Penetrative Sexual Assault* – Includes sexual touching with sexual intent without penetration, such as fondling or inappropriate physical contact (POCSO Act, 2012).
- iii *Sexual Harassment* – Encompasses verbal or non-physical acts like sexually explicit remarks, gestures, showing pornography, or stalking a child (WHO, 2006).
- iv *Sexual Exploitation and Pornography* – Involves using a child for the production, distribution, or consumption of pornographic material, including online abuse (Choudhry et al., 2018).
- v *Online and Digital Abuse* – Includes grooming, sextortion, and exposure to sexual content through digital platforms, increasingly prevalent due to internet access (UNICEF, 2021).
- vi *Incest and Abuse by Known Persons* – Abuse committed by family members, caregivers, or trusted individuals, often remaining undisclosed due to fear and social stigma (MWCD, 2007).

These forms highlight the complex and evolving nature of child sexual abuse, necessitating comprehensive legal and protective responses.

2. Vulnerability of Children and Power Imbalance

Children are inherently vulnerable due to their physical, emotional, cognitive, and social immaturity, which significantly limits their capacity to understand, resist, or report sexual abuse. This vulnerability is

further intensified by a pronounced power imbalance between children and adults, or between older adolescents and adults. Power in this context arises from age, authority, trust, dependency, and social positioning, enabling perpetrators to exploit children with minimal risk of immediate disclosure (WHO, 2006).

One of the primary sources of vulnerability is dependency. Children rely on adults for care, protection, education, and emotional support. When the abuser occupies a position of authority—such as a parent, relative, teacher, caregiver, or employer—the child may fear punishment, abandonment, or disbelief, discouraging resistance or reporting (Choudhry et al., 2018). Emotional manipulation, threats, and inducements are frequently used to maintain silence, reinforcing the imbalance of power.

Social and cultural factors further exacerbate vulnerability. In many societies, including India, children are expected to obey elders unquestioningly, and discussions around sexuality are taboo. This cultural silence limits children's awareness of abuse and their ability to articulate harm (Pitre & Lingam, 2021). Gender, poverty, disability, and lack of education also increase susceptibility, as marginalised children often have limited access to protective mechanisms and legal remedies.

The law recognises this inherent imbalance. The POCSO Act, 2012, is premised on the assumption that a child's consent is legally irrelevant, acknowledging that children cannot freely or meaningfully consent to sexual acts due to unequal power relations. Judicial interpretations have repeatedly emphasised that power asymmetry, rather than physical force alone, lies at the core of child sexual abuse. Addressing CSA, therefore, requires not only punitive legal measures but also structural interventions that reduce dependency, enhance child awareness, and promote safe environments that counter entrenched power hierarchies.

3. Constitutional Protections for Children

The Indian Constitution provides a robust framework for the protection and welfare of children, recognising them as a vulnerable group requiring special safeguards. Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, has been judicially interpreted to include the right to live with dignity, bodily integrity, and protection from sexual exploitation. Article 14 ensures equality before the law, while Article 15(3) empowers the State to make special provisions for

children to address structural disadvantages. Further, Article 23 prohibits trafficking and forced labour, indirectly safeguarding children from sexual exploitation and abuse. The Directive Principles of State Policy reinforce these protections through Articles 39(e) and 39(f), which mandate the State to ensure that children are not abused and that their development occurs in conditions of freedom and dignity. Additionally, Article 45 obligates the State to provide early childhood care and education, recognising the link between education, awareness, and protection. Collectively, these constitutional provisions establish a rights-based foundation that supports specialised child protection laws such as the POCSO Act, 2012.

4. International Obligations (UNCRC and Related Instruments)

India's commitment to child protection is further reinforced by its international obligations. As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989, India is bound to ensure protection of children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation under Articles 19 and 34. The UNCRC adopts a holistic child-rights approach, emphasising the principles of the best interests of the child, survival and development, and child participation. Complementary instruments such as the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000) and the ILO Convention No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour further strengthen international norms against sexual exploitation. Indian courts have consistently relied on these international standards to interpret domestic laws in harmony with global child rights principles, thereby integrating international obligations into the national legal framework.

Evolution of Laws Addressing Child Sexual Abuse in India

1. Position under the IPC Prior to POCSO

Before the enactment of the POCSO Act, child sexual abuse cases were dealt with under general provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, such as Sections 354 (outraging modesty), 375 (rape), and 377 (unnatural offences). These provisions were not child-specific and largely focused on penetrative acts, offering limited recognition to non-penetrative abuse, sexual harassment, and exploitation of male children.

2. *Limitations of General Criminal Law*

The IPC framework suffered from several limitations in addressing child sexual abuse. It was gender-biased, lacked clear definitions of child-specific offences, and did not recognise the unique vulnerability of children. Procedural safeguards were absent, trials were not child-friendly, and evidentiary standards often led to secondary victimisation, discouraging reporting and effective prosecution.

3. *Judicial Recognition of the Need for Special Legislation*

Indian courts gradually acknowledged the inadequacy of general criminal law in protecting children from sexual abuse. Through progressive interpretations emphasising child dignity and welfare, the judiciary highlighted the need for specialised legislation that could address varied forms of abuse and ensure child-sensitive procedures, thereby influencing legislative reforms in child protection jurisprudence.

4. *Enactment and Objectives of the POCSO Act, 2012*

The POCSO Act, 2012, was enacted to provide a comprehensive, child-centric legal framework to address sexual offences against children. Its objectives include defining specific offences, ensuring gender neutrality, introducing child-friendly procedures, establishing Special Courts, and safeguarding the best interests, dignity, and privacy of child victims throughout the justice process.

Salient Features of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

1. *Gender-Neutral and Child-Centric Approach*

One of the most significant features of the POCSO Act, 2012, is its gender-neutral framework, which recognises that both boys and girls can be victims of sexual abuse. Unlike the Indian Penal Code, the Act does not restrict protection on the basis of gender, thereby addressing a major gap in earlier criminal law (POCSO Act, 2012). The Act is also child-centric, as it defines a child uniformly as any person below eighteen years of age and prioritises the best interests, dignity, and psychological well-being of the child throughout investigation and trial.

2. *Definition of Offences under the Act*

The POCSO Act provides clear and exhaustive definitions of sexual offences against children, including penetrative sexual assault (Section 3), sexual assault (Section 7), sexual harassment (Section 11),

and use of children for pornographic purposes (Section 13). By covering both contact and non-contact forms of abuse, the Act addresses the diverse and evolving nature of child sexual exploitation (Choudhry et al., 2018).

3. *Aggravated Offences and Enhanced Punishments*

The Act recognises aggravated forms of sexual abuse where the offence is committed by persons in positions of trust or authority, such as police officers, teachers, relatives, or public servants, or where the child is particularly vulnerable (Section 5). The POCSO (Amendment) Act, 2019, introduced stricter punishments, including enhanced minimum sentences, reflecting the legislature's intent to strengthen deterrence against grave offences (Pillai & Paul, 2019).

4. *Presumption of Guilt and Burden of Proof*

To address evidentiary challenges and power imbalances, Sections 29 and 30 of the Act introduce a statutory presumption of guilt, shifting the burden of proof to the accused once foundational facts are established. This marks a departure from traditional criminal jurisprudence and underscores the law's victim-protective orientation, while remaining subject to judicial scrutiny and fair-trial safeguards.

5. *Mandatory Reporting Provisions*

Section 19 of the Act imposes mandatory reporting obligations on any person, including professionals, who has knowledge or apprehension of a POCSO offence. Failure to report is punishable under Section 21. This provision aims to address chronic under-reporting of child sexual abuse but has also generated debate regarding confidentiality, professional ethics, and adolescent autonomy (Pitre & Lingam, 2021).

Procedural Safeguards and Child-Friendly Mechanisms under the POCSO Act

1. *Role of Special Courts*

The POCSO Act mandates the establishment of Special Courts in each district to exclusively try offences under the Act (Section 28). These courts are designed to ensure speedy trials and a child-sensitive adjudicatory process. Judges presiding over Special Courts are expected to possess adequate training and sensitivity to handle child victims. The exclusive jurisdiction of these courts reduces procedural delays and minimises the child's repeated exposure to adversarial settings (Ferrao, 2024). Judicial practice has emphasised that Special Courts are central to the Act's protective intent.

2. *In-Camera Trials and Speedy Justice*

To protect the dignity and privacy of child victims, POCSO mandates in-camera proceedings and requires that trials be completed, as far as possible, within one year (Sections 33 and 35). Public access to proceedings is restricted to prevent secondary victimisation and social stigma. Courts have consistently held that delayed justice aggravates trauma and undermines the rehabilitative objectives of child protection laws.

3. *Child-Friendly Reporting and Recording of Evidence*

The Act prescribes child-friendly procedures at every stage of the criminal process. Statements of the child must be recorded at a place of the child's choice, preferably by a woman police officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector (Section 24). Aggressive questioning, repeated narration of incidents, and exposure to the accused are expressly discouraged. The use of video-conferencing and intermediaries is encouraged to reduce psychological stress (POCSO Act, 2012).

4. *Protection of Identity and Privacy*

Section 23 of the Act strictly prohibits disclosure of the child's identity through media or public records. Courts have treated breaches of confidentiality as serious violations of children's rights, recognising privacy as intrinsic to dignity and mental well-being. Protecting identity also increases victims' and families' willingness to approach legal authorities (Choudhry et al., 2018).

5. *Role of Police, Medical Professionals, and Support Persons*

The POCSO framework assigns clearly defined responsibilities to institutional actors. Police officers are duty-bound to provide immediate protection and assistance, while medical examinations must be conducted in a child-sensitive manner, preferably by trained professionals (Section 27). The Act also recognises the role of support persons, including counsellors and child welfare experts, to assist the child during the investigation and trial. This multidisciplinary approach reflects an understanding that effective justice requires coordination among legal, medical, and psychosocial domains (Juyal et al., 2017).

Role of the Judiciary in Interpreting the POCSO Act

1. *Supreme Court and High Court Interpretations*

The Indian judiciary has played a pivotal role in shaping the interpretation and application of the

POCSO Act, 2012. The Supreme Court has consistently emphasised that POCSO is a special, welfare-oriented legislation enacted to protect children from sexual exploitation and must therefore be interpreted purposively rather than narrowly. In *Alakh Alok Srivastava v. Union of India* (2018), the Court stressed the State's obligation to ensure effective implementation of the Act, particularly the establishment of Special Courts and child-friendly procedures. High Courts across India have further clarified procedural safeguards, evidentiary standards, and sentencing principles under POCSO, thereby strengthening the Act's operational framework.

2. *Progressive Judicial Trends*

Judicial decisions under POCSO reflect a progressive shift towards recognising the psychological vulnerability of child victims. Courts have accepted that minor inconsistencies in a child's testimony cannot be treated as fatal to the prosecution's case, given the trauma associated with abuse. In *State of Himachal Pradesh v. Sanjay Kumar* (2017), the Supreme Court held that the testimony of a child victim, if found reliable, does not require corroboration. This approach demonstrates judicial sensitivity towards child psychology and aligns with international child rights standards.

3. *Balancing Child Protection with Fair Trial Rights*

While adopting a victim-centric approach, courts have also ensured that the constitutional right to a fair trial is not compromised. In *Bijoy v. State of West Bengal* (2017), the Supreme Court cautioned against the mechanical application of statutory presumptions under Sections 29 and 30 of the POCSO Act. The Court clarified that the presumption of guilt arises only after the prosecution establishes foundational facts. This balanced approach safeguards the rights of the accused while preserving the statute's protective intent.

4. *Landmark Judgments under the POCSO Act*

Several landmark judgments have contributed significantly to POCSO jurisprudence.

- i. In *Attorney General for India v. Satish* (2021), the Supreme Court overturned a restrictive interpretation adopted by the Bombay High Court and reaffirmed that sexual intent, not physical skin-to-skin contact, is the decisive factor in determining sexual assault.
- ii. In *Independent Thought v. Union of India* (2017), the Court harmonised POCSO with

constitutional morality by criminalising marital sexual assault involving minor wives, thereby prioritising child rights over outdated social norms. These judgments collectively demonstrate the judiciary's crucial role in reinforcing child protection while upholding constitutional principles.

- iii. *State of Karnataka v. Shivanna @ Tarkari Shivanna* (2014), in this landmark judgment, the Supreme Court laid down mandatory guidelines for prompt recording of statements of child victims in sexual offence cases. The Court directed that statements under Section 164 CrPC must be recorded at the earliest, preferably within 24 hours, to reduce trauma and prevent torture. Though decided in a rape context, the principles have been consistently applied in POCSO cases, reinforcing the importance of child-sensitive and time-bound procedures (*State of Karnataka v. Shivanna*, 2014).
- iv. *Phul Singh v. State of Madhya Pradesh* (2022), In this case, the Supreme Court reaffirmed that sexual assault under POCSO must be assessed based on sexual intent, and courts should avoid stereotypical reasoning or moral judgments. The decision emphasised victim dignity, proportional sentencing, and judicial restraint, contributing to a more rights-oriented and sensitive interpretation of child sexual abuse cases (*Phul Singh v. State of M.P.*, 2022).

Recent Amendments and Emerging Developments under the POCSO Framework

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2019, marked a significant legislative response to rising incidents of child sexual abuse in India. The amendment was introduced with the stated objective of strengthening deterrence, expediting justice, and reinforcing the protective intent of the original Act. It amended key provisions relating to punishment, especially for aggravated forms of sexual offences against children (POCSO Amendment Act, 2019).

One of the most notable changes introduced by the 2019 Amendment is the enhancement of minimum and maximum punishments. The amendment increased the minimum sentence for penetrative sexual assault and introduced the death penalty as a sentencing option for aggravated penetrative sexual assault, particularly where the offence results in the death of the child or

leaves the child in a persistent vegetative state. These changes reflect a shift towards a more punitive approach aimed at reinforcing deterrence (Pillai & Paul, 2019).

However, the introduction of capital punishment under POCSO has generated considerable legal and academic debate. Critics argue that the death penalty may not necessarily deter sexual offences against children and could potentially discourage reporting, especially in cases where the offender is a family member. Concerns have also been raised regarding the compatibility of extreme punitive measures with principles of reformative justice and child-centric jurisprudence (Pitre & Lingam, 2021). Supporters, on the other hand, view stricter punishments as a strong symbolic assertion of the State's commitment to child protection.

In terms of impact, the amendments have reinforced the seriousness with which child sexual abuse is treated under Indian law. Courts have increasingly emphasised speedy trials, the dignity of victims, and proportionate sentencing in light of the amended provisions. Nevertheless, empirical evidence suggests that effective child justice depends not solely on enhanced punishments but on consistent implementation, institutional capacity, and victim support mechanisms. Thus, while the 2019 Amendment represents a decisive legislative development, its success ultimately rests on holistic enforcement rather than punitive severity alone.

IV. CONCLUSION

The research demonstrates that child sexual abuse in India is a grave violation of constitutional values, human dignity, and child rights, necessitating a specialised and child-centric legal response. The evolution from the general provisions of the Indian Penal Code to the enactment of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 reflects legislative and judicial recognition of the unique vulnerability of children and the inherent power imbalance involved in such offences. The POCSO Act provides a comprehensive framework through clearly defined offences, gender-neutral protection, child-friendly procedures, Special Courts, and safeguards for privacy and dignity. Judicial interpretation has further strengthened this framework by adopting purposive and progressive approaches, recognising the reliability of child testimony, emphasising speedy and in-camera trials, and ensuring that procedural protections are meaningfully implemented. At the same time, courts

have sought to balance child protection with the accused's right to a fair trial, thereby preserving the integrity of the criminal justice system.

The recent amendments introduced through the POCSO (Amendment) Act, 2019, signify a shift towards stricter penal measures, including enhanced minimum sentences and the introduction of the death penalty for aggravated offences. While these changes underline the State's commitment to combating child sexual abuse, the analysis reveals that deterrence cannot rest solely on punitive severity. Effective child justice depends equally on robust implementation, institutional capacity, trained stakeholders, and psychosocial support for victims. Persistent challenges such as under-reporting, procedural delays, and uneven functioning of Special Courts continue to affect outcomes under the Act. Therefore, the protection of children from sexual offences requires a holistic approach that integrates legal enforcement with awareness, prevention, rehabilitation, and sensitivity. Only through such a balanced and rights-based framework can the objectives of the POCSO Act be fully realised and the promise of child-centric justice be meaningfully upheld.

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