

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEARNING PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY THE STUDENTS OF GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this study is the comparative analysis of learning problems experienced by the students of government and private schools. Objectives of the study were, to identify the learning problems faced by the students of government schools, to identify the learning problems faced by the students of private schools and to compare the learning problems of the students of government and private schools. For this purpose, the method of quantitative comparative research was adopted. This study was conducted in tehsil City of district Lahore. Sample of 400 male students of grade 5 from private and government schools were taken for this study. Interview schedule including five point Likert's scale (Strongly Disagree (S.D), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (S.A)) was formulated for this purpose. Quantitative analysis was run through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v 26.0 including descriptive analysis (frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation) and independent one sample t test. The study evaluated the students' learning experience based on three indicators including the problems related to concentration, understanding and memorizing of lessons. Findings of this study conclude that private school students have fewer learning problems than government school students, and there is a significant difference between the two groups. This suggests that government schools should recognize the challenges faced by the students in order to address their learning needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is crucial to a nation's overall progress and advancement, encompassing economic, social, political, and structural development (Akram et al., 2021). By improving the education system in Pakistan, many of the country's economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment, resource

mobilization, and issues with housing, infrastructure, and healthcare, can be mitigated (Stein et al., 2019). Despite being a developing nation, Pakistan has not created an education system that satisfies the general public's expectations. As a result, the country is currently dealing with various complex issues and obstacles in the education sector (Pakistan gulf economist, 2022).

Pakistan's education system consists of three primary types of schools: public sector schools, private sector schools, and Deeni Madaris. These schools are categorized as public or private based on their curriculum, examination systems, and the language of instruction used by teachers (UNICEF, 2023). The education system in Pakistan faces numerous challenges, including inadequate budget allocation, poor policy implementation, faulty examination systems, insufficient infrastructure in educational institutions, low enrollment rates, a misguided education system, high dropout rates, political interference, outdated curricula, corruption, poor management and supervision, lack of uniformity, insufficient research, inadequate faculty training and development, high education costs, terrorist attacks, cultural constraints, insufficient parent input, a widening gap between educational institutions and the community, and a lack of academia-industry linkage programs. Additionally, the education system in Pakistan is currently experiencing a learning crisis (Pakistan gulf economist, 2022).

The current education system fails to equip students with the necessary knowledge expected from their respective academic levels. For instance, a student in the fifth grade may only possess the knowledge equivalent to that of a student in the second or third grade (Nurjanah et al., 2018). This learning crisis has emerged as the most significant challenge in our education system, indicating a significant disparity between the quality of education provided and the level of learning achieved by students. This gap suggests a considerable mismatch between the input and output of schools (Pakistan gulf economist, 2022).

Primary education in Pakistan is often overlooked, inadequately funded, and poorly administered. Evaluation of students' academic performance is primarily based on their ability to memorize rather than their actual understanding and application of the concepts (Akram et al., 2020). There are currently 5 million primary-aged children in Pakistan who are not enrolled in school, while 17 million attend school but are still illiterate. The issue mentioned earlier presents a major crisis in primary education that must be addressed before any significant progress can be made (Sharipovna et al., 2019). Focusing on this issue is crucial, as it is difficult to justify the enrollment of children in schools without addressing it. Additionally, there is a growing movement towards developing 21st-century skills that require greater creativity, conceptual understanding, and communication skills that may not be fostered in traditional, rote-based classrooms that are disengaging and result in high dropout rates. Many children may run away or drop out of school due to lacking engagement and relevance to their lives (UNICEF, 2023).

According to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals Report in 2019, Pakistan has a significant number of children who are not attending school, and many of those who do attend are not receiving adequate education. In the UNDP's 2021/2022 Human Development Index ranking, Pakistan

was ranked 161 out of 191 countries, indicating low levels of human development (). Adult literacy rates in Pakistan are also relatively low, with only 57 percent of those aged 15 or older considered literate and 60 per cent of those aged ten or above. Only 51 percent of the population that has attended school has completed primary or higher levels of education. Although Pakistan's Economic Survey in 2021-22 reported a better primary level completion rate (67%) compared to lower (47%) and upper secondary (23%) levels, it also highlights that the country has high dropout rates and a low transition rate from primary to higher grades, particularly in public schools.

Pakistan's public expenditure on education, as a proportion of its GDP, is very low compared to other developing countries. In 2022, it was only 1.77 per cent (Farooq et al., 2020). This insufficient funding has resulted in deficiencies in educational services at all levels in Pakistan, posing a significant obstacle to the country's educational progress (UNICEF, 2023). Since 2009, Pakistan has not developed a new education policy at the national level that includes a commitment to ensuring the enrollment of all children by 2015 (Latif et al., 2020). Previous education policies in Pakistan have set ambitious educational targets but were not achieved as claimed (Sunbal et al., 2021).

Following the 18th constitutional amendment, education has become a matter for the provinces to handle. However, the state of education in Punjab, one of the provinces in Pakistan, is still not up to the mark, with a literacy rate of only 64 percent (Andiema, 2022). About 66 percent of the population has received education at some point, but only 56 percent have completed primary education. Hidayati (2018) reported that In Punjab, the retention rate of students from primary to high school is only 49.83 percent, while the learning score of students in Urdu and English for classes 3 and 8 is 66.57 percent. However, the score for school infrastructure, which measures the availability of electricity, water, toilets, boundary walls, and building conditions, is relatively high at 90.56 percent.

The ratio of students to teachers in schools is high at 51.4 students per teacher, while the approved criteria set by the School Education Department is 40 students per teacher (Rizqon et al., 2021). Most of the schools operated by the government in the province are primary schools, while only 20% are middle and high schools (ADB, 2022). The enrollment rate in government primary schools in Punjab is lower (59%) than in other provinces in Pakistan. Within Punjab, Lahore district has the lowest enrollment rate of only 38%. Moreover, Lahore district also has a higher number of out-of-school children, ranking at 27 out of 36 districts (Andiema, 2022).

There are several reasons why government schools in Pakistan are not performing well, including limited community involvement, inadequately trained teachers, and insufficient resources (Begum et al., 2022). The majority of economically disadvantaged families in Pakistan opt to enroll their children in government schools, which offer free education but are plagued by various issues (Kalyar et al., 2018). In Pakistan, the private education sector is diverse and includes different types of schools, such as those that charge low or high fees, schools supported by local education foundations, and schools run by non-governmental organizations. This sector has been crucial in educating children in the country (NGOs).

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Private sector involvement in education can help address the gap between the demand for education and the government's ability to provide quality education. Private schools are often innovative, responsive to market demands, and quickly adapt to changing circumstances (Bangash et al., 2018). Private sector engagement can improve student learning outcomes if the market operates effectively. The private sector in education has several advantages, such as its proximity to the local communities, access to the local labor market, and more incredible accountability mechanisms due to the demand for private education services. These advantages make them a vital government partner in providing quality and affordable education to society. The private sector's potential to provide education as a social commodity makes them a significant stakeholder in education.

During the past thirty years, private education has become a significant player in providing educational services in Pakistan. The private education sector has experienced a significant increase in educational institutions since the 1990s. In the academic year 2017-2018, the private sector accounted for 37.9% of all educational institutions and 44.3% of total enrollments in the country (Shoaib et al., 2021). Private schools comprise 64.5% and 57.2% of all educational institutions at the middle and high school levels in Pakistan. Between 2008 and 2018, there has been an increase in private school enrollments at the primary level from 28% to 38% (Latif et al., 2020). In Punjab, approximately 50% of primary school students attend private schools. Private middle and high schools have also seen a rise in student enrollment. This trend suggests that families are willing to pay for their children's education because of the poor quality and limited access to public schools. Additionally, data on test scores shows that private schools, on average, perform at least as well as public schools in student performance, despite having lower expenses (Farooq et al., 2020). According to the Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER), private school students consistently outperform their public school peers in terms of academic achievement (ADB, 2022).

This research investigates the prevalence and characteristics of private school attendance in Pakistan using several national household sample surveys. Private schooling is becoming a prominent topic in public and government discussions in Pakistan. Approximately one-fifth of children, or one-third of all students, attend private schools in Pakistan. Students from wealthier, more educated, and urban households are more likely to attend private schools than government schools and those out of school.

There are significant differences in the characteristics of private school students and government school students across Pakistan's four provinces. Moreover, private school students are more likely to come from urban, wealthier, and more educated households than government school students, and the composition of private school students also differs by province. The availability of private schools in a given area is often related to the number of students attending. In the 2000s, private school enrollment rates increased in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces and among different socio-economic groups, particularly for boys, children from urban households, and those from the wealthiest households (World Bank, 2014).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was about the comparison of learning problems faced by the students of government and private schools at primary level, Lahore. As the above chapter explains the meager education statistics at the primary level in Pakistan, it was necessary to identify the specific learning problems of the government and private school students, which are the cause of poor academic achievement of the students. Comparison between government and private schools with reference to learning problems of the students of these schools are made in this study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To compare the learning problems of the students of government and private schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was about the comparison of learning problems faced by the students of government and private schools at primary level. For this purpose, the method of quantitative comparative study was adopted. This study was conducted in tehsil City of district Lahore. All the male students of grades 5 of government and private schools were the population of this study. As mentioned above, all the male students of grades 5 of government and private schools of Tehsil City of district Lahore were the population of the study.

For this study, sampling frame (published list of population) of government schools was available so probability sampling technique was used which permits the researcher to identify the probability/chance that each member of the population/sampling frame will be selected for the sample (Gay et al., 2012). Sampling frames of private school students was not available in this study, so the same sampling was replicated for private schools. There were a total 93 government primary schools in tehsil City. a 10 percent sample (Gay et al., 2012) from the total schools was drawn.

So, the sample of 10 schools or 10 % of 93 was drawn through systematic random sampling technique (i.e., every K th from the list) was used for selecting 10 schools. Based on the sampling technique used for the government schools, 10 private schools were also selected as samples from the tehsil City of district Lahore. So the total number of schools selected as a sample were 20. Then, 20 male students from each government and private school were selected for the interview, so the total number of students selected for the interview were 400.

Students of grades 5 were not be able to read, understand and write the responses of the questions by themselves, so interview schedule including five point Likert's scale from Strongly Disagree (S.D), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (S.A) was formulated for this purpose. Pre-testing of the tool was carried out. The reliability of the interview schedule was tested which was 0.86, which means the reliability was more than 86%. Quantitative analysis was run through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v 26.0 at different levels. The data was interpreted and analyzed through descriptive analysis (frequencies, percentages, mean test and standard deviation) and independent one sample t test.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Table 1 Learning Problems of the students of Government Schools

Sr. #	Indicators	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Total
1	Can you concentrate on a lesson during class?	5	45	15	20	15	100
2	Can you understand the lesson?	15	50	10	20	5	100
3	Can you memorize the lesson?	35	30	0	20	15	100

Table 1 shows various learning problems or challenges faced by the students of government schools, along with their responses on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA). The percentage of students who selected each response option is also provided. Indicators/questions are related to basic learning abilities such as concentrating, understanding and memorizing the lesson. 45% of students disagreed that they could concentrate on lessons during class, and 50% of students disagreed that they could understand the lesson. The next set of opinions are related to memorizing the lesson (35% strongly disagreed)

Table 2 Learning Problems of the students of Private Schools

Sr. #	Indicators	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Total
3	Can you concentrate on a lesson during class?	5	20	15	40	20	100
4	Can you understand the lesson?	0	15	5	40	40	100
7	Can you memorize the lesson?	0	25	5	40	30	100

Table 2 shows various learning problems or challenges faced by the students of private schools, along with their responses on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA). The percentage of students who selected each response option is also provided. Indicators/questions are related to basic learning abilities such as concentrating, understanding and memorizing the lesson. 40% of students strongly agreed that they could concentrate on lessons during class, and 40% of students strongly agreed that they could understand the lesson. The next set of opinions are related to memorizing the lesson (40% agreed) and explaining/telling the lesson in class (45% agreed).

Table 3 Comparison of Concentration on Lesson

Concentrate on lesson	N	Mean	Percentage (A & SA)
Students of Private schools	200	3.5000	60
Students of Government schools	200	2.9500	35

Table 3 shows the results from private and government schools regarding the ability of students to concentrate on the lesson during class. The mean score of students in private schools is 3.5, while the mean score of students in government schools is 2.95. The percentage of students who answered either "agree" or "strongly agree" on the survey shows that 60% of students in private schools and 35% of students in government schools reported being able to concentrate on the lesson during class.

Table 4 Comparison of Understanding of Lesson

Understand the lesson	N	Mean	Percentage (A & SA)
Students of Private schools	200	4.0500	80
Students of Government schools	200	2.5000	25

Table 4 explains that 80% of students from private schools agreed or strongly agreed that they can understand the lesson, with a mean score of 4.0500. On the other hand, only 25% of students from government schools agreed or strongly agreed that they can understand the lesson, with a much lower mean score of 2.5000.

Table 5 Comparison of Memorizing the Lesson

Memorize the lesson	N	Mean	Percentage (A & SA)
Students of Private schools	200	3.7500	70
Students of Government schools	200	2.5000	35

Table 5 represents the performance of two groups of students - students of private schools and students of government schools - based on memorizing the lesson. The average score for the private school students is 3.7500, while for the government school students, it is 2.5000. In the private schools group, 70% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that they can memorize the lesson, while in the government schools group, it is only 35%.

Table 6 Comparison of Mean and Standard Deviation of Learning Problems of Private and Government Schools

Learning Problems	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learning Problems of Private Schools	200	3.7222	.42961
Learning Problems Government Schools	200	2.5472	.85456

Table 6 shows the mean and standard deviation of the scores of two groups, Learning Problems of Private Schools and Learning Problems of Government Schools, on a learning problems assessment. The Private Schools group has 200 participants with a mean score of 3.7222 and a standard deviation of 0.42961, while the Government Schools group also has 200 participants with a lower mean score of 2.5472 and a higher standard deviation of 0.85456. The table suggests that, on average, the Private School group has fewer learning problems than the Government School group, but the variability in the scores within the government schools' group is higher than in the private schools group.

Table 7 T-test for Equality of Means

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Learning Problems	Equal variances assumed	6.587	398	.000	.57500	.08730	.40338	.74662
	Equal variances not assumed	6.587	397.310	.000	.57500	.08730	.40338	.74662

This table shows the results of an independent sample t-test that was conducted to compare the means of two groups based on the variable "Learning Problems." The table shows the results of the t-test assuming equal variances. The t-value is 6.587, the degrees of freedom are 398, and the significance level is 0.000, which indicates a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups. The mean difference is 0.57500, which means that the first group has a higher mean than the second group. The standard error of the difference is 0.08730, which indicates the precision of the estimate. The 95% confidence interval of the difference ranges from 0.40338 to 0.74662.

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The next column shows the results of the t-test without assuming equal variances. The degrees of freedom are slightly different in this case (397.310), but the t-value, mean difference, standard error difference, and confidence interval are the same as in the previous test. In summary, the results suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups, and the first group has a higher mean than the second group.

DISCUSSION

The topic of this study was the comparison of learning problems faced by the students of government and private schools at primary level. Sample of 200 students from private schools and 200 from government schools were taken for this study. The study evaluated the students' learning experience based on various parameters including the problems related to concentration, understanding and memorizing the lesson. Finding compares the ability of students from private and government schools to concentrate during class. The mean score for private school students was 3.5, indicating that, on average; they agreed or strongly agreed that they could concentrate during class. On the other hand, the mean score for government school students was 2.95, indicating a slightly lower agreement level compared to private school students. The percentage of students who answered either "agree" or "strongly agree" on the survey provides additional insight into the results. 60% of students from private schools reported that they were able to concentrate during class, while only 35% of students from government schools reported the same. This finding indicates that private schools may provide a more conducive learning environment for students to concentrate on the lesson during class.

It is essential to note that factors other than the school type may also influence the ability of students to concentrate during class. For instance, individual differences in personality, learning style, and external factors such as home environment can affect students' concentration. Nonetheless, the results suggest that there may be differences in the learning environment between private and government schools that contribute to the ability of students to concentrate on the lesson during class.

Results regarding students' ability to understand the lesson in private and government schools show that 80% of students in private schools agreed or strongly agreed that they can understand the lesson, indicating a relatively high level of comprehension among students in these schools. The mean score for this group was 4.0500, which suggests that most students in private schools do not face significant difficulties in understanding the lesson. On the other hand, only 25% of students in government schools agreed or strongly agreed that they can understand the lesson. This low percentage indicates that a large proportion of students in government schools face difficulties in comprehending the lesson. The mean score for this group was much lower than that of students in private schools, at 2.5000.

Overall, the table highlights the significant differences in students' ability to understand the lesson between private and government schools. The high percentage of students who reported being able to comprehend the lesson in private schools, along with the high mean score, indicated that these schools provide an environment conducive to learning and understanding. In contrast, the low percentage of students who reported being able to understand the lesson in government schools, along with the low

mean score and high standard deviation, suggests that students in these schools face significant challenges in comprehending the lesson, which could negatively impact their academic performance.

Result provides information about the performance of two groups of students - those from private schools and those from government schools - based on their ability to memorize lessons. The average score for the private school students is 3.7500, which suggests that they are performing better in memorizing lessons than the government school students, whose average score is 2.5000. Additionally, the findings show the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that they could memorize lessons. It indicates that 70% of students from private schools reported that they can memorize lessons, while only 35% of students from government schools reported the same.

This difference in performance and self-reported ability to memorize lessons between private and government schools could be attributed to a variety of factors, such as differences in teaching methods, resources available to schools, and student-teacher ratios. Private schools tend to have more resources and smaller class sizes, which may provide a more conducive environment for learning and help students to better memorize lessons. In contrast, government schools may face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and insufficient training for teachers, which could impact their students' learning and memorization abilities.

CONCLUSION

On average, students of private schools performed better than students of government schools. The finding suggests that students in private schools may have an advantage in terms of a conducive learning environment that allows them to concentrate on their lessons. Similarly, most students in private schools do not face significant difficulties in understanding and memorizing the lesson. Additionally, the possible influence of class size and available resources in private schools on student learning cannot be overlooked, and it may be beneficial for government schools to explore similar approaches to provide a more conducive learning environment for their students. This could have implications for students' future academic and professional success.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study findings, following suggestions are made:

- By analyzing the responses, teachers and school administrators can make informed decisions about how to improve the learning experience for their students.
- School Education Department, policy makers, administrators and teachers may draw or suggest policies to overcome the learning problems of government school children.
- Teachers should be trained regarding the learning problems of the students so that they can understand them better and concentrate on their individual needs.
- Efforts should be made to formulate a better student-teacher-parent triangle especially in government schools to overcome the learning problems of the students and to get more support.

More tangible resources should be provided to the government schools, so that they can teach their students with better AV aids and other teaching tools.

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