REVEALING THE REALITY: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present research was to determine the school effectiveness factors as perceived by students in public and private sector secondary school (SS). The context of the study was district Rawalpindi (Punjab, Pakistan). Responses of 400 SS students were collected through School Effectiveness Survey Questionnaire (SESQ). Findings detected significant differences in perceptions of students of both sectors about school effectiveness factors. Private sector SS students score was higher on factors of safe environment, practical opportunities for students to learn, definite focused mission, monitoring students' progress frequently, and home school relation, whereas public sector SS students" score was higher on climate of high expectation, effective time management and instructional leadership. Public sector SS lack in safe environment, involvement of stakeholders, teaching support to students based on frequent assessment. Private SS lack in climate of high expectation, time management and instructional leadership as perceived by students. Based on findings, it was concluded that factors like safe school environment, practical opportunities for each student to learn, definite mission, monitoring students' progress frequently, home school relation, having high expectations about each student, effective time management and instructional leadership are the major factors for considering effectiveness of school. Therefore, it is recommended that school principals, teachers, district management, policy makers and planners are required to take

	steps to promote safe environment for students to learn, involve stakeholders and to promote frequent assessment in public sector SS. Moreover, district management can instruct private sector school management to improve climate of motivation, effective time management and instructional leadership in private SS. This study contributes to the literature about global school effectiveness methods to assess secondary school effectiveness in Pakistani context.

Introduction

Schools are system of government that provide educational services to the masses. (Delice & Köse, 2021). As a result, governments invest and spend a significant amount of money on school education in order to provide education service to its public. Earlier research of Coleman et al. (1966) claimed that personal antiquity and economic status, rather than educational variables, influenced achievement of students. However, later research has showed that factors of school effectiveness do effect learning of pupil, regardless of their family background or economical level (Ismail et al., 2022). Previously, in a study Singh and Sikda (2018) elaborated that an effective school is one that focuses on the overall development of students and, as a result, contribute to the betterment of nation and the society. In the educational sciences, the study of school effectiveness and the discovery of factors related with it are developing fields of inquiry (Martinez-Abad, 2019). Within this backdrop, this research presents a unique approach for identifying institutional factors related with high school effectiveness based on the perceptions of students.

According to Pakistan's "National Education Policy" (NEP,2009) Government of Pakistan identified that there are no specific indicators available in Pakistan for assessing school effectiveness that may provide a clear picture of the school effectiveness (SE) in the context (NEP, 2009). Although, National Education Management Information System (NEMIS) has recently taken the lead in developing indicators for school effectiveness but, mostly they are primarily based on UNESCO data (NEP, 2009, p.12). Hence, from the students' perspective study of SE complements a novel information to school effectiveness investigation in Pakistan and further adds to the overall sympathetic of improvement of secondary school. According to research knowledge, no significant study of this magnitude has been done about Pakistani students' perceptions of the efficacy of secondary education in the understudy region. Consequently, by concentrating on secondary school success from the standpoint of students, this study opens up new scholarly avenues for researchers, management and future planners.

Statement of the problem

The study focused on the problem titled "*Revealing the Reality: A Descriptive Study of Students' Perceptions About School Effectiveness*". This study specifically focused to evaluate and compare school effectiveness factors as perceived by secondary school students in public and private sectors. Seven factors including; safe and orderly environment, Clear and focused school mission, instructional leadership, instructional leadership, School climate of high expectations, Opportunity to learn and student time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress and home school relations were variables of interest in the study. This study was conducted not only to understand students' perceptions of school effectiveness factors, but also to identify and examine areas in need of improvement within our educational systems

Research Objective of the study
To determine the school effectiveness factors as perceived by secondary school students in public and private sector.

Hypothesis of the study
Ho1: Public and private sector school students have same perceptions about the school effectiveness.

***Sub Hypotheses* of the study**
Ho1.1: Public and private secondary school students have same perception about safe and orderly environment (SOE)
Ho1.2: Public and private secondary school students have same perception about Clear and focused school mission (CFSM)
Ho1.3: Public and private secondary school students have same perception about instructional leadership (IL)
Ho1.4: Public and private secondary school students have same perception about School climate of high expectations (SCHE).
Ho1.5: Public and private secondary school students have same perception about Opportunity to learn and student time on task (OLSTT)
Ho1.6: Public and private secondary school students have same perception about frequent monitoring of student progress (FMSP).
Ho1.7: Public and private secondary school students have same perception about home school relations (HSR).

LITERATURE REVIEW
Generally, school effectiveness is defined as the successful attainment of educational goals through successful implementation of educational goals of a nation. A school is a place where the government and other public organizations invest to implement set policies. Stakeholders use various criteria to express their expectations from a school. Some target it a place of personality grooming of a person and majority take it as a source of personality of persons from all aspects of life. In developing countries, education is often regarded as a key driver of progress for individuals, families, and the nation. Certainly, each stakeholder has a unique set of criteria for evaluating the success factors of a school. Therefore, researchers from the globe have derived different conclusion about the specification of school effectiveness. In the view of Ngware et al (2021) different researchers have defined school effectiveness in a diverse manner.

A number of researchers observed that school effectiveness is a complex notion with some schools are being more successful than others (Akay & Aypay, 2016). An effective school provides equal learning opportunities and resources to all of its pupils, and foster an accountable atmosphere for all stakeholders including heads, teachers, students, parents & the community. An effective school is a place where students progress, depending on the information that follows, different definitions of effective schools exist. Since 1950s, effectiveness has been linked to change and achievement. So, quantifying effectiveness in education is quite challenging (Zamir, 2020).

Coleman et al. (1966) suggested that "schools make no difference". Nevertheless, later research of Ostroff, & Schmitt (1993) found that factors like school climate, leadership performances, student success, administrative functioning, civic support, mastery of basic skills, teachers' commitment and efficacy,

participation of parents, faithfulness and happiness all play a vital role in determining school performance (Ali, Sharma & Kannan, 2016). Brookovers et al. (1979) and Mwambo & Epah (2022) define an effective school as one with high evaluation of students, high expectations, and appropriate reinforcement and instruction.

Researchers agree on the "school climate" factor as a key factor for successful school (Etxeberria et al., (2017), Turhan, et al. (2017). Discussing the school effectiveness factors, Doran (2004) showed in his analysis of the literature that several studies classified effective school factors differently, and arranged them in to 13 themes, which are: Leadership, high expectations, rules, focus on mission, monitoring, assessment and evaluation, positive climate, time emphasis on duty, parent/community participation, staff development, basic skills, teacher participation in decisions and quality.

Literature displays that the term 'school effectiveness' have defined in variety of ways (Ismail et al., 2022). The ability to attain the school's planned goals and objectives has been connected with school effectiveness (Cobanoglu & Yurek, 2018). Overall the definitions suggested that the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of schools can be depending on how well a school accomplish its goals (Delice, & Köse, 2021). This study uses school effectiveness as an example, focusing on creating a safe and ordered environment, have high expectations, focus instructional leadership, monitors progress of students frequently, develop relationship between school and home, provide opportunities to students for learning through time on task.

Factors Associated with School Effectiveness

Ronald Edmonds (1979) identified five correlates of effective schools: which have been confirmed by numerous studies: exemplary administrative leadership, clearly defined and generally accepted mission, a secure and well-organized setting, instructors have rigorous standards for their pupils, and their development. On the contrary, Lezotte (1991) identifies a safe and orderly environment, a culture of high expectations for success, instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, the chance for learning and students' time spent on task, regular progress monitoring, and home school relations as key factors for effective schools. According to Lee Baldwin, Freeman Coney, Diane Fridge and Roberta Thomas (1993), school effectiveness is determined by seven factors: Safe environment, definite school mission, Instructional leadership, climate of high expectations (motivation), practical opportunities for students to learn, Frequent monitoring of student progress, and Home-school relations. Similarly, a group of interrelated elements that combine to create SE are known as effective school factors (Talebloo et al., 2018). The different factors of effective schools have been acknowledged by various scholars as a source to measure SE (Baldwin et al., 1993; Herman, 2017; Magulod, 2017). Keeping in view the background literature, following factors were the focus of this research:

Safe Environment (SE): Effective schools, administrators, teachers and other staffs create a safe environment for students to learn, ensuring each participant has the necessary resources and protocols to effectively execute educational operations (Lezotte 1991; Özgenel, 2020).

Definite School Mission (DSM): Effective schools have an open mission and a school climate, involving all stakeholders who are aware of and supportive of the school's goals.

Instructional Leadership (IL): Effective schools are influenced by IL, which establishes a unified aim and values, guides teaching team members, offers in-service training and supports educators in participating in prevailing drills.

Climate of High expectations (CHE): An effective school values all learners equally, recognizing their potential for learning and reaching high standards. Teachers monitor students' development, assign challenging tasks based on their learning environment, and emphasize academic work standards.

Opportunities to learn and time on task (OLSTT): Effective time management and teaching require balancing objectives of educational programs with appropriate teaching content and adequate time allocation.

Frequent monitoring of student progress (FMSP): Assessments and evaluations are utilized to enhance educational programs (Mert et al., 2021). In an effective school, students need assistance identified through consistent testing and evaluation procedures. These students receive additional support or instruction during or after school. Their progress and need are frequently observed and tailored accordingly.

Home school relation (HSR): Steinberg (2016) discovered that regular physical visits and participation in meetings, and demonstrations between parents and their children significantly improved school performance and family life.

Research Gap

A comprehensive literature review reveals that despite extensive studies on school effectiveness, there is disagreement on the factors and characteristics influencing secondary school performance. Despite these contributions, there appears to be a limited application of Baldwin et al, (1993) SESQ framework in the Pakistani context. This gap suggests an opportunity for research that employs the School Effectiveness Survey Questionnaire to evaluate school effectiveness in Pakistan from the point of view of students. Additionally, multiple databases and search engines (Google, Google scholar, Research Gate, ERIC, and Pro-Quest) have not produced significant research articles on the effectiveness of secondary schools in the understudy region as currently perceived by the students. Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights for policy makers and educators aiming to enhance SE in Punjab, Pakistan. Keeping in view the limited resources, current study was delimited to Rawalpindi district of Punjab, Pakistan.

Methodology

Research Design

The topic of study was descriptive in nature. Therefore, a survey design within the framework of descriptive research using a quantitative method was employed to conduct this study.

Population and Sample of the study

Secondary school students, whether studying in public or private secondary schools located in district Rawalpindi (Punjab Pakistan) were the population of the present study. The sample of 400 secondary level students from public and private schools of Rawalpindi district was taken through convenient sampling technique. The study was conducted with the approval obtained from the District Education Officer Rawalpindi and all participants of the study were provided informed consent.
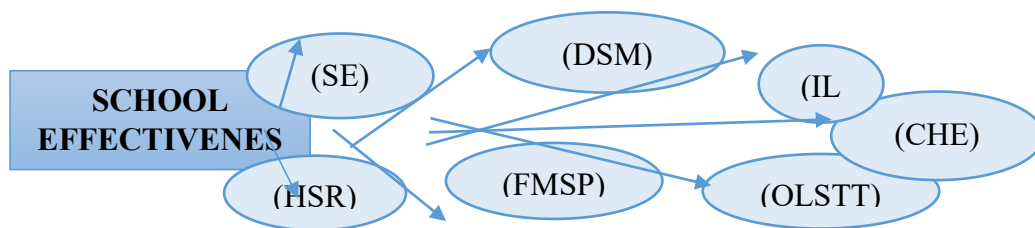
Research Instrument

The instrument school effectiveness survey questionnaire (SESQ) developed by Baldwin et al. (1993) concentrated seven factors of school effectiveness was used

for data collection. The data were analyzed through statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) independent sample t-tests. The questionnaire items and responses included 5-point Likert scale SDA, (1) to SA, (5). For content validation (CV), was checked through seven experts, who determine whether the questionnaire's contents were appropriate for the local context and conceptual framework before determining the accuracy of the research content. Because, the participants did not indicate any difficulties in understanding the items, so it was not translated into participants' local language. Subsequently, the modified SESQ was face validated by the same group of experts. Five experts received it. In response to their suggestions and comments, the questionnaire underwent a few minor revisions. The researchers developed SESQ's conceptual framework, which is described in the following figure:

Figure 01

Conceptual framework for the SESQ described by experts

Note: SE= Safe environment; DSM=Definite school mission; IL=Instructional leadership= CHE: Climate of High expectations; OLSTT= Opportunity to learn and student time on task; FMSP= Frequent monitoring of student progress; HSR= Home-school relations

Field Testing

The reliability of the SESQ was checked through pilot testing by applying questionnaire on 40 students (which were 10 percent of the actual sample). The questionnaire items were also modified to fit the local context, and two items were removed from the questionnaire when they appeared to be in conflict with the study objectives. The overall reliability of SESQ was calculated as *α = 0.96*. Those students, who participated in pilot testing were not include in final round of the current study.

Table 01

Reliability check of SESQ

Factors	Cronbach Alpha (α)	Test-Retest
SE	.89	.86
DSM	.76	.90
IL	.81	.81
CHE	.76	.80
OLSTT	.80	.81
FMSP	.83	.82
HSR	.73	.84
SESQ	.89	.88

Table 01 shows that the SESQ, a reliable instrument for measuring school effectiveness, has a high reliability index of 0.89, with item related to SE such as: Safe environment (SE), Definite school mission (DSM), Instructional leadership (IL), Climate of High expectations (CHE), Opportunity to learn and student time on task

(OLSTT), Frequent monitoring of student progress (FMSP), and Home-school relations (HSR).

Data collection and data analysis

Data was collected through personal visits to secondary level schools. School Effectiveness Survey Questionnaire (SESQ). Descriptive statistical analysis was used for data analysis., and the means score was calculated to draw the results.

Results of the Study

Table 02

Overall sector wise differences in the perception of students about school effectiveness

Sector	N	Mean	S.D	t	P value	Cohen's d	Hypothesis status
Public	160	61.675	6.020	31.882	.000	3.188	Ho1 = Rejected
Private	240	88.140	10.078				Ha1= Accepted

Table 02 determines significant differences in public and private sector secondary school level students of class 9th (IX) and 10th (X) regarding school effectiveness. There for the Ho1 "Public and private sector school students have same perceptions about the school effectiveness" and the related sub hypotheses $H_{o1.1}$ to $H_{o1.7}$ were not accepted. Likewise, Cohen's *d* values described rational of the six factors. Overall analyses disclosed that private sector schools had higher mean (M= 88.140, S. D= 10.078) on seven factors of school effectiveness. While public sector school students reported lower mean (M=61.675, S.D = 6.020) on SE factors.

Table 03

Comparison of student's perceptions regarding school effectiveness in public and private sector secondary schools.

S.E Factors	Sector	n	Mean	S.D	t	P	Cohen's d
SE	Public	160	13.510	2.416	9.769	.000	0.977
	Private	240	15.910	2.497			
CHE	Public	160	13.385	1.677	3.225	.001	0.322
	Private	240	12.825	1.795			
IL	Public	160	15.835	2.902	21.422	.000	2.142
	Private	240	10.070	2.463			

OSLTT	Public	160	12.110	6.885	25.402	.000	2.541
	Private	240	6.885	2.074			
DSM	Public	160	3.890	1.299	24.454	.000	2.444
	Private	240	7.625	1.726			
FMSP	Public	160	7.355	2.168	18.081	.000	1.808
	Private	240	11.425	2.331			
HSR	Public	160	6.580	2.168	28.333	.000	2.834
	Private	240	12.410	2.317			
Total	Public	160	61.675	6.020	31.882	.000	3.188
	Private	240	88.140	10.078			

Note: SOE= Safe and ordered environment; HEC= high expectation's climate; IL= Instructional Leadership; OSLTT= opportunity for student to learn through time on task; CFM= clear-cut focused mission; MSPF= monitoring student progress frequently; HSR= Home school relation.

Table 03 depicts significant difference in students' views about all the factors of school effectiveness, as t values are significant at 5 % level of significance. while Cohens' d effect size for safe environment (SE) is (d= 0.9) proposing a large effect size. Additionally, (d= 0.3) is value of Cohen's effect size, proposing a small practical significance for climate of high expectations (CHE). Moreover, (d= 1.8) is value of Cohen's effect size, proposing a considerable useful practically for frequent monitoring of student progress (FMSP). Besides, (d= 2.1, 2.4, 2.5 & 2.8) values of Cohen's effect size, proposing a sizeable practical worth for Instructional Leadership (IL), opportunity to learn and student time on task (OLSTT), definite school mission (DSM), and for home school relation (HSR) of school effectiveness.

On the whole, data indicates a significant mean difference regarding all variable/ factors reported having a visible mean difference. Moreover, mean score of factors; SE, DSM, FMSP, HSR including total school effectiveness is poor for public sectors effectiveness. Mean scores of SE factors; CHE, IL and OSLTT were better for private schools.

Findings

Results about students' perceptions about SE at SS level revealed that (48.0 %; n = 192) the public sector students were less confident about their school's effectiveness as compared to (52.0%; n = 208) the private sector students. According to t-test results t (400,31.882), p = .000 < .05, the study, moreover, elaborates the findings of

the objective with respect to seven factors of school effectiveness. So, the null hypothesis Ho_1: and the related sub-hypotheses ($Ho_{1.1}$ to $Ho_{1.7}$) were not accepted (Table 3). Private sector students were perceiving that their school is effective in terms of *safe environment*. SE (M = 13.510, S.D = 2.416), such as t (9.769), p = .000 < .05, as compared to the public sector students (M = 15.910, S.D = 2.497). Likewise, regarding *climate of high expectations (CHE)* as per t (400, 3.225), p = .001, the public sector schools hold HEC (M= 13.385, S.D = 1.677) as compared to the private sector schools (M = 12.825, S.D = 1.795). Similarly, regarding *instructional leadership* t (400, 21.422), p = .000 < .05 was found. Consequently, on the basis of mean values, public sector students (M= 15.835, S.D = 2.902) have strong (IL) as compared to private sector students (M = 10.070, S.D = 2.463). Correspondingly, on the subject of *opportunity for student to learn through time on task* (OLSTT) t (400, 25.402), p = .000 < .05 was observed.

The public sector SSS reported slightly higher mean (M=12.110, S.D = 6.885) for OLSTT as compared to the private sector counterparts (M=6.885, S.D= 1.299). Moreover, about *definite school mission* (*DSM*) by means of t (400, 24.454), p= .000 < .05, the private sector secondary school students (SSS) were found slightly better with higher mean (M= 7.625, S.D = 1.726) in CFSM than the public sector participants (M = 3.890, S.D = 1.299). Additionally, as regards to frequently *monitoring student progress* (FMSP) for instance t (400, 18.081), p = .000 < .05, the public sector SSS are not monitored frequently (M= 7.355, S.D = 2.168), then private sector SSS (M= 11.425, S.D = 2.331). Furthermore, on the subject of *home school relation* (HSR) as per t (400, 4.28.333), p = .000 < .05, the public sector schools with (M = 6.580, S.D = 2.168) have lesser HSR as compared to private sector schools with (M = 12.410, S.D = 2.317).

Discussion

The study aimed to evaluate the difference between the perceptions of students studying in public and private sector secondary level schools about school effectiveness (SE). Findings detected significant differences about school effectiveness factors in perceptions of students from private and public sector SS. Private sector SS students reported higher satisfaction levels in their respective schools regarding safe environment, practical opportunities for students to learn, definite focused mission, monitoring students' progress frequently, and home school relation. Contrariwise, public sector SS students score was higher regarding climate of high expectation (motivation), effective time management and instructional leadership (supportive teaching learning environment) in their respective schools.

Findings detected the gap in public sector SS regarding safe environment for students to learn, lack of involvement of stakeholders in designing school goals, lack of additional teaching support to students through frequent assessment and lack of relationship between school and parents. Whereas, findings identified certain gaps in private SS regarding lack of climate of high expectation (motivation), lack of time management and instructional leadership.

Results of the studies of Yasin et al. (2017), Manaf and Omar (2017), Ali et al. (2016) regarding first factor were in line with the findings of this research. Further results of research reported in past (Ramberg, Laftman, Almquist, & Modin, 2019; Bosworth et al. 2018; Özgenel, Çalışkan Yılmaz & Baydar, 2018; Gove 2017; Dulay & Karadağ, 2017; Berkowitz et al., 2017; Masino & Nino-Zarazua, 2016; Dee & Wyckoff, 2015; Chang 2011) favors the results of this study. A study by Iqbal et al. (2021) described that instructional leadership as school effectiveness factor in public and private schools plays constructive role for creating a positive learning

environment in school for educators and learners. Their results also support the findings of current research.

In a mixed method study by Bellibaş and Gedik (2014) described different results regarding IL in public and private sector schools. They stated significant difference in favor of private schools through quantitative phase of their research, while the qualitative phase found that private school heads were involved in instructional leadership factor less often than public school heads were.

The findings are associated with Alam, Iqbal and Iqbal (2021). They found that performance of private sector schools was better in performance than public sector schools. The reason may be currently, parents choose to enroll their children in private schools in Rawalpindi district because of their structured academic programs, superior educational infrastructure, capacity for knowledge development, and extracurricular activities. Although they cost more money.

On the whole, this study has explored both alignments and differences with past research in multiple areas and has opened new room for need to continue the study for future researchers. It has clued to take multiple steps by multiple stakeholders to improve the school administration and improve its organization improving school resources to satisfy its end users.

Conclusion

Based on findings, it was concluded that certain factors like safe school environment, practical opportunities for each student to learn, definite mission, monitoring students' progress frequently, home school relation, having high expectations about each student, effective time management and instructional leadership (supportive teaching learning environment) are the major factors for considering effectiveness of any school. Findings highlight the need for improved educational environment and leadership strategies for students in both sectors.

Recommendations

It is recommended that school principals, teachers, district management, policy makers and planners are required to take steps to promote safe environment for students to learn, involving stakeholders in designing school goals, providing required additional teaching support to students through frequent assessment and building strong relationship between school and parents in public sector SS to promote better environment and share students' various problem which finally helpful in improving schools.

In private sector educational institutions students are lacking time management, which can be strictly focused by the school heads to mentor teachers regarding lesson plans and designing time table and in improving climate of motivation for learning, and instructional leadership (supportive teaching learning environment) to make these schools as effective in terms of in terms of improving all students' holistic development. This study contributes to the literature about global school effectiveness methods to assess secondary school effectiveness in Pakistani context.

The study also recommended that school principals, teachers, district management, policy makers and planners are required to take steps to promote safe environment for students to learn, involving stakeholders in designing school goals, providing required additional teaching support to students through frequent assessment and building strong relationship between school and parents in public sector SS.

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