



### Equipping Students with Interpersonal Relationship Skills through Islamic Studies Textbooks of Elementary Level

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**Abstract:** Research has proved that healthy human functioning depends on successful interpersonal relationships. The study was designed to determine the extent to which the textbooks of Islamiyat for grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> address interpersonal relationship skills. Content analysis method of qualitative research was employed to collect and analyze the data. All the textbooks of Islamiyat for grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, published by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Lahore Pakistan for the academic year 2020-21, were selected through census for analysis. Based on reviewed literature, regarding the indicators of interpersonal relationship skills, a checklist was developed as a research instrument to analyze the textbooks content. Expert opinion was also sought from the experts in the field. The manifest and latent content of the selected textbooks was analyzed to explore the content that motivates the development of interpersonal relationship skills in students. It was found that the content of all the textbooks of Islamiyat for grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> addressed interpersonal relationship skills at different levels.

**Key words:** Interpersonal relationship skills, textbooks, Islamiyat, content

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#### 1. Introduction

Human beings are naturally social (Aronson et al., 2007). They are influenced by their social milieu and vice versa. In response to this, they form and maintain relationships to lead a successful life and fulfill their fundamental needs. Interpersonal relationships, that help mutual interaction among individuals to fulfill their needs, may be defined as “mutual interaction and behaviors experienced at different levels from acquaintance to close relationship stemming from various needs among two or more people” (Imamoglu, 2008). Being bio-psychosocial, individuals determine their recognition through their interpersonal relationships (Yilmaz, 2010). Interpersonal relationships encompass connections between individuals. There is always a purpose behind the existence of this connection like friendship, social support, mitigation of fears, the realization of goals, etc. Culture, values, and environmental factors influence interpersonal relationships. A person connects with his environment through his world view which is formed from his sensations, positions and actions and it implants the process of humanization of interpersonal relationships. If these relationships are humanized, they get expressed in an individual’s awareness of human dignity, human rights and human values, humane relationships, responsiveness, assertiveness, empathy, etc. (Kleptsova, 2018).

It has been unearthed through a substantial number of studies that healthy human functioning requires positive interpersonal relationships. These relationships prove to be a foundation of pleasure and power to fight back stress; contribute to achieving tasks; become instrumental in meeting testing situations; and emotional backing in day-to-day life. An extensive bulk of research and theory verifies that the academic success of students and their commitment and motivation at school are substantially influenced by their interpersonal relationships (Martin, 2014). Students abstaining to form interpersonal relationships have low ability to solve problems (Kuehner, 2006).

It is believed that positive interpersonal relationships engender numerous benefits. Constructive interpersonal relationships work as instrumental help for tasks, defense to counter stress and risk, emotional backing in everyday life, a foundation for social and emotional growth, and companionship in shared activities (Martin et al., 2009; Martin, 2013). The feeling of being connected also constructively influences students' motivation, commitment and triumph because of its healthy impact on other processes governing self which are related to academic consequences (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). For instance, in addition to improving self-esteem and self-worth, good interpersonal relations with parents, teachers, and fellows cause good social, emotional and intellectual working (Martin & Dowson, 2009). Martin and Dowson (2009) and Martin (2013) reported that it has been proved through numerous theories and conceptions that healthy interpersonal relationships may support student results.

It has also been explained that students learn to settle with a specific group in the school or classroom through social interactions. They also get knowledge about their social skills and training (Wentzel, 1999). Moreover, the dogmas, bearings, and ethics of students match their interactive setting. Therefore, if students are connected to others in the academic domain, they learn all those beliefs, orientations, and values which are needed for proper functioning in academic settings (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The behavior of students is directed by these beliefs and manifests in the form of heightened efforts for goals, self-regulation and persistence (Wentzel, 1999).

It is with the help of healthy relationships that students internalize the beliefs valued by important figures in their environment such as teachers and parents and learn the significance of these particular beliefs for working in school and the classroom. (Wentzel, 1999). For example, in the academic setting, a good relationship with a certain teacher predicts a good likelihood of directing students to adopt some of the beliefs and morals of that teacher (Martin & Dowson, 2009). Notably, relatedness in itself is an important process of self-system (Martin & Dowson, 2009; Martin, 2013). For instance, constructive relationships generate positive effects along with a positive mood and exercise an invigorating function on the self (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

The energy acquired through positive interpersonal relationships leads an individual to motivation and engagement (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Martin & Dowson, 2009). The 'need to belong' hypothesis evinces the fact that healthy relationships produce positive impacts. This hypothesis puts forward that "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The satisfaction of this requirement engenders positive emotional responses as an outcome of its fulfillment. The behavior of students related to achievement which includes their participation, regulation of self, reaction to challenging situations, and use of strategy is believed to be adaptively driven by these positive emotional responses (Meyer & Turner, 2002).

Different theories of achievement motivation can be well understood by using the valuable lens of interpersonal relationships. Therefore, relatedness may serve as a handy tool that can be used to observe and understand the classroom behavior of students and to tackle any motivation and commitment matters surging up in the classroom that may be related to 'other' (Martin & Dowson, 2009). For instance, a student's failure to adjust and settle in the school has been blamed on the inability of the learning environment to provide fulfillment to a student's need to fit in (Wentzel et al., 2004). As the interconnection of student's social, affective and academic aspects is chiefly accommodated by relatedness, it implies that relatedness should be acknowledged under these conditions and the programs for education should also identify this interconnection (Martin & Dowson, 2009).

As a result, educational programs may find a drive by this notion of relatedness to house 'the whole self' and its status in the related academic scenario. Roughly speaking, healthy relationships may provide help for an improved understanding of social working at a large scale as they are considered to be an esteemed human outcome in their place. Parents/caregivers, teachers, and fellows are the three chief relationship springs that prove to be significant in the academic and non-academic lives of students. Each plays a crucial role in the positive working and growth of students (Martin, 2014).

Though each is distinct from the other, both internal and external influences exercise an impact on interpersonal relationships between individuals. Inherent qualities (internal) of the individual, his interactions with other

individuals, and certain other external factors may provide the basis for the categorization of these influences. Moreover, an individual's overall behavior at his workplace results because of the contribution of these influences. As pointed out by Myasishev (1995), though interpersonal relationships are transformed by several factors, such as age, personal characteristics, professional preference, and sociocultural changes, they remain with people throughout their lives. Internal influences which are purely linked to the individual govern interpersonal relationships (Kleptsova & Balabanov, 2016).

These inbuilt influences comprise the characteristics of personality which every individual possesses by birth such as the individual's innate features, capabilities and idiosyncratic competencies as well as his need for love, attachment and control which are contributory to the individual's whole interaction characteristics (Schutz, 1958). This is the most important trait that establishes an individual's uniqueness and distinctiveness from others. Kleptsova and Balabanov (2016) designate these influences as factors that fall into the categories of internal influences and external influences. For that reason, the internal influences make up the total of the features of a person (Kleptsova & Balabanov, 2016).

Nevertheless, these internal influences can play a partial role in determining interpersonal relationships at the place of work because many other external influences overlap with these internal influences and cause interpersonal relationships as a whole. As rendered by Kleptsova and Balabanov (2016), these external influences consist of the group of people who are in interaction with the individual and the work environment in which the individual is to be found to accomplish certain tasks. The interaction of the individuals at the workplace and the accomplishment of the tasks are directly related to the attitudes demonstrated by the group identified. This is because the attitudes demonstrated by the individuals are observed by other individual workers in the workplace and they respond following their observations to make themselves socially meaningful (Kleptsova & Balabanov, 2016).

### **1.1 Problem Statement and Rationale of the Study**

Vitality of social skills has been accentuated by international organizations (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2015; Guerra et al., 2014), different researches (Morgan et al., 2015; Daraee et al., 2016; Rawles, 2016; Alberg, 2019), our national education policies (Government of Pakistan, 2009, 2017), theorists advocating social development (Huitt, & Dawson, 2018), and national curriculum (Government of Pakistan, 2006; PCTB, 2017). Interpersonal relationship skills are one of the integral social skills (Yoder, 2015; OECD, 2015; Morgan et al, 2015; Agran et al., 2016; Daraee et al, 2016; Rawles, 2016; Sedler, 2016; Alberg, 2019).

As human beings are affected by the environment they live in or affect it, so they establish relationships for the sake of life and fulfill their fundamental needs. Interpersonal relationships help mutual interaction among individuals to fulfill their needs. Being bio-psychosocial, individuals determine their recognition through their interpersonal relationships (Yilmaz, 2010). Hence, it is important to analyze the content of textbooks in relation to interpersonal relationships skills. As textbooks are one of the main agencies of social skills.

Textbooks not only provide reliable information but also serve as basic tools to develop students' behavior and attitudes. They are deemed to be effective channels to disseminate skills and knowledge at all stages of education (Government of Pakistan, 2018). It is believed that classroom activities and consequently students' behaviors are strongly affected by textbooks (Tarr et al., 2008). Textbooks provide teachers a sequenced content and help in setting pace of instruction and scaffold as a plan which they can follow throughout the academic year (Government of Pakistan, 2016). Development of social skills is substantially important but there is comparatively lack of research in this field (Daraee et al., 2016) that motivated the researcher. In consequence, the study was planned by the researcher to determine whether and to what extent the content of Islamiyat textbooks for grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, prepared by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Lahore Pakistan, address interpersonal relationship skills?

### **1.2 Objectives**

The objectives of the study were:

- i. To analyze the content of Islamiyat Textbooks for Grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> with regard to interpersonal relationship skills.
- ii. To determine the extent to which the content of Islamiyat textbook for each grade addresses interpersonal relationship skills.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

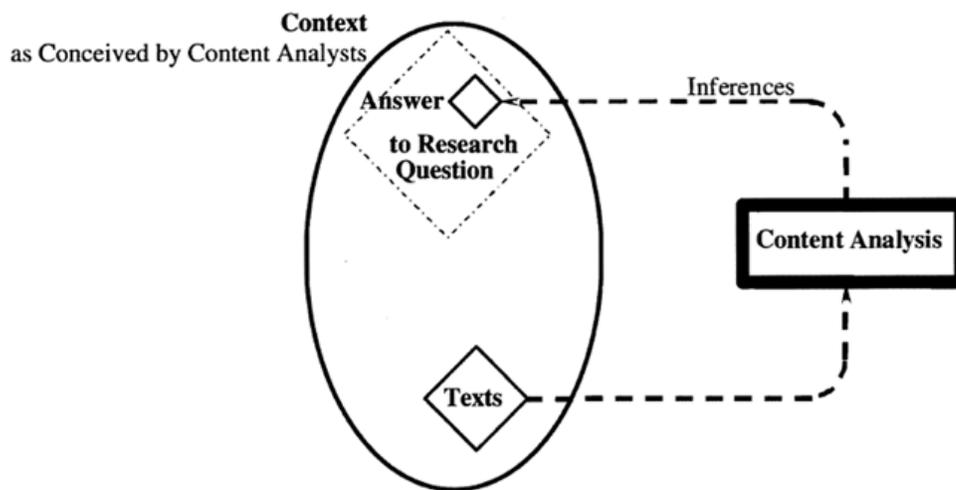
1. At how many places interpersonal relationship skills have been addressed in the content (sentences, phrases, activities, words and pictures) of Islamiat textbooks for Grades 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>?
2. To what extent the content of Islamiat textbooks for each grade address interpersonal relationship skills?

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

In this study, the content of Islamiat textbooks that deal with interpersonal relationship skills was examined using the content analysis method. This approach examines the content in light of the messages' underlying objectives and meanings as well as the specific situations in which they were delivered (Prasad, 2008). One of the fundamental techniques for qualitative research is content analysis. Different types of investigations may be carried out using content analysis. Due to its ability to objectively and methodically analyze textual material, content analysis can also be employed in quantitative investigations (Tuomi & Sarajarvi, 2009). Researchers can use this method to indirectly analyze human behavior by analyzing various communications. In actuality, it is a method that aids researchers in indirectly gathering information about human behavior. It analyzes their communications so that conclusions drawn from texts can be reliable and consistent with the context in which they are used. The finding of meanings is the primary benefit of content analysis above alternative methods (Krippendorff, 2019). This research used conceptual content analysis. In conceptual content analysis the researcher selects concepts or constructs to analyze and then quantify and count the number of times those concepts or constructs appear in the text through particular words, phrases, sentences, and images (Carley, 1990; Busch et al., 2005; Wilson, 2016).

Research design



#### 3.2 Sampling Plan

In content analysis population refers not only to people but also, and mainly, to text, the domains of the analysis (Cohen et al., 2017). For content analysis, the textbooks from grades one to ten prepared by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Lahore were the population of the study. Texts are chosen for sampling based on their contexts, sources, genres, intertextualities, and historical periods. In this study the sample was selected through relevance sampling. The goal of relevance sampling is to choose every text that helps to address the suggested research questions (Krippendorff, 2019). Out of all the textbooks for grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>, the Islamiat textbooks were the sample of the study. These textbooks were published by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Lahore for the 2020–21 academic year, based on the National Curriculum 2006 learning objectives for students.

#### 3.3 Source of Data

The textbooks of Islamiat for grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>, published by Punjab curriculum and textbook board Lahore Pakistan for the academic year 2020–21 in consideration of the learning objectives of the National Curriculum of 2006, were the source of data for this study.

### 3.4 Data Collection Tool

A checklist, based on indicators of interpersonal relationship skills that were found in the reviewed literature, was constructed. The checklist was constructed to identify the content that addressed interpersonal relationship skills in Islamiat textbooks for grades 1st through 8<sup>th</sup> published by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Lahore, Pakistan. The textbooks were taught during the academic year 2020–21. The checklist also received validation from experts in the field.

### 3.5 Units of Analysis

Prior to starting the analysis the researcher specifies the units of content that exactly are to be analyzed (Frankel et al., 2018; Krippendorff, 2019). The unit of analysis is the precise thing that has to be examined. In this study, the units of analysis included words, phrases, sentences, pictures and exercise activities.

### 3.6 Formulating Coding Categories

When the researcher has specified that what units of the content are to be analyzed, he/she formulates coding categories apropos to the exploration (Wilson, 2016; Cohen et al., 2017; Neuendorf, 2017; Frankel, Wallen & Hyun, 2018; Krippendorff, 2019). Coding is a creative and time taking process used in the analysis of qualitative research. The process of creating codes can be predetermined, sometimes referred to as deductive or “a priori. Predetermined coding may be based on a previous key concepts in a theoretical construct. What you hope to impart to others should become the base of your coding. Starting coding content with the purpose of the study is a good way of coding (Stuckey, 2015). In this study predetermined coding was used as the purpose of the study was to find out interpersonal relationship skills in the textbooks of Islamiat. Interpersonal relationship skills was a theoretical construct that had its predetermined types and indicators. These very indicators were used as coding categories to analyze the textbooks of Islamiat. A checklist was developed based on the indicators of interpersonal relationship skills found in the reviewed literature to explore interpersonal relationship skills in the textbooks of Islamiat.

### 3.7 Analysis of Categories (Interpersonal Relationship Skills)

Following the cues provided in the checklist, the manifest and latent content of the chosen textbooks was examined using the content analysis technique to gather and examine the data in order to explore the content that addresses interpersonal relationship skills. A researcher decides before beginning content analysis whether to focus on manifest or latent content. Both the manifest and latent contents of a message may also be specified. The surface, obvious content, the words, visuals, photographs, and other elements that are immediately discernible to the unaided eye or ear is referred to as the manifest content of a communication. Inferences may or may not be necessary. The underlying significance of what is shown or spoken is referred to as the latent content. In order to determine the underlying meaning, a researcher may examine the chosen material and evaluate the extent to which it is likely to advance the desired notion or skill (Frankel et al., 2018). Following analysis, the researcher either develops themes and documents the findings in a qualitative manner or determines the frequency of occurrence of the intended skill, concept, or construct, regardless of whether it exists in latent or manifest content in the form of phrases, sentences, or activities that promote the development of the targeted skill or concept. Both the manifest and latent contents were examined in this investigation. During analysis the frequency of occurrence, of words, phrases, and visual representations that directly reflected interpersonal relationship skills and could be seen by the naked eye, was calculated. For example, in the sentence "Islam mein dusaron k sath hussn-e-salook ka hukam diya geya hay. Yahan tak keh jo taalaq tureen un se bhe acha salook karnay ki taaleem dee gae hay (Islamiat for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, P56)." For example at another place in the sentences "Masjid mein musalmanon ko aik dusary se milnay ka moqa milta hay. Panch waqt apas mein milnay se muhabat barhati hay aur bahami itefaq paida huta hay. (Islamiat for grade 3, P32)" the underlined words manifestly teach interpersonal relationship skill. The sentences and activities which motivate the development of some interpersonal relationship skills through their underlying meanings were also coded and calculated. For example, the sentence " Madina k musalmano nay hijrat kar k anay walay musalmano ki her tarah se madad ki (Islamiat for grade 4, P56)." latently motivates the development of interpersonal relationship skills. The reliability was ensured through re-analyzing each textbook with a gap of some days and matching the results of both the analyses. Commonly 80 percent agreement between the two analyses is considered (Frankel et al., 2018). In this study, the agreement between the two analyses was 82-95 percent.

### 3.8 Criterion for determining inclusion level of interpersonal relationship skills in each textbook

The following criterion was used to assess how much interpersonal relationship skills are covered in the Islamiat textbooks for grades 1st through 8<sup>th</sup>.

Table 1: Criterion to determine the extent of inclusion of interpersonal relationship skills in each textbook of Islamiat

Range of frequency of interpersonal relationship skills existence	Extent/level
Up to 10 times occurrence (in each grade)	Low
11-20 times occurrence	Moderate
Above 20 times occurrence	High

The level of existence was determined by measuring the frequency of occurrence in each textbook of Islamiat to determine how much interpersonal relationship skills are addressed in the content of Islamiat textbooks for grades 1st through 8<sup>th</sup>.

### 4. Results

The manifest and latent content (words, pictures, phrases, sentences, and activities) of Islamiat textbooks for grades 1st through 8<sup>th</sup> was analyzed to examine interpersonal relationship skills. It was determined how often interpersonal relationship skills were covered in each grade. Following is a breakdown of the frequencies of interpersonal relationship skills in each grade textbook of Islamiat.

Table 2: Inclusion of interpersonal relationship skills in the textbooks

Grade	Frequency of interpersonal relationship skills in each grade textbook of Islamiat
1	5
2	6
3	2
4	4
5	6
6	9
7	22
8	12
9	4
10	0
Total frequency	70

Table 2 indicates grade-wise frequency of interpersonal relationship skills in the manifest and latent content (words, pictures, phrases, sentences and activities) of Islamiat textbooks for grades 1<sup>st</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>. Collectively the content of Islamiat textbooks addressed interpersonal relationship skills 70 times. The table horizontally reflects grade-wise frequency of interpersonal relationship skills. In the content of grade one textbook of Islamiat interpersonal relationship skills were attended at 5 places. Interpersonal relationship skills were attended in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade textbook 6 times. The grade 3 textbook contained content at 2 places that motivated interpersonal relationship skills. In the content of 4<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks interpersonal relationship skills were attended 4 times. The textbook of 5<sup>th</sup> grade contained the components of interpersonal relationship skills at 6 places. The content of 6<sup>th</sup> grade encouraged interpersonal relationship skills at 9 places. Grade 7<sup>th</sup> textbook contained content at 22 places that motivated interpersonal relationship skills. The textbook of 8<sup>th</sup> grade addressed interpersonal relationship skills 12 times. The content of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades textbook of Islamiat attended interpersonal relationship skills at 4 places.

### 4.1 Findings and Discussion

A textbook is placed in the position of an imperative reference and resource for students' learning in the education

system. It guides the teacher to decide on the depth and limit of the content to be presented to the students while teaching (Sharma, 2017). This study found that the elements of interpersonal relationships were included in the textbooks of Islamiyat for grades 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> at low frequency. The findings of the study by Shah et al. (2022) to some extent fall in line with this finding regarding the inclusion of interpersonal relationship skills supporting material in the English textbook for 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In conformity with this, Rehman et al. (2023) reported very low frequency of interpersonal relationship skills in the textbooks of English, Urdu and social studies for grade one. In the same way, Bano and Abubakar (2021) found low frequency of social etiquettes and participatory citizenship skills, types of interpersonal relationship skills, in the content of 5<sup>th</sup> grade English textbook based on Single National Curriculum.

This study found that interpersonal relationships skills were attended in the textbook of Islamiyat for grade 7<sup>th</sup> in high frequency. The findings of Rehman et al. (2023) conform to this finding. They found high frequency of interpersonal relationships skills in the content of Islamiyat for grade one. In the same way, Gonen et al. (2012) noted a notable frequency of peer-related social skills in one hundred pictured story books which belonged to interpersonal relationship skills.

## 5. Conclusions

As far as the grade wise inclusion of interpersonal relationships skills is concerned, they have been addressed in the content of 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook of Islamiyat in the highest frequency, while in the content of grade 3 Islamiyat textbook, interpersonal relationships skills have been addressed in the lowest frequency.

The 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook of Islamiyat addresses interpersonal relationships skills at high level. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook of Islamiyat addresses Interpersonal relationships skills at moderate level. The textbooks of Islamiyat for grades 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> address interpersonal relationships skills at low level.

### 5.1 Recommendations

As the study concluded that in the content of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades textbooks interpersonal relationships skills have been addressed in the low frequency. Keeping in view the vitality of interpersonal relationships for the success in life, it is recommended for Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Lahore that more content addressing interpersonal relationship skills be included in the textbooks where it lacks and especially in the content of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades Islamiyat textbooks.

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