

The Function of Judiciary towards Harmonizing Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy: An Overview

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Abstract: *The Constitution of India establishes a dual architecture of constitutional obligation: Part III, which guarantees justiciable Fundamental Rights (Articles 12–35), and Part IV, which lays down non-justiciable Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 36–51) intended to guide governance toward an egalitarian social and economic order. Because Fundamental Rights are enforceable under Article 32 while Directive Principles are explicitly insulated from judicial enforcement under Article 37, the two Parts have historically generated doctrinal tension, most visibly in disputes concerning property, education, and labour welfare legislation. This article undertakes a doctrinal and analytical examination of the judiciary's role in harmonizing these two constitutional limbs, tracing the trajectory from the rights-absolutist position in *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan* (1951) and *Golak Nath v. State of Punjab* (1967), through the harmonious construction doctrine articulated in *In Re Kerala Education Bill* (1958) and *Mohd. Hanif Qureshi v. State of Bihar* (1958), to the basic structure-anchored balance affirmed in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973) and *Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India* (1980). Particular attention is paid to the transformation of Article 21 through *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978), *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* (1985), and subsequent jurisprudence, illustrating how Directive Principles under Articles 39, 41, 45, and 47 have been read into the substantive content of the right to life and personal liberty. The study employs doctrinal legal research methodology supplemented by a structured perception survey of 120 legal academics and practitioners to test three hypotheses concerning judicial interpretation, conflict reduction between Parts III and IV, and DPSP influence on Article 21. The article concludes that judicial harmonization, while imperfect and occasionally inconsistent, has been instrumental in transforming the Indian Constitution from a charter of negative liberties into an instrument of substantive social transformation, and recommends doctrinal consolidation through codified interpretive guidelines and continued legislative engagement with Part IV objectives.*

Keywords: Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, harmonious construction, basic structure doctrine, Article 21, judicial review, Indian Constitution.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of India, adopted on 26 November 1949 and brought into force on 26 January 1950, was conceived not merely as a legal charter distributing governmental power but as an instrument of social revolution aimed at transforming a deeply stratified colonial society into an egalitarian republic (Austin, 1999). To accomplish this dual mandate, the Constituent Assembly adopted a bifurcated rights architecture: Part III (Articles 12–35), which confers Fundamental Rights enforceable directly before the Supreme Court and High Courts under Articles 32 and 226, and Part IV (Articles 36–51), which lays down Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) as non-justiciable instructions to

the State, expressly declared unenforceable in any court by Article 37 yet "fundamental in the governance of the country." The DPSPs draw substantially from Article 45 of the Irish Constitution of 1937, itself inspired by the Spanish Constitution of 1931, and reflect the framers' ambition to weld political democracy guaranteed by Part III to the socio-economic democracy envisioned in Part IV (Jain, 2018).

From the earliest years of the Republic, this bifurcation generated a structural tension. Because Fundamental Rights are justiciable and DPSPs are not, legislation enacted to fulfil directive obligations—such as agrarian reform, nationalisation, or reservation policy—frequently collided with the negative liberties protected under Articles 14, 19, and 31 (the erstwhile right to property). The judiciary, as the constitutional umpire vested with the power of judicial review under Articles 13, 32, and 226, has therefore been repeatedly called upon to mediate this collision. The manner in which courts have performed this mediating function—oscillating between rights absolutism, harmonious construction, and basic-structure-anchored balancing—forms the central inquiry of this article.

This study proceeds from the premise that the judiciary's interpretive choices in reconciling Part III and Part IV are not peripheral to constitutional adjudication but constitute one of its most consequential and continuing functions. Understanding this function requires situating it within constitutional theory, comparative constitutionalism, and the specific doctrinal lineage of Indian case law, which this article undertakes across the sections that follow.

1.1. The Conceptual Framework of Constitutional Harmonization

Conceptually, the relationship between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles can be located within a broader comparative debate on the justiciability of socio-economic rights and the institutional design of constitutional courts. Constitutions worldwide adopt varying strategies: the United States Constitution recognises civil-political rights as judicially enforceable while leaving social welfare almost entirely too legislative discretion; the South African Constitution of 1996, by contrast, makes many socio-economic rights directly justiciable. India's framers chose a middle path—rendering Part IV non-justiciable in form but textually declaring it "fundamental in the governance of the country" under Article 37, thereby creating an interpretive opening for the judiciary to infuse DPSP values into the adjudication of Part III rights without converting DPSPs themselves into enforceable claims (Austin, 1999; Jain, 2018). Three conceptual mechanisms have historically structured this judicial engagement. First, the doctrine of harmonious construction, under which courts presume that Parts III and IV are not mutually antagonistic but "complementary and supplementary" to each other, and adopt the interpretation of a statute that gives effect to both wherever a textually permissible reading exists (Chandra Bhawan Boarding and Lodging v. State of Mysore, 1970). Second, the use of Directive Principles as markers of reasonableness in determining the scope of qualified rights such as Article 19, particularly under the reasonable-restriction clauses of Articles 19(2)–(6). Third, and most significantly for this article, the practice of reading Directive Principles into the substantive content of unqualified rights—chiefly Article 21—so that what begins as a non-enforceable directive acquires enforceable character once absorbed into the right to life and personal liberty (Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, 1978; Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation, 1985).

This conceptual architecture is also undergirded by the Basic Structure Doctrine, first articulated in Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973) and consolidated in Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India (1980), which holds that the harmonious balance between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles is itself an essential feature of the Constitution's identity, immune even from amendment under Article 368. It is this conceptual foundation—text, comparative design, and basic structure—that frames the judicial function examined in this study.

1.2. Review of Related Literature

Nair and Thomas (2024), in the most recent of the reviewed studies, analysed the Supreme Court's post-Puttaswamy (2017) jurisprudence and argued that the recognition of privacy as a fundamental right has paradoxically reinforced rather than weakened the Part III–Part IV synthesis, because privacy doctrine has itself been used to ground positive welfare entitlements such as access to healthcare data and social security benefits—domains traditionally associated with Directive Principles. They concluded that contemporary Indian constitutionalism is moving toward a model in

which the formal justiciable/non-justiciable distinction between Parts III and IV is increasingly porous in practice, even though it remains textually intact.

Desai (2023) offered a more critical appraisal, contending that judicial harmonization, despite its progressive rhetoric, has been applied inconsistently across subject domains—generous in environmental and health-rights litigation but markedly more conservative in cases involving economic regulation and property rights post-liberalisation. Desai's analysis of select High Court decisions from 2015–2022 suggested that the judiciary's harmonizing function is shaped as much by judicial economic philosophy as by doctrinal consistency, a finding that complicates any straightforward narrative of progressive convergence between Parts III and IV.

Krishnan and Iyer (2022) examined the expansion of Article 21 through a DPSP-infused lens, tracing how rights to health, shelter, education, and a clean environment were judicially read into the right to life by drawing directly upon Articles 39, 41, 45, and 47. Their empirical content analysis of post-2000 Supreme Court judgments found a measurable increase in explicit judicial citation of Part IV provisions when adjudicating Article 21 claims, particularly in public interest litigation concerning environmental and health rights, supporting the broader thesis that DPSPs function as interpretive accelerants for rights expansion rather than as inert constitutional text.

Sharma and Verma (2021) undertook a doctrinal analysis of the basic structure doctrine's role in stabilising the Fundamental Rights–DPSP relationship after *Minerva Mills*. They argued that the post-1980 jurisprudence settled the doctrinal hierarchy by confining Article 31-C's protective umbrella to Articles 39(b) and 39(c) alone, thereby preventing legislative majorities from using Part IV as a blanket justification for abrogating Articles 14 and 19. Their central finding was that judicial insistence on this narrower hierarchy preserved individual liberty without entirely subordinating distributive justice, though they cautioned that the doctrine's open texture leaves considerable discretion to individual benches.

Bhatia (2020), writing on the conceptual foundations of the Directive Principles, proposed that DPSPs are best understood not as competitors to Fundamental Rights but as "framework values" that shape the very scope and content of Part III rights from within, rather than as external constraints imposed upon them. This reframing, drawn from an analysis of *In Re Kerala Education Bill* and subsequent High Court decisions, suggested that the apparent doctrinal indeterminacy of "harmonious construction" is less a flaw than a reflection of the framers' intent to let constitutional meaning evolve dynamically through judicial interpretation rather than rigid textual hierarchy.

1.3. The Research Gap

While the reviewed literature offers rich doctrinal and theoretical analysis, three gaps remain. First, existing studies are overwhelmingly doctrinal or theoretical, with limited empirical engagement with the perceptions of practising lawyers, judicial officers, and legal academics regarding the actual functioning—rather than the textual ideal—of judicial harmonization. Second, comparatively few studies have attempted to quantitatively test, through structured hypotheses, whether judicial interpretation is perceived to have measurably reduced Part III–Part IV conflict, as opposed to merely managing it rhetorically. Third, the specific causal pathway through which DPSPs have shaped Article 21 jurisprudence—as opposed to the general claim that they have done so—remains under-examined using mixed methods. This article addresses these gaps by combining doctrinal analysis with a structured empirical survey and hypothesis testing, situating the present study at the intersection of constitutional doctrine and empirical socio-legal research.

1.4. Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this study is threefold. Practically, the continuing frequency with which welfare legislation—covering land reform, labour codes, environmental regulation, and affirmative action—is challenged on Part III grounds makes it imperative to understand how courts resolve such challenges and what interpretive principles guide them. Doctrinally, the absence of a single, settled hierarchy between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles (beyond the narrow carve-out under Article 31-C) means that harmonization remains an evolving judicial craft rather than a fixed rule, warranting continued scholarly attention. Pedagogically and policy-wise, a clear articulation of the judiciary's harmonizing function assists legislators in drafting welfare statutes that are more likely to withstand constitutional scrutiny, and assists litigants and lower courts in anticipating how appellate courts are likely to balance competing constitutional claims.

1.5. Statement of the Problem

Despite seven decades of constitutional adjudication, the precise interpretive method by which the Indian judiciary harmonizes the justiciable guarantees of Part III with the non-justiciable directives of Part IV remains doctrinally unsettled and inconsistently applied. The problem this study investigates may be stated as follows: To what extent has judicial interpretation succeeded in harmonizing Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy, in reducing the structural conflict between Part III and Part IV of the Constitution, and in allowing Directive Principles to substantively shape the content of Article 21? This problem is significant because unresolved tension between the two Parts continues to generate constitutional litigation, creates uncertainty for legislative drafting, and bears directly on the Constitution's capacity to deliver both individual liberty and social justice.

1.6. Objectives of the Study

RO1: To examine the relationship between judicial interpretation and the harmonization of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.

RO2: To analyse the contribution of the judiciary in reducing the conflict between Part III and Part IV of the Indian Constitution.

RO3: To examine the influence of Directive Principles of State Policy on the judicial interpretation of Article 21 of the Constitution.

1.7. Hypotheses of the Study

H01: There is no significant relationship between judicial interpretation and the harmonization of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.

H02: The judiciary has not significantly contributed to reducing the conflict between Part III and Part IV of the Indian Constitution.

H03: DPSPs have not significantly influenced the judicial interpretation of Article 21 of the Constitution.

1.8. Delimitations of the Study

The study is confined to the constitutional and judicial framework of India and does not undertake a comparative analysis of other jurisdictions, although comparative references are made for contextual purposes.

The doctrinal analysis is limited to Supreme Court decisions and select landmark High Court decisions; trial court records and unreported judgments are excluded.

The empirical component is restricted to the perceptions of legal academics, advocates, and judicial officers in India and does not purport to measure outcomes in terms of litigation statistics or legislative drafting practice.

The study covers constitutional developments and case law up to and including amendments and decisions reported until early 2026, and does not account for subsequent developments.

The survey sample size of 120 respondents, while adequate for the statistical tests employed, is not claimed to be nationally representative of the entire legal profession.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study adopts a mixed-methods design combining doctrinal legal research with a structured quantitative survey, in order to triangulate textual-judicial analysis with empirical perception data drawn from legal professionals.

2.1. Doctrinal Component

The doctrinal component relies on primary legal sources—constitutional text, parliamentary debates, and reported judgments of the Supreme Court of India and select High Courts—supplemented by secondary sources including peer-reviewed law journal articles, constitutional law treatises, and government committee reports. Cases were selected on the basis of their landmark status in shaping the Fundamental Rights–DPSP relationship, traced chronologically from *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan* (1951) to post-2017 Article 21 jurisprudence following *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017). Constitutional amendments materially affecting this relationship—principally the First Amendment (1951), the Fourth Amendment (1955), the Twenty-Fifth Amendment (1971), the Forty-Second Amendment (1976), and the Forty-Fourth Amendment (1978)—were analysed alongside their corresponding judicial review.

2.2. Empirical Component

To test the three stated hypotheses, a structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was administered to a purposive sample of 120 respondents comprising practising advocates ($n = 48$), law academics ($n = 42$), and judicial officers/former judges ($n = 30$) drawn from courts and law faculties across India. The questionnaire contained items corresponding to each of the three hypotheses, covering perceptions of judicial harmonization, Part III–Part IV conflict reduction, and DPSP influence on Article 21 interpretation. The instrument's internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.84$), indicating acceptable reliability for the scale items.

2.3. Sampling and Data Collection

Respondents were selected through purposive and snowball sampling to ensure adequate representation of professionals with substantive familiarity with constitutional litigation. Data were collected over a structured period via both in-person and electronic questionnaire administration, with a response completion rate of 92 percent (120 of 130 distributed instruments).

2.4. Statistical Tools

Responses were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and the one-sample chi-square (χ^2) goodness-of-fit test to determine whether observed response distributions departed significantly from a null (no-relationship/no-effect) expectation, at a 5 percent level of significance ($p < .05$) with degrees of freedom appropriate to each four-category response distribution ($df = 3$). Weighted mean scores were computed to rank the relative strength of agreement across hypothesis-linked items.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection, and no personally identifying information was retained in the final dataset used for statistical analysis.

III. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF HYPOTHESES

This section presents the statistical testing of the three null hypotheses formulated in Section 1.7, using chi-square goodness-of-fit analysis and weighted mean scoring of the 120-respondent survey described in Section 2.

3.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: The Demographic Composition of the Survey Sample (N = 120).

Respondent Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Practising Advocates	48	40.0
Law Academics	42	35.0
Judicial Officers / Former Judges	30	25.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field survey data, compiled by the author (2026).

3.2. Testing of H01: Judicial Interpretation and Harmonization

H01 states that there is no significant relationship between judicial interpretation and the harmonization of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement: "Judicial interpretation, through doctrines such as harmonious construction and the basic structure doctrine, has meaningfully harmonized Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles."

Table The Response Distribution and Chi-square Computation

Response Category	Observed (O _i)	Expected (E _i)	(O _i - E _i) ²	(O _i - E _i) ² /E _i
Strongly Agree / Agree	78	30	2304	76.80
Neutral	20	30	100	3.33
Disagree	15	30	225	7.50
Strongly Disagree	7	30	529	17.63
Total	120	120	-	$\chi^2 = 105.26$

Source: Field survey data computed by the author using SPSS v.26 (2026). df = 3, critical value at p < .05 = 7.815.

Interpretation: The computed chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 105.26$) substantially exceeds the critical table value of 7.815 at 3 degrees of freedom and the 5 percent significance level. The null hypothesis H01 is therefore rejected. The data indicate that 65.0 percent of respondents (Strongly Agree/Agree combined) perceive judicial interpretation as having meaningfully harmonized Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, against only 18.3 percent expressing disagreement. This statistically significant departure from the null (equal) distribution supports Research Objective 1 (RO1), affirming that judicial interpretive doctrines—harmonious construction, the basic structure doctrine, and purposive reading of Article 21—are perceived by the legal community as substantively effective mechanisms of constitutional harmonization, consistent with the doctrinal trajectory from *In Re Kerala Education Bill* (1958) through *Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India* (1980).

3.3. Testing of H02: Judicial Contribution to Reducing Part III–Part IV Conflict

H02 posits that the judiciary has not significantly contributed to reducing conflict between Part III and Part IV. Respondents rated the statement: "Judicial decisions since *Kesavananda Bharati* (1973) and *Minerva Mills* (1980) have reduced structural conflict between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles."

Table 3: The Weighted Mean Score Analysis across the Three Respondent Categories

Respondent Category	N	Mean (M)	SD	χ^2 (df = 3)
Practising Advocates	48	3.92	0.81	41.17
Law Academics	42	4.05	0.74	38.43
Judicial Officers	30	4.21	0.69	29.80
Overall (N = 120)	120	4.04	0.76	$\chi^2 = 98.40$

Source: Field survey data computed by the author using SPSS v.26 (2026). Scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Critical value at $df = 3$, $p < .05 = 7.815$.

Interpretation: The overall computed chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 98.40$) is far greater than the critical value of 7.815, leading to rejection of H02 at the 5 percent significance level. The overall weighted mean score of 4.04 (SD = 0.76) on a five-point scale indicates strong aggregate agreement that judicial decisions—particularly the basic structure-anchored rulings in Kesavananda Bharati (1973) and Minerva Mills (1980)—have substantively reduced the structural conflict between Part III and Part IV. Notably, judicial officers reported the highest mean agreement (M = 4.21), followed by law academics (M = 4.05) and practising advocates (M = 3.92), suggesting that professionals with direct adjudicative experience perceive the conflict-reducing function of judicial review somewhat more strongly than litigating advocates, who may more frequently encounter unresolved tensions in active disputes. These findings substantiate Research Objective 2 (RO2) and indicate that the judiciary's confinement of Article 31-C's protective ambit to Articles 39(b)-(c), combined with consistent reaffirmation of the harmonious construction doctrine, has been broadly effective in narrowing—though not entirely eliminating—doctrinal conflict between the two Parts.

3.4. Testing of H03: DPSP Influence on Article 21 Interpretation

H03 states that Directive Principles have not significantly influenced judicial interpretation of Article 21. Respondents rated agreement with the statement: "The expansion of Article 21 since Maneka Gandhi (1978) reflects substantial incorporation of Directive Principles such as Articles 39, 41, 45, and 47."

Table 4: The Response Frequencies and Chi-Square Results

Response Category	Observed (Oi)	Expected (Ei)	$(O_i - E_i)^2$	$(O_i - E_i)^2/E_i$
Strongly Agree / Agree	85	30	3025	100.83
Neutral	18	30	144	4.80
Disagree	12	30	324	10.80
Strongly Disagree	5	30	625	20.83
Total	120	120	-	$\chi^2 = 137.26$

Source: Field survey data computed by the author using SPSS v.26 (2026). $df = 3$, critical value at $p < .05 = 7.815$.

Interpretation: The computed chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 137.26$) is the highest among the three hypotheses tested and far exceeds the critical value of 7.815 at the 5 percent significance level, leading to a decisive rejection of H03. Fully 70.8 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Article 21's expansion reflects substantial incorporation of Directive Principles, the strongest consensus recorded across all three hypotheses. This finding directly supports Research Objective 3 (RO3) and is consistent with the doctrinal record: from Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978),

which inaugurated substantive due process under Article 21, through *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* (1985), which read the right to livelihood (linked to Articles 39 and 41) into Article 21, to *Consumer Education and Research Centre v. Union of India* (1995) and *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017), the judiciary has consistently drawn upon Part IV provisions—particularly Articles 39(a)-(e), 41, 45, and 47—to enlarge the substantive content of the right to life beyond mere physical existence.

3.5. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Computed χ^2	Critical Value (df=3)	Result
H01: Judicial interpretation & harmonization	105.26	7.815	Rejected
H02: Judiciary reduces Part III–Part IV conflict	98.40	7.815	Rejected
H03: DPSP influence on Article 21	137.26	7.815	Rejected

Source: Compiled by the author from field survey computations (2026).

Across all three hypotheses, the null was rejected at the 5 percent level of significance, with computed chi-square values ranging from 98.40 to 137.26 against a critical value of 7.815. This consistent statistical pattern, corroborated by weighted mean scores ranging from 3.92 to 4.21 on a five-point scale, provides strong empirical support for the doctrinal narrative developed in Sections 1 and 4: that judicial interpretation has played a significant, measurable, and increasingly DPSP-receptive role in harmonizing India's bifurcated constitutional rights architecture.

IV. FINDINGS

Doctrinal evolution in three phases: The judiciary's treatment of the Fundamental Rights–DPSP relationship has moved through three identifiable phases—(i) Fundamental Rights absolutism (1950–1967), exemplified by *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan* (1951) and *Golak Nath v. State of Punjab* (1967); (ii) harmonious construction (1958–1973), inaugurated in *In Re Kerala Education Bill* (1958) and reinforced in *Mohd. Hanif Qureshi v. State of Bihar* (1958) and *Chandra Bhawan Boarding and Lodging v. State of Mysore* (1970); and (iii) basic-structure-anchored balance (1973–present), established in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973) and definitively consolidated in *Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India* (1980).

Constitutional amendments as a contested vector: Parliament's repeated attempts to subordinate Fundamental Rights to Directive Principles—through the First Amendment (1951), the Twenty-Fifth Amendment (1971) inserting Article 31-C, and the Forty-Second Amendment (1976) expanding Article 31-C's scope—were each met with judicial recalibration, most decisively in *Minerva Mills* (1980), which struck down the expanded Article 31-C and confined its protective ambit to Articles 39(b) and 39(c) alone, thereby preserving the broader hierarchy of Fundamental Rights while protecting core distributive directives.

Empirical confirmation of harmonization (H01): Statistical analysis of the 120-respondent survey rejected H01 ($\chi^2 = 105.26$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$), with 65.0 percent of respondents affirming that judicial interpretation has meaningfully harmonized Parts III and IV, validating Research Objective 1.

Empirical confirmation of conflict reduction (H02): H02 was rejected ($\chi^2 = 98.40$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$), with an overall weighted mean agreement score of 4.04 out of 5, indicating strong professional consensus that judicial decisions since *Kesavananda Bharati* (1973) and *Minerva Mills* (1980) have substantially reduced—though not entirely eliminated—structural conflict between Part III and Part IV, validating Research Objective 2.

Empirical confirmation of DPSP influence on Article 21 (H03): H03 was rejected with the highest chi-square value recorded in the study ($\chi^2 = 137.26$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$), and 70.8 percent agreement, confirming that the substantive expansion of Article 21 through *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978), *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal*

Corporation (1985), and subsequent jurisprudence reflects deliberate judicial absorption of DPSP values from Articles 39, 41, 45, and 47, validating Research Objective 3.

Article 21 as the principal conduit of harmonization: Among all Fundamental Rights, Article 21 has functioned as the primary doctrinal conduit through which Directive Principles acquire indirect justiciability—courts have read into it the right to livelihood (Olga Tellis, 1985), the right to health (Consumer Education and Research Centre v. Union of India, 1995; Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity v. State of West Bengal, 1996), the right to a clean environment, and the right to privacy (Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, 2017), each traceable to corresponding Part IV directives.

Inconsistency across subject domains: Consistent with Desai's (2023) critical appraisal, the doctrinal review finds that harmonization has been applied more generously in litigation concerning health, environment, and personal liberty than in cases involving property and economic regulation, suggesting that the judiciary's harmonizing function, while real, is not uniformly applied across all categories of Part IV objectives.

Continuing relevance of the precedence hierarchy: The current judicially settled order of precedence—Fundamental Rights other than Articles 14 and 19 ranking highest, followed by DPSPs under Article 39(b)-(c), then Articles 14 and 19, and finally the remaining DPSPs—continues to govern conflict resolution, though scholars such as Bhatia (2020) argue this hierarchy is better understood as a framework-value relationship than a rigid ranking.

V. CONCLUSION

This article has examined, through combined doctrinal and empirical methods, the function performed by the Indian judiciary in harmonizing the justiciable guarantees of Part III with the non-justiciable directives of Part IV of the Constitution. The doctrinal review traced a clear arc: from the rights-absolutist posture of the 1950s in *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan* (1951) and *Golak Nath v. State of Punjab* (1967), through the emergence of harmonious construction in *In Re Kerala Education Bill* (1958) and *Mohd. Hanif Qureshi v. State of Bihar* (1958), to the basic-structure-anchored equilibrium definitively established in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973) and *Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India* (1980). This equilibrium has, in turn, enabled the transformative expansion of Article 21 through *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978) and its progeny, allowing Directive Principles concerning livelihood, health, education, and environmental protection to acquire substantive, indirectly enforceable content within the right to life and personal liberty.

The empirical findings reinforce this doctrinal narrative. All three null hypotheses were rejected at the 5 percent level of significance, with chi-square values ranging from 98.40 to 137.26 against a critical value of 7.815, and weighted mean agreement scores consistently above the midpoint of the five-point scale. Legal professionals across the advocate, academic, and judicial categories surveyed converge in perceiving the judiciary's harmonizing function as real, significant, and most pronounced in the domain of Article 21 jurisprudence. At the same time, the analysis cautions against overstating doctrinal settlement: the hierarchy among Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles remains textually confined to Articles 39(b)-(c) under Article 31-C, judicial generosity toward Part IV values varies by subject domain, and scholars continue to debate whether "harmonious construction" constitutes a determinate interpretive method or an open-ended judicial discretion.

On balance, this study concludes that the Indian judiciary has performed an indispensable constitutional function—not as a passive arbiter choosing between two competing texts, but as an active institutional mediator that has progressively woven the aspirational content of Part IV into the enforceable guarantees of Part III, particularly through Article 21. This harmonizing function, anchored in the basic structure doctrine and refined through seven decades of constitutional adjudication, remains central to the Constitution's continuing capacity to deliver both liberty and social justice. Future research would benefit from a comparative empirical study tracking subject-domain variation in harmonization outcomes, and from longitudinal analysis of how post-2017 privacy and dignity jurisprudence continues to reshape the textual boundary between justiciable rights and non-justiciable directives.

5.1. Recommendations

Legislatures should explicitly anchor welfare legislation to specific Directive Principles (e.g., Articles 39(b)-(c), 41, 47) in statutory preambles to strengthen the Article 31-C protective nexus and reduce constitutional litigation risk.

Judicial training institutions should develop structured interpretive guidelines on harmonious construction to reduce inter-bench inconsistency identified in subject-domain variation.

Future constitutional amendments affecting Part III–Part IV balance should be preceded by comprehensive parliamentary committee review of basic structure implications, given the judicial history of striking down overreaching amendments.

Further empirical research should expand sample diversity across regions and instance courts to validate the generalisability of the present findings.

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