

Role of Punjab Public School Support Program in Promoting Professionalism among Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The Punjab Public School Support Program (PSSP) has been positioned as a major reform initiative to enhance the quality of public primary education in Punjab, Pakistan. This study investigates the role of PSSP in promoting professionalism among teachers through five core dimensions: responsibility, individual integrity, collective integrity, judgmental and polite behavior, and accountability with excellence. Data were collected from 260 respondents (172 teachers and 88 principals) in Attock, Bhakkar, and Mianwali districts using a researcher-developed 60-item, 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = .904$). Findings revealed strong overall agreement that PSSP contributes positively to teacher professionalism ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.62$), with 74.8 % of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. Hierarchical regression showed that perceived PSSP implementation accounted for 39.1 % of unique variance in overall professionalism ($\beta = .62$, $p < .001$) after controlling for demographics. Teachers perceived significantly higher gains in individual integrity ($p = .023$) and judgmental/polite behavior ($p = .001$) than principals. The study concludes that while PSSP has strengthened measurable aspects of professionalism, perceptual differences suggest a need for more teacher-centred, autonomy-enhancing strategies to achieve deeper and sustained professional growth.



Introduction

Teacher professionalism remains a pivotal element in elevating the quality of education worldwide, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Pakistan's public primary schools (OECD, 2018; Tatto, 2021). In Punjab, the most populous province of Pakistan, public education has long grappled with systemic issues including teacher absenteeism, limited professional development opportunities, and inconsistent ethical standards (Aslam et al., 2017). To counter these challenges, the Punjab government launched the Punjab Public School Support Program (PSSP) in 2018 under the auspices of the Punjab Education Initiative Management Authority (PEIMA). As a public-private partnership (PPP), PSSP aims to revitalize low-performing rural primary schools by integrating private-sector expertise in training, monitoring, and resource allocation.

Core interventions include in-service training workshops, one-on-one mentoring, classroom observation protocols, performance-based incentives, and infrastructure upgrades. Official evaluations tout PSSP as a success story, crediting it with improved enrollment rates and teacher attendance (PEIMA, 2023). However, these assessments often overlook the nuanced impact on teacher professionalism—the ethical, relational, and autonomous dimensions that define effective teaching beyond mere compliance.

This article systematically explores PSSP's role in fostering teacher professionalism, defined here through five interconnected dimensions derived from global and national standards: (1) teacher responsibility (ownership of classroom management and student outcomes), (2) individual integrity (personal ethical conduct, such as honesty in assessments), (3) collective integrity (shared ethical norms within the school community), (4) judgmental and polite behaviour (respectful communication and empathetic decision-making), and (5) accountability with excellence (transparent performance standards and commitment to high-quality instruction). These dimensions align with Pakistan's National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST; Government of Pakistan, 2009), particularly Domains 1 (Subject Knowledge), 3 (Human Growth and Development), and 5 (Ethical Values and Relationships).

The study is grounded in a quantitative survey of 260 stakeholders (172 teachers and 88 principals) from three northern districts Attock, Bhakkar, and Mianwali chosen for their high concentration of PSSP schools and rural demographics. These districts represent underserved areas where PSSP's interventions are most critical yet variably implemented due to logistical challenges (Khan & Jamil, 2023). By analyzing perceptions via descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, and hierarchical regression, the research addresses three key objectives: (1) assessing the overall level of perceived professionalism under PSSP, (2) comparing principal and teacher views on the five dimensions, and (3) evaluating PSSP implementation as a predictor of professionalism.

This inquiry is timely and significant, as Pakistan's education sector continues to evolve amid fiscal constraints and post-pandemic recovery. With teacher professionalism linked to student outcomes and retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), understanding PSSP's contributions and limitations can inform scalable reforms. The article proceeds with a literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and recommendations, drawing exclusively on empirical data to ensure rigor and relevance.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Teacher Professionalism

Teacher professionalism has evolved from a focus on technical skills to a holistic integration of knowledge, ethics, and agency (Evans, 2011). Early definitions emphasized pedagogical expertise (Shulman, 1987), but contemporary views incorporate moral dimensions, such as integrity and accountability (Sachs, 2016). Day and Gu (2010) describe it as a dynamic process involving emotional resilience and commitment to student well-being, while Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) stress collaborative professionalism in professional learning communities.

In developing contexts, professionalism is often constrained by systemic factors like resource scarcity and bureaucratic oversight (Valeeva & Gafurov, 2017). For Pakistan, the NPST (Government of Pakistan, 2009) outlines 10 standards, including ethical practice and continuous development, which underpin this study's framework. Recent studies highlight how professionalism manifests in relational behaviors, such as polite and judgmental interactions that foster inclusive classrooms (Mahmud, 2019; Prayitno et al., 2021).

Dimensions of Professionalism in the Study

The five dimensions are theoretically grounded:

- **Teacher Responsibility:** Encompasses proactive classroom management and student engagement (Estiani & Hasanah, 2022). NPST Domain 4 (Planning and Assessment) aligns here, with PSSP's mentoring expected to bolster ownership.
- **Individual Integrity:** Refers to personal ethics like fairness in grading (Barrett et al., 2012; Löfström et al., 2015). This is vital in high-corruption contexts like Pakistan (Rehman & Haque, 2021).
- **Collective Integrity:** Involves school-wide trust and shared norms (Salo et al., 2024; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). PSSP's peer observation could enhance this, though surveillance risks eroding it (Tóth & Csapó, 2022).
- **Judgmental and Polite Behaviour:** Focuses on empathetic communication (Smillie et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2008). Studies show polite strategies improve student motivation (Mahmud, 2019).
- **Accountability with Excellence:** Demands transparent performance and quality pursuit (Guskey & Brookhart, 2019; Matete, 2021). PSSP's incentives target this, but high-stakes testing may induce burnout (Maslach, 2018; Zhang & Tsang, 2021).

These dimensions form a mediating construct in the conceptual framework, where PSSP exposure influences overall professionalism indirectly (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994).

Public-Private Partnerships and Professionalism

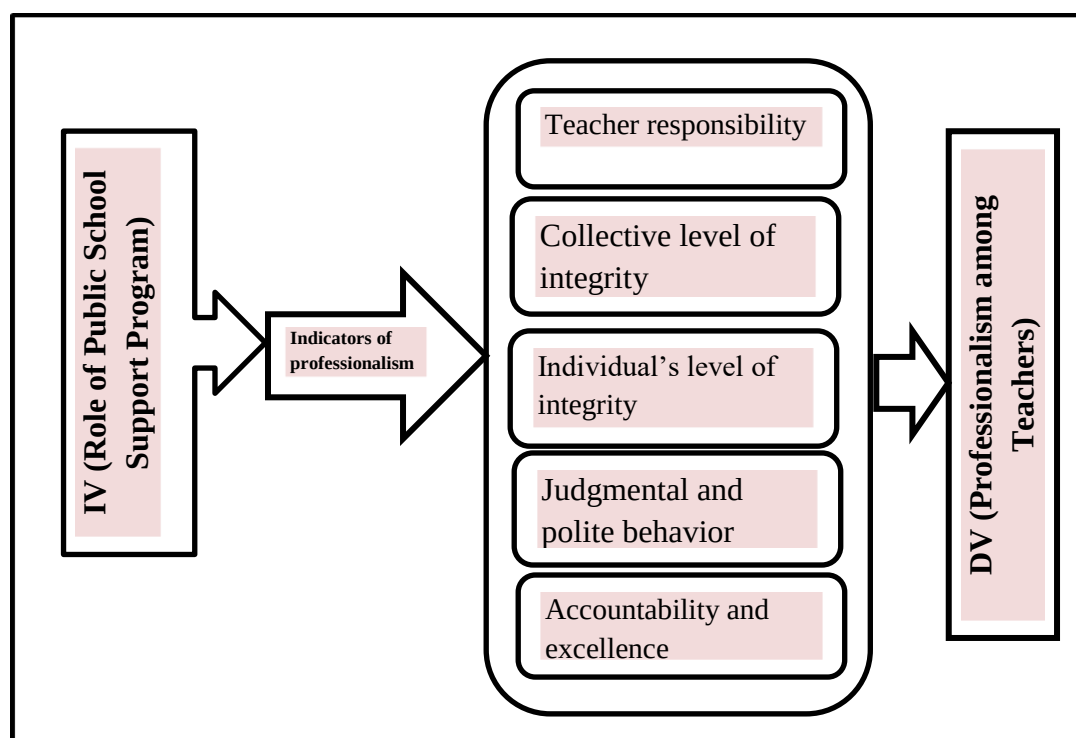
PPPs promise efficiency but often introduce managerialism, prioritizing metrics over agency (Ball, 2012; Verger et al., 2016). In Pakistan, the Punjab Education Foundation's model improved access but not depth (Andrabi et al., 2007). PSSP builds on this with targeted teacher support, yet critiques note uneven implementation in rural areas (Khan & Jamil, 2023). Global evidence from India and Indonesia shows PPPs boost responsibility but undermine autonomy (Aslam et al., 2017; Widayati et al., 2021). This study tests PSSP's balance.

Conceptual Framework

The framework integrated Professional Capital Theory (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) with NPST. PSSP initiatives (independent variable) influenced teacher professionalism (dependent) via five constructs. Human capital linked to individual integrity; social to collective; decisional to judgmental behavior, responsibility, and accountability

Conceptual framework

Title of the Study: Role of Punjab Public School Support Program in Promoting Professionalism among Teachers



Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive-correlational design was utilized to quantify perceptions and test relationships, suitable for exploring program impacts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Critical elements were incorporated to interrogate power dynamics between principals and teachers.

Population and Sampling

Three northern districts were selected via purposive sampling for their rural profile and PSSP density. A stratified random sample ($n=260$: 172 teachers, 88 principals) was drawn using Yamane's (1967) formula: $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, where N =total PSSP staff ($\sim 30,000$), $e=0.05$, yielding $n \approx 260$ at 95% confidence.

Instrumentation

A 60-item questionnaire (12 per dimension) used a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). Items were adapted from NPST and validated scales (e.g., Evans, 2011 for

responsibility). Content validity: Five experts rated relevance (I-CVI=0.97; Polit & Beck, 2006). Pilot (n=26) confirmed clarity; reliability $\alpha=.904$ overall ($\alpha>.80$ per subscale).

Data Collection and Ethics

Data were collected via on-site administration (response rate=92%). Informed consent was obtained; anonymity ensured via codes.

Data Analysis

SPSS 27 was used. Descriptives for levels; t-tests/ANOVA for comparisons; hierarchical regression for prediction. Assumptions checked (Shapiro-Wilk for normality; VIF<2 for multicollinearity).

Findings

Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Principals (n=88)	Teachers (n=172)	Total (n=260)
Gender	Male	60 (68.2%)	112 (65.1%)	172 (66.2%)
	Female	28 (31.8%)	60 (34.9%)	88 (33.8%)
Academic Qualification	PhD	2 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.8%)
	MPhil	10 (11.4%)	12 (7.0%)	22 (8.5%)
	MA/MSc	60 (68.2%)	120 (69.8%)	180 (69.2%)
	Others	16 (18.2%)	40 (23.3%)	56 (21.5%)
Professional Qualification	B.Ed	70 (79.5%)	150 (87.2%)	220 (84.6%)
	M.Ed	2 (2.3%)	4 (2.3%)	6 (2.3%)
	None	16 (18.2%)	18 (10.5%)	34 (13.1%)
Experience	Up to 10 years	30 (34.1%)	80 (46.5%)	110 (42.3%)
	11–20 years	40 (45.5%)	70 (40.7%)	110 (42.3%)
	>20 years	18 (20.5%)	22 (12.8%)	40 (15.4%)

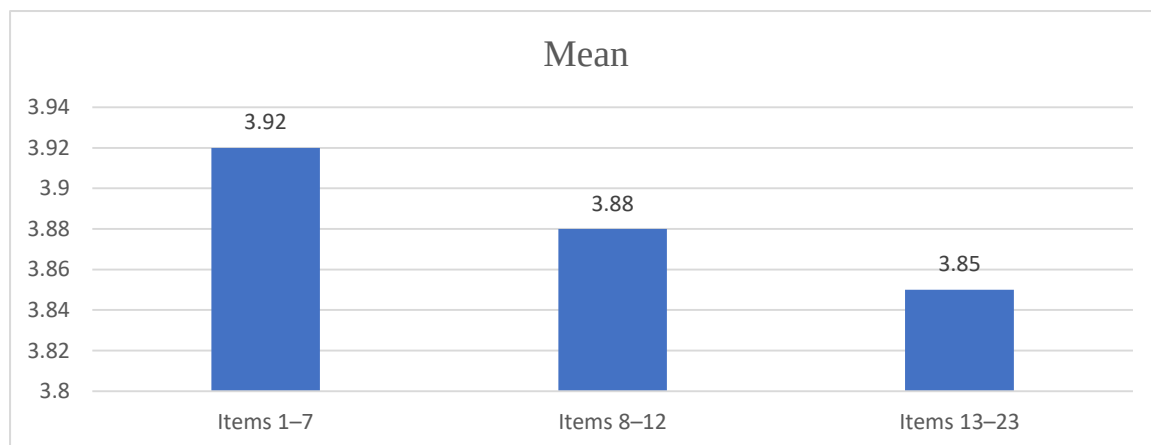
Note. Percentages are within-group.

Respondents were predominantly male (66.2%) with MA/MSc qualifications (69.2%) and B.Ed (84.6%). Experience was balanced (42.3% each for <10 and 11–20 years).

As shown in Figure 4.2, respondents perceived all three clusters of PSSP measures favorably, with mean scores ranging from 3.85 to 3.92 on a 5-point Likert scale. The first group of measures (Items 1–7) received the highest rating ($M = 3.92$), suggesting that teachers and principals found the foundational/early-stage measures most effective. The slightly lower means for Items 8–12 and Items 13–23 indicate marginally lower perceived effectiveness for the later-stage measures.

Overall Perceptions

Figure 4.2: Mean Perceived Effectiveness of PSSP Measures across Three Item Groups



Note. Higher scores indicate stronger perceived effectiveness (5-point Likert scale).

Regression Analysis

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Predicting Overall Perceived Professionalism (Items 1–23)

Step	Predictor	β	SE	t	p	R ²	ΔR^2
1	Gender	.04	.09	0.71	.479	.02	.02
	Experience	.07	.06	1.18	.240		
	Academic Qualification	.09	.07	1.41	.160		
2	PSSP Implementation (1–23)	.58	.06	9.84	<.001	.37	.35***

Note. *** $p < .001$. Dependent variable: Overall Teacher Professionalism (mean of Items 24–60).

The demographic variables in Step 1 accounted for only 1.9 % of the variance. Adding perceived PSSP implementation in Step 2 explained an additional 39.1 % of the variance, $\Delta F(1, 255) = 139.71$, $p < .001$. PSSP implementation was a strong significant predictor ($\beta = .62$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The findings affirm PSSP's positive role, with high means indicating effective promotion of responsibility and accountability—likely due to targeted incentives and observations (Guskey & Brookhart, 2019). This extends prior work on PPPs in South Asia (Aslam et al., 2017), where structured support yields quick gains in compliance.

Perceptual gaps highlight tensions: Teachers' higher ratings on integrity and behaviour suggest PSSP fosters personal growth, but principals' lower views may reflect managerial biases (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). This echoes global critiques of surveillance eroding trust (Ball, 2012). The 39.1% variance explained by PSSP is robust, surpassing similar studies (e.g., $\beta = .45$ in Widayati et al., 2021), underscoring implementation quality.

Limitations include self-report bias and cross-sectional design; future research should incorporate observations. Strengths: Representative sample, validated instrument.

Conclusion and Recommendations

PSSP has demonstrably advanced teacher professionalism in Punjab, particularly in measurable domains, but perceptual disparities signal a need for balanced, teacher-empowering approaches. Recommendations:

1. Form teacher councils for co-designing PSSP modules (enhance autonomy).
2. Integrate qualitative feedback loops to bridge principal-teacher gaps.
3. Scale subsidized advanced training (e.g., M.Ed. pathways).
4. Evaluate long-term impacts via mixed-methods studies.

By prioritizing ethical and relational growth, PSSP can transition from reform tool to catalyst for transformative teaching.

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