

ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SECTOR OF PAKISTAN: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Kanwal^{*1}, Tasneem Saifuddin², Waqar Ahmed Khan³, Adil Aqeel⁴, Sumaira Arsalan⁵

^{*1,3,4}Research Scholar (NUML University)

²Lecturer (NUML University)

⁵Teacher (Beaconhouse School Systems Karachi)

^{*1}kanwalfaisal205@gmail.com, ²tasneem@numl.edu.pk, ³waqarkhan308@hotmail.com,
⁴adilaaqeel80@gmail.com, ⁵sumairaarsalan.36934@bh.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14761235>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
07 November, 2024	07 December, 2024	22 January, 2025	29 January, 2025

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the systemic challenges undermining the quality of education in Pakistan's public sector schools and their impact on literacy levels. Using a narrative analysis approach, the research explores issues such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of funding, unclean and overcrowded facilities, ineffective governance, and untrained teachers. Semi-structured interviews, observation checklists, and reflection journals were employed to gather data from stakeholders, including teachers and school administrators. The findings reveal the detrimental effects of multigrade teaching, unsanitary conditions, and insufficient resources on student engagement, learning outcomes, and teacher performance. Recommendations include infrastructure improvements, teacher training programs, enhanced accountability systems, and equitable resource allocation. The study highlights the urgency of reforming the public education system to address socioeconomic disparities and ensure access to quality education for all children. By prioritizing these reforms, policymakers can transform Pakistan's education sector into a cornerstone for national development.

Keywords: Public Sector of Education, Illiteracy Level, Narrative Analysis, Educational Disparities.

INTRODUCTION

A key component of any country's growth and advancement is education. In Pakistan, socioeconomic development is significantly influenced by literacy. In contrast to other developing nations, Pakistan's literacy rate is still shockingly low. The public sector, which forms the foundation of the educational system for the poor, faces many obstacles that reduce its effectiveness (Siddiqui et al., 2022). The sector's incapacity to deliver high-quality education is exacerbated by problems including inadequate infrastructure, inadequate funding, unclean conditions, subpar learning settings, and incompetent management. These problems continue in spite of several programs and regulations,

underscoring the urgent need for targeted study and change in this field.

Pakistan's public education system has numerous obstacles that keep it from carrying out its mandate to improve literacy. An atmosphere that is not conducive to learning is created by poorly maintained school structures, a lack of basic amenities, a lack of funding, and inadequate teacher preparation (Khan and Khan, 2006). Millions of youngsters have restricted access to high-quality education as a result of administrative inefficiencies and a lack of accountability. A stagnant literacy rate and growing educational disparity are results of these systemic problems. It is essential to comprehend these issues and their effects

(Memon, 2007) in order to provide workable strategies to enhance literacy.

1.1 Research Objectives

Investigating literacy levels in Pakistan's public education system and identifying the main problems influencing its effectiveness are the main goals of this study. The study specifically seeks to:

- Draw attention to the difficulties public schools confront in terms of resources and facilities.
- Analyze how learning outcomes are affected by the environment, cleanliness, and ineffective management.
- Make suggestions to improve Pakistan's public education system's accessibility and efficacy

1.2 Research Questions

The following important questions are the focus of this study:

- What effects do poor facilities and unclean conditions have on student recruitment and retention?
- What effect does a lack of financing have on the standard of instruction that public schools offer?
- How may ineffective management practices in public schools be fixed to enhance learning outcomes?
- What measures can be taken to improve the public sector's literacy rates in Pakistan?

The literacy levels in Pakistan's public education system are the main subject of this study, which also aims to identify systemic issues and their effects on both instructors and pupils. The study addresses problems with school management procedures, money distribution, cleanliness, and infrastructure. Additionally, it examines the differences in literacy rates between provinces, offering a comparative evaluation of how well certain areas perform in terms of educational quality. The results are intended to help stakeholders, educators, and legislators push for reforms in the public school system, which will raise literacy rates nationwide.

Literature Review

Pakistan's public education system is chronically underfunded, with funds not meeting basic requirements like teacher preparation and facility development. For instance, just PKR 83 billion was set aside

for education in 2020, which was not enough to meet the fundamental needs of schools. Students are forced to learn in subpar conditions in many primary schools because they lack basic amenities like classrooms, furniture, and water. The disparity in access and quality between socioeconomic levels is further widened by the unequal distribution of money, which allocates less for primary education than for higher education. (Ismat and Ashraf , 2016)

It is distressing to see the physical condition of Pakistani schools, especially those in rural areas. Many public schools lack adequate classrooms, sanitary facilities, and potable water. Natural catastrophes like floods worsen these problems by destroying already fragile infrastructure. A recurring problem is the absence of a strong mechanism to repair damaged schools and guarantee educational continuity, which severely disadvantages pupils in vulnerable communities (Khalid and Tadesse, 2024)

2.1 Education in Public Sector in context of Pakistan

Since many public-school instructors lack proper training and are not prepared with contemporary teaching approaches, teacher competency is a crucial concern. Outdated teaching methods that impede student engagement and learning outcomes result from a lack of frequent professional development programs. Additionally, low motivation and teacher absenteeism are common, especially in rural schools where a single teacher may oversee several grades, which further degrades the quality of teaching (Khan, 2011; Ahmed et al., 2014)

The public education sector's governance is characterized by inadequate accountability systems. Lack of training frequently results in poor management and wasteful resource use among educational administrators. Efforts to enhance the educational system are further hampered by corruption and opaque resource distribution. To overcome these governance issues, school administrators and leaders must get professional training and institutional responsibility must be strengthened (Riaz & Sultan, 2017).

Pakistan's dual educational system, which consists of both public and private institutions, has led to glaring differences. While public schools, which are sometimes

underfunded and badly run, serve low-income populations, private schools serve high-income families by providing superior resources and instruction. This discrepancy deepens societal divisions and leads to unequal access to high-quality education. Policies that give equality and resource distribution to underprivileged communities top priority are necessary to close these gaps (Nolan et al., 2014; Rashid & Mukhtar, 2012). The education system is further strained by rapid population increase because the resources and infrastructure available cannot keep up with the rising demand. It is challenging to provide high-quality education in both rural and urban areas due to overcrowded classrooms and a lack of schools. To meet the growing number of pupils, the government must concentrate on population control measures and enlarge educational facilities (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2019).

Despite the challenges, as per statistics revealed by Pakistan Educational Statistics (2021-2022), mentions that approximately 29,359,376 students are enrolled in public sector schools in Pakistan and this strength is deprived of the quality facility in education. It is high time that we need to think for them and some revolutionary steps to make public education system better for the underprivileged children.

Methodology

In order to thoroughly investigate the variables influencing literacy levels in Pakistan's public education system, this study used a qualitative research design. Understanding stakeholders' lived experiences, the sector's structural and systemic issues, and the policies affecting literacy results are the main areas of emphasis. The primary method of gathering data will be semi-structured interviews and observations and researcher displayed her observations in narrative design which give freedom to delve into particular topics of interest. Teachers, parents, school officials, and education policymakers will all be the stakeholders for the study.

The purpose of the study is to identify recurrent issues, such as difficulties attending class consistently or attaining acceptable learning outcomes because of structural constraints. To find trends and important

insights pertaining to the study topics, the gathered qualitative data will be transcribed, coded, and subjected to thematic analysis. The study aims to offer a comprehensive and nuanced knowledge of the literacy crisis in Pakistan's public education system by concentrating on qualitative approaches, opening the door for sensible and useful solutions. Researcher as government employee working in that sector had the privilege to observe the system very deeply therefore the school was selected via purposive sampling as researcher herself was working in the school. The school was selected as a comprehensive government school that was facing many issues related to quality education

Observation checklist was used to observe the classrooms effectively which is enclosed in Appendix: A. Researcher has also used the anecdotes and reflection journal to record the observations carefully. Semi structured interview was also done with the teachers to find out existing challenges in their context. Researcher has also captured pictures of classrooms and buildings which were also carefully analyzed.

Data collected was carefully analyzed through narrative analysis and output is recorded in form of researchers writing which is discussed in subsequent section.

Data Analysis

Data observed through careful observation revealed that there is not enough room in the congested classrooms for every pupil to be comfortably seated. Due to a shortage of suitable furniture, many students are compelled to sit on damaged benches or the ground. The learning environment is unwelcoming and unhealthy since the walls are frequently unpainted, have peeling plaster, and have no natural light or ventilation. The lack of necessary teaching tools like whiteboards, projectors, or charts makes learning even more difficult.

Overall findings are documented in two broader themes:

4.1 Two classes at one time in one class:

The sample school was facing one major problem, which was the simultaneous instruction of two or more grades in the same classroom—is a major problem. The lack of classrooms and teaching personnel is the

reason behind this system. When attempting to teach lessons to multiple graders at once, teachers are frequently overworked. Students from one grade distract others from another, causing frequent disruptions. Each grade has a different seating arrangement, which furthers confusion and lowers the standard of instruction and learning results. Teachers some times have to opt for multigrade teaching means a single teacher catering two grades at a time. Multigrade teaching is an innovative method of teaching especially in an inclusive setup (Saifuddin, Huzaifa & Ishrat,2024). But in the public sector teachers are not trained for this and thus leads to confusion and panic for both teachers as well as students:

As one of the teachers during an interview proclaimed that:

“We sometimes get annoyed to handle the classroom, we don’t know how to handle the two classrooms at same time students even don’t understand, and they start to disturb and make a chaos in the classroom.”

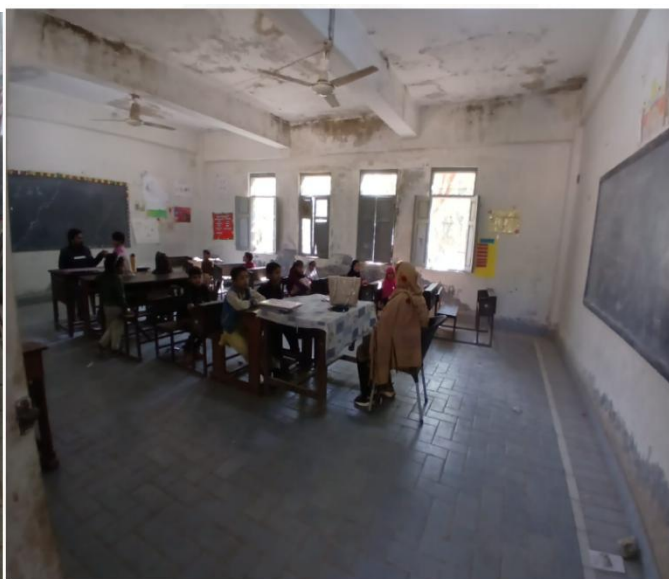
The observation checklist which we used during our observations also reflected in recommendations that “classroom should be managed properly, and teachers should use some interactive strategy to handle classroom effectively”.

4.2 School Infrastructure

A big worry at the school is cleanliness, which reflects the general carelessness in

public schools. Dust and litter buildup occur because classrooms and hallways are rarely cleaned. No effective cleaning schedules or sufficient janitorial staff are in place to ensure hygienic conditions. When they are present, restrooms are frequently dirty and devoid of basic amenities like soap, toilet paper, and running water. Both employees and students are at serious health danger from this unsanitary setting. Due to inadequate supervision, kids at Cosmopolitan GGSS are served poor quality, unsanitary food in the school canteen. The choices are dominated by boxed snacks, fried foods, and sugary drinks; there is little focus on wholesome or freshly made meals. Students run the risk of eating tainted food due to the lack of health and safety inspections, which could result in illnesses including food poisoning. Building cleanliness Broken windows, leaky roofs, and neglected grounds reveal a lack of regular maintenance and funding, and the general state of the school building is poor, with dirt and litter visible in common areas like hallways, stairwells, and playgrounds; paint on walls is frequently chipped, and graffiti is prevalent, giving the building an unkempt appearance; and these conditions have a detrimental effect on students' pride in their school and their morale.

For evidence some pictures of schools are passed to reflect the real infrastructure of the school.



School’s infrastructure is in poor condition, which is typical of many Pakistani

government institutions. In addition to having dilapidated furniture, cracked walls, and too

few student desks, classrooms are packed. Students are deprived of crucial possibilities for hands-on learning since there are no computer laboratories or functional science labs. If there are playgrounds, they are empty and devoid of necessities like sporting goods. Additionally, there are no spaces set aside for extracurricular activities, which restricts students' ability to develop holistically.

Research as part of the study describes that:

“I witnessed that there are more students in the Cosmopolitan classrooms than there is room and furniture to hold. Students are unable to concentrate well in this crowded learning environment.

Many pupils are forced to sit on the floor because the majority of the desks and chairs are damaged or in bad condition. The learning process is hampered by improper seating arrangements.

Inadequate Moreover, lessons are less interesting and productive when classrooms lack basic teaching aids like whiteboards, charts, and technology.

Due to a lack of cleaning, classrooms, restrooms, and common areas are unclean,

dusty, and unsanitary. One factor contributing to the buildup of garbage is the absence of janitorial personnel. The restrooms are in terrible condition, without hygienic materials, soap, and running water. Students and employees are seriously affected by health problems as a result. Moreover, the school canteen serves unclean, low-quality food products that are neither nourishing nor prepared in a clean setting, such as fried snacks and sugary drinks. Especially in the summer, classrooms are uncomfortable places to learn because of inadequate ventilation and frequent power outages.

A large number of educators are not adequately trained in contemporary teaching methods. This has an impact on their capacity to hold students' attention and conduct productive classes. Low pay, few prospects for professional growth, and difficult working conditions frequently demotivate teachers, which results in absenteeism and subpar work”.



There is no proper basic facility for students despite a huge number of students are enrolled. The government should take some necessary steps to uplift these institutions as we cannot comprise the health and education of our children.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

Pakistan's socioeconomic development and advancement depend on raising literacy rates in the public sector. The deep-seated problems in the public education system, such as inadequate infrastructure, low teaching quality, multigrade teaching

techniques, poor cleanliness, and ineffective governance, have been brought to light by this study. Achieving fair access to high-quality education has become extremely difficult as a result of these structural issues, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

To overcome these obstacles, a multifaceted strategy is needed. To create a favorable learning environment, it is essential to prioritize infrastructure development, update teacher training programs, and put accountability measures in place. To further close the literacy gap between rural and urban areas, policies centered on fair resource distribution, improved monitoring systems, and higher budgetary allotments for education would be crucial.

The results of this study further highlight how interrelated the issues ailing Pakistan's public education system are. For example, inadequate infrastructure exacerbates problems like multigrade teaching and crowded classrooms in addition to creating subpar physical learning environments. In a similar vein, inadequate hygienic facilities have an impact on student attendance and retention, especially for female students, and present health hazards that impede academic success even more. To develop a comprehensive solution that can address the underlying causes of the literacy crisis rather than just its symptoms, it is imperative that these issues be tackled collaboratively.

The urgent need to empower educators as change agents is one important takeaway from this study. Teachers have a significant influence on students' learning experiences and results, but inadequate training, low motivation, and unfavorable working conditions limit their potential. To improve teaching quality, professional development programs that emphasize topic competence, classroom management, and contemporary pedagogical approaches are crucial. Additionally, giving instructors both monetary and non-monetary incentives—like performance-based awards and recognition—can greatly raise morale and lower absenteeism. Even the best policy changes and infrastructure improvements could not have the desired effect if teachers are not empowered and motivated.

Additionally, accountability and governance were found to be crucial elements impacting

the performance of public sector literacy programs. To guarantee that education funds are spent effectively and fairly, transparent resource allocation and monitoring systems are required. Stricter control and community involvement are needed to combat corruption and poor administration, which have long afflicted Pakistan's educational system. Through School Management Committees (SMCs), local communities can be involved in school management, which can promote accountability and a sense of shared responsibility for raising educational standards. By serving as a liaison between legislators and school administrators, these committees can guarantee that the opinions of educators, parents, and students are heard and that funds are allocated to meet their most urgent needs.

Additionally, immediate attention is needed to address the socioeconomic gaps between rural and urban communities. Because of weak governance, teacher shortages, and inadequate facilities, rural schools have much lower literacy rates than their urban counterparts. Targeted investments in rural education, such as building new schools, hiring skilled teachers, and providing basic amenities, will be necessary to close this gap. A more equal educational system that leaves no one behind can also be achieved by policies that give priority to underserved groups, such as inclusive education for kids with disabilities and scholarships for low-income students.

Addressing Pakistan's fast population increase, which is placing further burden on the public education system's already meager resources, is another crucial component of raising literacy levels. National policy should incorporate population control strategies including better access to contraception and family planning awareness programs. The government must simultaneously concentrate on building more schools, recruiting more instructors, and making sure that existing schools are prepared to accommodate growing student enrollments in order to increase the educational system's capacity.

It is impossible to ignore the contribution that technology makes to literacy improvement. E-learning platforms and digital tools have enormous potential to improve teaching and learning results, especially in underprivileged communities with limited access to high-

quality education. The gap between urban and rural schools can be closed by integrating technology into the classroom and providing teachers with the necessary training to use digital resources efficiently. Furthermore, offering dependable internet access in isolated locations would guarantee that both teachers and students can take advantage of virtual learning possibilities and online educational materials.

Even though Pakistan's public education system faces many difficult obstacles, they are not insurmountable. Pakistan can learn important lessons from the success of literacy programs in other developing nations and apply them to its own situation. For instance, conditional cash transfer programs to promote school attendance, community-driven education models, and collaborations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have all had encouraging outcomes in raising literacy rates around the world. Such evidence-based tactics can help Pakistan move more quickly toward its literacy objectives.

Lastly, attaining long-lasting gains in literacy requires the cooperation of all parties involved. Legislators must give education first priority as a fundamental right and provide the industry with enough funding. For improvements to be implemented at the local level, educators and school administrators must cooperate. In order to assist schools and hold authorities responsible, parents and communities must take an active role. Pakistan can only overcome its public education system's obstacles and unleash the potential of its millions of pupils by working together. In summary, raising the level of literacy in Pakistan's public sector is a national objective that directly affects the socioeconomic future of the nation, not only an educational necessity. Pakistan may create a more promising and equitable future by tackling the structural problems found in this report and putting the suggested reforms into practice. The moment to take action is now, and funding education is an investment in the advancement of the country. Every stakeholder has a duty to make sure that literacy becomes the cornerstone of Pakistan's development process, changing lives and paving the way for future generations to live prosperous lives.

Addressing systemic issues that impede efficient learning is necessary to raise literacy levels in Pakistan's public education system. The following suggestions center on important issues:

- **Enhancing the Infrastructure**

The physical infrastructure of Pakistan's public schools needs to be significantly improved. It is necessary to update existing classrooms with useful furnishings, appropriate ventilation, and sufficient lighting. To alleviate overcrowding and do away with multigrade teaching methods, more classrooms must be constructed. In addition, schools should include essential amenities like science labs and libraries, as well as clean drinking water and sanitary restrooms.

- **Improving the Quality of Instruction**

To improve literacy, teachers' professional development is essential. Frequent training initiatives should be put in place to give educators the tools they need to use contemporary teaching techniques. To ensure that every subject has a dedicated instructor and to lessen the strain of managing big class sizes, more teachers must be hired. Offering rewards and chances for professional advancement can also inspire educators and lower absenteeism.

- **Overcoming Teaching Difficulties in Multiple Grade**

Teachers should receive specific training to enable them effectively manage different groups in situations when multigrade teaching continues because of resource limitations. However, by guaranteeing that every school has a sufficient number of classrooms and teachers, the ultimate objective should be to do away with multigrade teaching.

- **Enhancing Nutrition and Hygiene**

One of the biggest obstacles to student retention and well-being in schools is unsanitary conditions. To guarantee that classrooms, bathrooms, and other facilities are kept clean, schools should have a sufficient cleaning crew and frequent maintenance plans. Campaigns to raise

instructors' and students' health awareness can help encourage better hygiene habits. In order to guarantee that they serve wholesome and secure food, school canteens also need to be closely watched. Programs offering free midday meals can increase student focus and attendance.

• **Increasing Accountability and Governance**

The efficient utilization of resources depends on transparent governance. It is necessary to have a strong monitoring and accountability system to keep an eye on school administration, teacher performance, and funding distribution. School management committees can promote accountability and openness by including local communities. To guarantee that money is spent properly, corruption and inefficiencies in resource distribution must be addressed.

• **Taking Socioeconomic Inequities Under Control**

More funding should be allocated to rural and impoverished schools in order to narrow the literacy gap between them and urban areas. Students from low-income families should receive financial aid in the form of scholarships, free textbooks, and uniforms. To guarantee that pupils with special needs are accommodated, inclusive education policies ought to be put into place.

• **Reforms at the Policy Level and Budget Distribution**

The government must prioritize subsidizing primary and secondary education while increasing the education budget to 4-6% of GDP. Priority should be given to strictly enforcing the laws requiring free and compulsory education. Long-term plans for enhancing public education and guaranteeing universal access should be created by policymakers.

• **Observation and Assessment**

It is important to regularly assess literacy results and school performance. It is possible to enlist independent organizations to conduct objective evaluations and pinpoint areas in need of development. Future reforms and policies should be informed by the input gathered from these assessments

REFERENCES

- Siddiqui, G. K., Zulfiqar Ali, M. S., Zarar, N., & Asghar, S. (2022). Public Education System in Pakistan: An Exploration into Major Problems. *Journal of Educational Research, University of Education, Lahore*.
- Khan, S. M., & Khan, F. (2006). Pakistan: The State of Education. *The Muslim World*, 96(2), 305-322.
- Memon, G. R. (2007). Education in Pakistan: The Key Issues, Problems and The New Challenges. *Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 47-55.
- Ismat, R., and Ashraf, M. (2016). Problems with Pakistan's public education system: discrepancies between policy and implementation. *The News*. taken from *The News* (18).
- Bari, H., Ismat, U., and Ahmed, A. (2014). Issues with elementary school teacher preparation: A case study of Pakistan's rural areas. *Journal of Educational Research, Islamia University Bahawalpur, Department of Education*. taken from the *IUB Journal of Educational Research*, issue 18.
- M. A. Khan (2011). Reforming teacher education is necessary to enhance learning outcomes at the primary level. *Pedagogical Skills Development Journal*. retrieved from *ResearchGate* [18].
- Riaz, N., & Sultan, S. (2017). What is Under the Layer: Leadership Practices of Public School Headteachers in Pakistan. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(2).
- Rashid, A., Mukhtar, H., and Nolan, A. (2014). Socioeconomic differences in literacy in Pakistan: Examining the gap between public and private schooling. *Journal of Social Sciences in Pakistan*. From *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, retrieved on July 17.
- Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2019. Opportunities and problems in the education sector. *The Ministry*
- Khalid, S., & Tadesse, E. (2024). Understanding Primary School Enrollment in the Free Education Era Through Large-Scale from Punjab, Pakistan: Roadblocks to Meeting the Sustainable Development Goal. *Child Indicators Research*, 17(2), 753-778.
- PAKISTAN EDUCATION STATISTICS 2021 22 HIGHLIGHTS REPORT 1 Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22 -Highlights Report. (2022). <https://pie.gov.pk/SiteImage/Downloads/PES%20Highlights%202021-22%20New.pdf>
- Saifuddin, T., Huzaifa, A., & Ishrat, S. (2024). Implementing Multigrade and Team-

Teaching Approaches to Enhance Holistic Development for Slow Learners in Inclusive Classroom Settings. International

Journal of Innovation in Teaching and Learning (IJITL), 10(2), 58-76.



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES BULLETIN