

Analyzing the Causes of Low Enrollment in Public Intermediate Institutions in Punjab, Pakistan

Muhammad Rashid¹, Areesha Rashid², Mansoor Azmat³ & Farkhanda Khorshid⁴

¹Senior Subject Specialist, Education Department, Government of the Punjab, Faisalabad, 38000, Punjab, Pakistan, Email: rmuh003@aucklanduni.ac.nz , mrpk007@gmail.com

²M.Phil Scholar, Department of Zoology, Faculty of Biological Sciences, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 45320, Pakistan, Email: areesha.rashid@bs.qau.edu.pk

³PhD Scholar, Department of Education, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, 04012, Punjab, Pakistan, Email: mnsrazmat@gmail.com

⁴Subject Specialist, Education Department, Government of the Punjab, Faisalabad, 38000, Punjab, Pakistan, Email: farkhanda2010@hotmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: December 05, 2024
Revised: December 24, 2024
Accepted: December 28, 2024
Available
Online: January 01, 2025

Keywords:

Enrollment, Professionals, Govt.,
Public, Institutions, Education

Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Rashid

Email:

rmuh003@aucklanduni.ac.nz ,
mrpk007@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study is to seek the underlying causes of low enrollment and analyze the key factors contributing to the low enrollment rates in public institutions as compared to private colleges in the Punjab, Pakistan. This research work adopts the quantitative research design under the cross-sectional descriptive research model. Data was collected from 28th July, 2024 to 7th November, 2024 by employing a structured questionnaire from educational professionals that included Subject Specialists and Principals of the Faisalabad division. Quantitative data analysis was done, and statistical description was performed using SPSS. The level of significance was determined at p-value ($p = 0.05$) with a test of confidence level of 95%. The study reveals that teachers' shortage (91.8%), parents' lack of education and awareness (85.8%), nonexistence of parents' involvement (85.2%), and insufficient facilities (84.3%) in government institutions are the main reasons for the decline of enrollment in public type of educational institutions. In addition, lack of individual attention (73.6 %), and poor discipline and safety measures (72.3 %) in the public sector's institutions reduce enrollment in these institutions. This paper discusses the main issues of concern in relation to low enrollment in government institutions, focusing on infrastructure, teachers and parents. The findings provide useful recommendations for policymakers and educators to increase demand for public education. The study's uniqueness lies in its comparison of government and private schooling, providing insights that can drive reforms for more equitable educational admittance.

Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of sustainable development. Education enables people to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can help them to live a meaningful life. Education fosters the development of problem-solving skills, improves interpersonal interactions, and cultivates responsibilities towards the society, which are crucial for the development of democratic nations (Benavot et al., 2016; Timidi & Okuro, 2024). In addition to knowledge sharing, education plays a role in preserving culture and creating the key values of the modern world (Barghi, Zakaria, Hamzah, & Hashim, 2017). Education develops critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills and its goal is to improve individual and group potential, to help young people to bring new ideas, create and lead the future. Furthermore, educated populations tend to have better health outcomes, higher earnings, and greater civic participation, contributing to the overall socio-economic development of nations (Hannum & Buchmann, 2005). These objectives make education a powerful vehicle for personal and societal development (Shpeizer, 2018).

In Pakistan, the quality and availability of education, particularly in the public sector, is under pressure constantly. Government institutions which have in the past been charged with the responsibility of offering low-cost education to a cross-section of the population are experiencing a decline in enrollment and quality (I. Ahmad, Ali, Khan, & Khan, 2014). This trend is as a result of the roles that parents, teachers, students, and governmental support structures have played. The facilities and resources the government can provide, particularly in a developing country like Pakistan where poverty is rising, play a crucial role in shaping education outcomes (N. Akram, Muhammad, & Husnain, 2007). The problem of economic difficulties that hinder the acquisition of quality education affects many families, so the problems in public education are also relevant. These challenges have made a privatization shift more apparent in the last decade in the education sector in Pakistan. Over the years, the government has permitted more private institutions to be opened to help to reduce the burden on the public system with the hope of enhancing the quality of education (Rind, 2023). Therefore, parents and students have shifted their preference to private institutions and perceive them to be better in terms of facilities, opportunities, attention, and quality than public schools (Awan & Zia, 2015; Brunello & Rocco, 2008). This change is part of a more general process in which private institutions seem better equipped to meet current educational needs and, as a result, attract a significant number of students away from the public system.

The problems that hinder public institutions' enrollment are not only a problem for the educational sector, but a social problem as well, since public education is the key to equal opportunities in learning. To counteract this trend, it is necessary to understand its roots, which include infrastructural problems, teacher scarcity, changes in public and governmental attitudes, and others. In this situation, examining and undertaking the reasons behind the low enrollment in public institutions has emerged as a significant challenge. Studies indicate that different social and economic elements, together with policy frameworks and the quality of education, significantly impact enrollment rates (Banerjee & Duflo, 2013).

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify the causes of low enrollment in public sector institutions, particularly government higher secondary schools and colleges, and to offer recommendations for addressing these challenges based on clear and comprehensive findings.

Research Questions

This investigative study examines the key factors contributing to the low enrollment rates in public institutions at the higher secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan. It aims to address the following questions:

- What are the underlying causes of declining enrollment in government institutions?
- What factors in private institutions contribute to their increasing enrollment rates?

Literature Review

Pakistan faces a significant issue with low enrollment in public educational institutions. The enrollment issue is far greater in rural areas than in urban public institutions. The National Education Policy Framework of Pakistan (2010) has launched many projects to enhance resource availability in public schools and to modify the language of instruction in different institutions to elevate student enrollment levels (Kalim, 2023). A study done in Vocational High Schools (SMK) focuses on the influence of infrastructure management and teacher-teaching quality on student engagement and its impact on student competence, suggesting that the management of infrastructure facilities and the quality of teachers' teaching has a significant effect on student engagement, which in turn improves their competence (Mahmud, Yanto, & Edy Mulyono, 2023).

The insufficiency of qualified teaching staff is another problem that is facing most public schools. Large classes are normally occasioned by inadequate staffing, which reduces individual attention for students and a general decline in the quality of instruction. This situation can greatly affect the student's academic experience as they are unable to get the necessary assistance to succeed academically. The need for staffing is supported by research that associates teacher availability with students' learning and achievement (N. Ahmad, Anak Nugak, Abd Rahman, & Asiah Mohamad @ Razak, 2024). The government and other authorities need to allocate more resources to construct an effective learning infrastructure, at the same time, guaranteeing that there are enough qualified teachers for learners. This dual focus can make the learning environment more effective and increase the likelihood of better academic performance and greater satisfaction among students (Panjwani, 2024).

Parents are also more concerned with class size and individual attention, which they think also play a huge role in determining students' performance and character (Wright, Bergom, & Bartholomew, 2019). However, safety and discipline are some of the most important factors that parents have to consider when selecting an educational institution. This is because private schools tend to have more rigid disciplinary measures and better security measures as parents are increasingly becoming worried about school safety. These factors are considered relevant to children's development and academic achievement by parents, as evidenced by the studies (Shakeel, 2018; Yaacob, Osman, & Bachok, 2015).

In Pakistan, intermediate institutions are broadly divided into two categories: private and public. Private institutions are funded through private sources, while public institutions rely on government support. Public institutions offer education at minimal or even free of cost, making them accessible to a larger segment of the population. However, they often face challenges due to limited resources and the significant number of students they must accommodate, which can affect the quality of education provided.

Private Institutions in Pakistan

Private colleges in Pakistan are generally established and managed by individual capitalists, educational organizations, or non-governmental individuals with a focus on providing quality education. These institutions run independently of government funding, relying instead on tuition fees and endowments to sustain and grow their operations. This financial independence allows private colleges to maintain flexibility in curriculum design, infrastructure development, and hiring practices, enabling them to adapt quickly to educational trends and student needs. Additionally, their self-sustaining model adopts competition, pushing them to offer better facilities, highly qualified staff, and innovative teaching methods, all of which contribute to higher enrollment rates. By not depending on government support, private colleges often achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness, thereby strengthening their reputation and appeal among students and parents.

Government Institutions in Pakistan

At the intermediate level in Pakistan, there are two main types of institutions: Intermediate Colleges and Government Higher Secondary Schools. Intermediate Colleges specialize solely in offering classes for grades 11 and 12 education. Government Higher Secondary Schools (GHSS), on the other hand, provide both secondary (grades 9-10) and intermediate (grades 11-12) education, often serving students from diverse backgrounds within a single institution. These schools follow the national curriculum set by the Ministry of Education and use Urdu or regional languages as the medium of instruction.

Government schools aim to provide universal access to education, especially for children from lower-income families and rural areas. Despite their widespread presence and role in promoting literacy, government schools often face challenges such as inadequate funding, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient infrastructure (Rashid, Rashid, Gul, & Qamer, 2024), and a shortage of qualified teachers. Hence, the government is trying to privatize the education system and, in almost a decade, no appointments in the public sector have been made. Most of the teaching posts along with the principals at higher secondary school are lying vacant. Table 1 shows that in the Faisalabad division, 238 out of 609 posts of Principals and Subject Specialist/ Senior Subject Specialist (SS/SSS) in male schools are lying vacant, which just over 30% is. In female institutions, the situation is worse, where 420 (56.9%) out of 738 posts are lying vacant. Vacancy positions in boys' GHSS and Girls' Government Higher Secondary Schools (GGHSS) up to date, taken from the schools Punjab site (<https://sis.punjab.gov.pk/>) are shown.

Enrollment in BISE, Faisalabad

The data presented in Figure 1 highlights a significant shift in enrollment trends for students appearing in the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Faisalabad. In 2015, a considerable 64.6% of the students who took the board exams were from government higher secondary schools/colleges (GHSSs/GCs), while only 35.4% of the candidates came from private higher secondary schools/colleges (PHSSs/PCs). This indicates that at that time, the majority of students preferred government institutions for their intermediate education. However, by 2024, as described by BISE Faisalabad gazette (<https://www.bisefsd.edu.pk/>), the scenario has reversed. The percentage of students from GHSSs/GCs has significantly dropped to 43.1%, whereas the enrollment in PHSSs/PCs has rushed to 56.9%. This indicates a steady annual decline in the enrollment rate at government institutions at an average of 2.15% per annum over the nine-year period. This trend could entail several factors contributing to the declining popularity of

government schools and the corresponding rise in private school enrollment, which should be investigated.

Table 1: Vacancy positions of principals in BS-19, 20 along with SS/SSS in Faisalabad's GHSSs.

Districts	Professionals	GHSSs			GGHSSs		
		Sanctioned	Working	Vacant	Sanctioned	Working	Vacant
Faisalabad	Principal-20	22	11	11	20	10	10
	Principal-19	80	55	25	55	46	9
	SSS	67	60	7	96	55	41
	SS	140	90	50	155	98	57
Jhang	Principal-20	3	3	0	4	3	1
	Principal-19	23	14	9	22	15	7
	SSS	46	38	8	85	25	60
	SS	64	25	39	75	30	45
T.T. Singh	Principal-20	6	1	5	5	1	4
	Principal-19	20	12	8	13	10	3
	SSS	40	22	18	66	9	57
	SS	33	19	14	84	5	79
Chiniot	Principal-20	5	2	3	3	2	1
	Principal-19	7	6	1	8	4	4
	SSS	19	7	12	22	3	19
	SS	34	6	28	25	2	23
Total		609	371	238	738	318	420

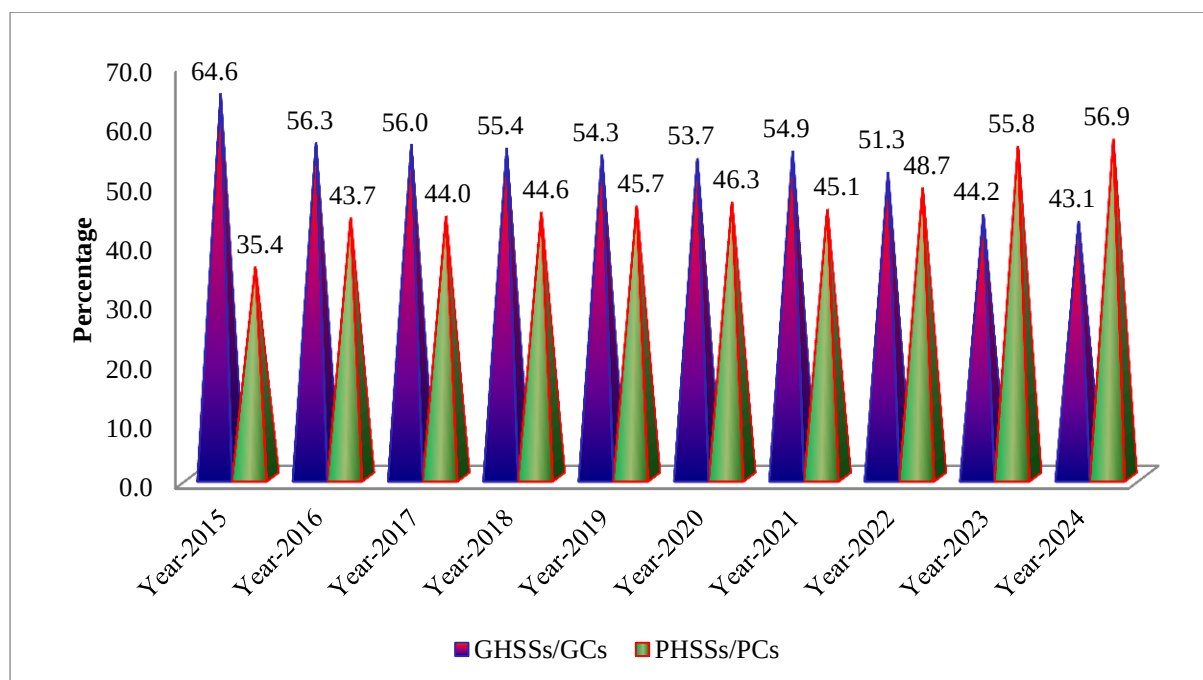


Figure 1: Number of students (%) appeared in BISE, Faisalabad in past decade.

Methodology

The methodology of research outlines the study's design, data collection, and analysis procedures, providing a framework that ensures transparency and reproducibility.

Study Design and Sampling

The study utilized a descriptive and cross-sectional quantitative survey design in which a survey is conducted to collect information about unique characteristics of respondents, their opinions, views or behaviours (Ansari, Rahim, Bhoje, & Bhosale, 2022). The population included educational professionals such as Subject Specialists, Senior Subject Specialists (SS/SSS), and principals from higher secondary and high schools across Punjab, Pakistan. Due to time constraints and limited resources, the sample focused specifically on all principals/head teachers of public secondary and higher secondary schools, as well as Subject Specialists and Senior Subject Specialists (SS/SSS) within the Faisalabad division, which consists of 1347. The sample size was determined using the formula: $n = \frac{N}{1+N e^2}$ with a minimum calculated sample size of: $n = 309$.

Study Tools

A structured questionnaire developed by the author was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions divided into two sections; the first section gathered sociodemographic information (including gender, designation, institution type, and location), while the second section addressed factors contributing to low enrollment in government higher secondary schools. The collected data was then transferred to Microsoft Excel and analyzed quantitatively and statistically using SPSS Version 23.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The study sample comprised all Subject Specialists (SS), Senior Subject Specialists (SSS), and principals from higher secondary schools, as well as SS and SSS who serve as principals of high schools. Other teaching staff involved at the higher school level was excluded to maintain a focus on senior-level educators and administrators whose roles directly influence enrollment in higher secondary schools.

Data Collection

The snowball sampling technique was employed to distribute questionnaires to all SS, SSS, and principals across the Faisalabad division. This approach relied on participants referring or sharing the survey with other eligible respondents, thereby expanding the sample reach progressively. The questionnaire was distributed through various digital platforms, including WhatsApp groups, Facebook, and Twitter, which facilitated easy access and engagement. These social media channels were chosen for their wide usage among the target population, helping ensure efficient data collection and a high response rate. The study's duration spanned from July 28, 2024, to November 7, 2024, with data collection taking 103 days to complete the sample, resulting in an average response rate of 3.1 responses per day.

Results and Discussion

The sample size consisted of 309 participants, with a total of 318 responses obtained, enhancing data precision and reliability for more robust findings. The responses included 211 (66.4%) male and 107 (33.6%) female professionals (SS/SSS and Principals), as detailed in Table 2, along with their demographic profiles.

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents (N = 318)

Items		Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	211(66.4)
	Female	107(33.6)
Professional	Principals	111(34.9)
	SS/SSS	207(65.1)
Nature of Institution	GHS	60(18.9)
	GHSS	258(81.1)
Locality	Urban	197(61.9)
	Rural	121(38.1)

The data collected from the survey have been organized and presented in Table 3, which provides a clear summary of the respondents' views on the factors affecting enrollment in public institutions. Research results reveal that a significant majority of respondents (84.3%) believe that inadequate facilities in government institutions contribute to low enrollment compared to the private sector. This includes 29.9% who strongly agree, 28.6% who moderately agree, and 25.8% who agree. Conversely, 15.7% (11.0% disagree, 4.7% strongly disagree) do not consider this a factor. A majority, 67.6%, don't agree (42.8% disagree, 24.8% strongly disagree) with the statement that low quality of education in government institutions is a reason for low enrollment. However, 32.2% (10.1% strongly agree, 11.6% moderately agree, 10.7% agree) believe it does contribute to the issue. Most respondents (67.0%) think that poor infrastructure in government institutions is a key cause of low enrollment, with 16.7% strongly agreeing, 20.4% moderately agreeing, and 29.9% agreeing. In contrast, 33.0% (26.7% disagree, 6.3% strongly disagree) do not share this view.

An overwhelming 91.8% of respondents (53.8% strongly agree, 13.2% moderately agree, 24.8% agree) express serious concern over the shortage of teachers in government institutions as a factor for low enrollment. Only 8.2% (4.4% disagree, 3.8% strongly disagree) disagree with this assessment. A majority, of 67.3% (38.1% disagree, 29.2% strongly disagree), do not believe that teachers' quality education is a cause of low enrollment in government institutions. However, 32.7% (10.7% strongly agree, 9.7% moderately agree, 12.3% agree) hold an opposing view.

Opinions are split, with not much difference; 54.1% oppose the idea that private institutions offer more prestigious education (40.3% disagree, 13.8% strongly disagree), while 45.9% agree with this notion (29.9% agree, 8.8% moderately agree, 7.2% strongly agree). A slight majority, 56.3% (34.9% agree, 14.2% moderately agree, 7.2% strongly agree), believe that private institutions offer more extracurricular activities, leading to higher enrollment. Meanwhile, 43.7% (34.0% disagree, 9.7% strongly disagree) do not share this belief. About 73.6% (41.8% agree, 22.6% moderately agree, 9.2% strongly agree) think private institutions provide more individual attention to students,

is a major factor in declining enrollment in government schools. In contrast, 26.4% (18.2% disagree, 8.2% strongly disagree) disagree.

Table 3: Frequency responses n (%) for objectives structured decline of enrollment in public sector institutions perception of professionals along with statistical analysis (N= 318).

Items	Strongly disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Moderately agree n (%)	Strongly agree n (%)
Low facilities in Govt. institutions are the cause of low enrollment	15(4.7)	35(11.0)	82(25.8)	91(28.6)	95(29.9)
$M = 3.679$, $SD = 1.1501$, $P\text{-value} = 0.790$					
Low quality of education in Govt. institutions is the cause of low enrollment	79(24.8)	136(43.8)	34(10.7)	37(11.6)	32(10.1)
$M = 2.393$, $SD = 1.2557$, $P\text{-value} = 0.036$					
Low infrastructure in Govt. institutions is the cause of low enrollment	20(6.3)	85(26.7)	95(29.9)	65(20.4)	53(16.7)
$M = 3.145$, $SD = 1.1719$, $P\text{-value} = 0.027$					
Teacher shortage in Govt. institutions is the cause of low enrollment	12(3.8)	14(4.4)	79(24.8)	42(13.2)	171(53.8)
$M = 4.008$, $SD = 1.1394$, $P\text{-value} = 0.366$					
Teacher's quality education in Govt. institutions is the cause of low enrollment	93(29.2)	121(38.1)	39(12.3)	31(9.7)	34(10.7)
$M = 2.346$, $SD = 1.2856$, $P\text{-value} = 0.048$					
Perception that private institutions provide better and prestigious education is the cause.	44(13.8)	128(40.3)	95(29.9)	28(8.8)	23(7.2)
$M = 2.553$, $SD = 1.0665$, $P\text{-value} = 0.789$					
Perception that private institutions provide extracurricular activities is the cause	31(9.7)	108(34.0)	111(34.9)	45(14.2)	23(7.2)
$M = 2.752$, $SD = 1.0498$, $P\text{-value} = 0.621$					
Perception that private institutions provide more attention to individual is also a cause of low enrollment	26(8.2)	58(18.2)	133(41.8)	72(22.6)	29(9.2)
$M = 3.063$, $SD = 1.0489$, $P\text{-value} = 0.432$					
Private institutions have greater parental involvement which led to low enrollment	8(2.5)	39(12.3)	143(45.0)	66(20.8)	62(19.4)
$M = 3.425$, $SD = 1.0167$, $P\text{-value} = 0.718$					
Private institutions have strict discipline and better safety measurements	20(6.3)	68(21.4)	116(36.5)	82(25.8)	32(10.0)
$M = 3.119$, $SD = 1.0559$, $P\text{-value} = 0.126$					
Language barriers, i.e., Private institutions use English whereas, Govt. institutions use local or regional	23(7.2)	120(37.7)	116(36.5)	37(11.6)	22(7.0)
$M = 2.733$, $SD = 0.9957$, $P\text{-value} = 0.168$					
Lack of parent's education and awareness about Govt.	18(5.7)	27(8.5)	152(47.8)	56(17.6)	65(20.4)
$M = 3.387$, $SD = 1.0766$, $P\text{-value} = 0.272$					

institutions

Overall Mean Values

M = 3.050, SD = 1.1094, P-value = 0.366

A substantial number of respondents, 85.2% (45.0% agree, 20.8% moderately agree, 19.4% strongly agree), believe that private institutions' active parental involvement in admissions positively affects enrollment. Only 14.8% (12.3% disagree, 2.5% strongly disagree) do not see this as a significant factor. A majority of respondents, 72.3% (36.5% agree, 25.8% moderately agree, 10.0% strongly agree), feel that stricter discipline and better safety measures in private institutions enhance enrollment. However, 27.7% (21.4% disagree, 6.3% strongly disagree) didn't agree with this perspective.

Responses are nearly balanced regarding the use of language: 55.0% (36.5% agree, 11.6% moderately agree, 7.0% strongly agree) support the view that public sector institutions using regional languages over English affect enrollment, while 45.0% (37.7% disagree, 7.2% strongly disagree) deny, and they think language barriers don't affect the enrollment. Research indicates that challenges in teaching English in government schools have contributed to the preference for private institutions, where students are believed to receive better language education, often supported by external coaching classes (Hassan Sain, Geng, & Song, 2024). Moreover, the results also reveal that 85.8% (47.8% agree, 17.6% moderately agree, 20.4% strongly agree) believe that parents' lack of education and awareness about government institutions is a primary reason for low enrollment in public institutions. Only 14.2% (8.5% disagree, 5.7% strongly disagree) do not see this as a contributing factor.

Statistical Analysis

In this study, statistical analysis was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale developed by the authors to assess respondents' views on factors contributing to low enrollment in government institutions compared to private institutions. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Key statistical measures included the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of responses, with mean values ranging from 2.346 to 4.008 and standard deviation values between 0.9957 and 1.2856. These values indicate the central tendency and variation in responses, providing insights into participants' agreement levels on various factors.

To evaluate the significance of the findings, p-values were calculated for each variable. The p-value ($p > 0.05$) indicates that there is no significant difference in perceptions between principals and SS/SSS, suggesting that the respondents have relatively consistent views on the assessed factors. Conversely, a p-value of $p \leq 0.05$ would indicate statistically significant differences among responses, indicating notable variance in opinions on the causes of low enrollment in public institutions.

The data analysis reveals that for most factors (where $p > 0.05$), both groups of professional subject specialists and principals share a similar perspective on key issues contributing to low enrollment in government institutions. The results reveal that the professionals collectively agree that inadequate facilities and teacher shortages in government institutions, as well as the perception of more prestigious education, greater individual attention to students, availability of extracurricular activities, active parental involvement in admissions, stricter discipline, and better safety measures in the private sector, are major contributing factors.

However, a significant difference in opinion was noted between the two professional groups regarding the quality of teacher education and the infrastructure within public institutions, as indicated by p-values of $p \leq 0.05$ for these variables. Despite these differing views on specific aspects, the overall perception remains aligned, with both groups acknowledging the broader factors influencing enrollment trends. This alignment of viewpoints underscores a shared understanding of the challenges facing public institutions in comparison to the private sector.

The overall mean value ($M = 3.050$) suggests that respondents generally have an agreed-to-moderate agreement with the statements regarding the causes of low enrollment. The standard deviation ($SD = 1.1094$) indicates a moderate level of variability in responses, reflecting some diversity in opinions among participants but with a central tendency around moderate agreement. The overall p-value ($p = 0.366$) is greater than the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in viewpoints between the professionals (principals and SS/SSS) on the overall factors assessed.

Discussion

The findings from the survey underscore several critical factors that appear to contribute to low enrollment in government institutions, with responses reflecting a nuanced view of both the strengths and limitations of public and private educational setups.

The significant consensus (84.3%) that low facilities in government institutions lead to reduced enrollment emphasizes a pressing need for infrastructure improvement. The lack of adequate facilities in government schools can result in an unappealing learning environment, which may discourage both parents and students, who instead opt for private institutions that often present more appealing amenities. This disparity in facilities is a visible and impactful issue that appears to drive enrollment preferences. A study conducted in Pakistan examined the relationship between school resources and student enrollment, revealing that the availability of qualified teachers, sanitation facilities, and overall infrastructure directly affects enrollment rates. The findings suggest that parents are more likely to choose schools with better facilities, leading to a preference for private institutions over under-resourced public schools (Kalim, 2023).

Interestingly, the majority (67.6%) do not see the quality of education itself as a primary issue in government schools. This challenges the common perception that private institutions inherently provide better academic quality. It suggests that while educational quality is sometimes equated with enrollment choices, other factors like facilities and infrastructure might weigh more heavily in decision-making for families. Research from Kenya indicates that increased enrollment in public primary schools often results in overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teaching resources, which negatively impacts the quality of education. This situation further discourages parents from enrolling their children in government schools, as they seek environments that promise better educational outcomes (Mwirigi & Muthaa, 2015).

Similar to facilities, a significant number (67.0%) believe that inadequate infrastructure in government schools is a key factor behind low enrollment. Infrastructure encompasses essential elements like building quality, availability of classrooms, and necessary educational resources (Murtaza & Hui, 2021). These issues may create a less engaging environment, impacting students' comfort and sense of pride in their school, thus leading families to choose private institutions with better facilities.

A devastating concern (91.8%) among respondents is the shortage of teachers in government institutions, which is viewed as a major factor in enrollment decline. A shortage of teaching staff can lead to overcrowded classrooms, less individual attention, and lower instructional quality, all of which can significantly affect students' academic experience (Wiggan, Smith, & Watson-Vandiver, 2021). This finding underscores the importance of adequate staffing in public schools to ensure a valuable learning environment. A study focusing on vocational high schools found that both infrastructure quality and teaching effectiveness significantly impact student involvement and competence. This suggests that improving physical facilities can lead to enhanced educational outcomes when combined with high-quality teaching practices (Mahmud et al., 2023). Furthermore, another study highlights the correlation between improved educational facilities and increased student participation in extracurricular activities, which are vital for skill development and motivation (Arjanto & Telussa, 2024). In contrast, a majority (67.3%) do not believe that the quality of teaching staff itself is a direct cause of low enrollment. This suggests a perception that government school teachers are competent, although the challenge lies more in systemic issues like workload and support.

The perception of private institutions as more prestigious remains divided, with only a slight majority (54.1%) rejecting this view. This division hints that societal perceptions of private schooling may vary greatly depending on region, socioeconomic background, and cultural factors. While prestige may not universally drive enrollment, it is likely to remain influential in some communities, especially where private schools actively promote themselves as higher-status options. A small majority (56.3%) feel that private institutions offer more extracurricular activities, contributing to their higher enrollment. This reflects a growing demand for a well-rounded education where students have access to sports, the arts, and other non-academic pursuits. Government institutions often have a lack of funding for such programs, which can make them less attractive to parents seeking a holistic educational experience for their children. A study conducted reveals that lack of funding can cause low education and consequently low enrollment (Onyema et al., 2020).

A notable 73.6% of respondents agree that private institutions provide more individualized attention, which many view as a significant advantage. Smaller class sizes and personalized teaching are increasingly valued by parents, as they believe such environments foster better academic and personal growth for their children. Government institutions, often limited by larger class sizes and fewer resources, may struggle to match this appeal. Research indicates that smaller class sizes can lead to enhanced student engagement and improved learning outcomes. For instance, studies show that instructors in smaller classes often employ more learner-centered activities, such as group work and simulations, which can foster deeper understanding and retention of material (Wright et al., 2019).

A high percentage (85.2%) feels that private schools' efforts to involve parents in the admission process positively influence enrollment. This indicates that parents appreciate being active participants in their child's education, feeling more reassured and engaged when they're consulted and involved. Government schools may benefit from adopting similar practices to enhance parental trust and involvement. Over 70% of respondents see stricter discipline and enhanced safety in private institutions as favorable enrollment factors. Parents are increasingly focused on school safety, and private institutions often prioritize and advertise these aspects. Government schools could benefit from implementing and highlighting stronger safety protocols to appeal to parents' concerns (Z. Akram, Shahzad, & Bibi, 2015).

There is an almost even split in opinion about the impact of language use, with 55% supporting the view that government institutions' preference for local languages over English affects enrollment. This suggests that language of instruction remains a contentious issue, with English often viewed as offering greater career opportunities, particularly in urban areas. Addressing this language divide might involve offering bilingual instruction or adopting a balanced approach to meeting community needs. Research has shown that two-way bilingual education programs can effectively promote dual language proficiency while enhancing academic achievement. Such programs not only support language development but also foster positive cross-cultural attitudes among students, making them more appealing to diverse communities (Christian, 1996).

Finally, the overwhelming majority (85.8%) attribute low enrollment in government institutions to parents' lack of education and awareness. This implies that, regardless of the quality of government schools, many parents may lack the information or understanding needed to value the education offered (Tripathi, 2019). Thus, targeted awareness campaigns or informational programs could play a crucial role in changing parental perceptions and boosting public school enrollment.

Conclusion

This study identifies key factors contributing to low enrollment in public intermediate institutions in Punjab, Pakistan. Analysis reveals that inadequate facilities, teacher shortages, and limited extracurricular activities in public schools significantly drive students toward private institutions. Furthermore, parental perceptions about the quality and reputation of private schools further influence enrollment decisions. Addressing these challenges requires targeted measures, including improving infrastructure, ensuring sufficient teacher recruitment, and encouraging active parental engagement to enhance public institutions' enrollment.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the authors propose the following recommendations to improve enrollment in government institutions:

1. The shortage of teaching staff is a prominent issue. Hiring more teachers, especially in rural areas, should be prioritized. Additionally, offering incentives for teachers to work in underserved regions and retaining experienced staff can help stabilize the teaching workforce in government institutions.
2. Although teacher quality wasn't seen as a major factor, government schools could invest in ongoing teacher training programs to further improve instructional methods and classroom management skills. Teachers should also be provided with adequate support, such as teaching aids and technology, to enhance their effectiveness and improve students' learning experiences.
3. Government institutions should prioritize upgrading basic facilities to provide a beneficial and attractive learning environment. Collaborating with local governments and private donors for funding and resources could help expedite these improvements.
4. Since most respondents did not see educational quality as a major issue, government schools could benefit from publicly promoting their academic strengths, such as teacher qualifications, successful alumni, and student achievements. Additionally, conducting regular assessments to ensure quality standards can help build community confidence in public education.

5. Upgrading the physical infrastructure of government institutions should be a priority. Govt. institutions may also consider allocating resources for basic repairs, furniture, and equipment maintenance to make these spaces more inviting.
6. Government schools can counter the prestige associated with private institutions by emphasizing their unique benefits, such as lower tuition costs, cultural diversity, and community-based learning. Schools could collaborate with the local community and stakeholders to showcase their contributions and success stories, fostering a sense of pride and encouraging more families to consider public education.
7. To compete with private institutions, government schools should introduce and expand extracurricular activities like sports, arts, and clubs. Local partnerships with sports teams, community arts programs, or volunteers could help establish these programs without significant budgetary strain, providing students with a holistic education experience.
8. Government institutions could look into creating smaller class sizes where feasible or adopting teaching strategies that facilitate more individualized attention. Additionally, introducing teacher assistants or part-time tutors could support students more effectively, particularly in large classrooms.
9. Parental involvement can be encouraged by creating platforms such as parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and community events.
10. To address safety concerns, government schools should implement and communicate clear safety and discipline policies. Investing in basic security measures like fencing, lighting, and campus supervision can also reassure parents about their children's safety.
11. Many parents may be unaware of the opportunities available in government institutions. Institutions could host open houses, informational workshops, or school tours to showcase their facilities, faculty, and achievements. Partnering with local community leaders to disseminate information can also help reach parents effectively and improve public perception of government education.

Acknowledgement

The authors sincerely extend their deepest gratitude to the honorable respondents for dedicating their valuable time to providing insightful responses, which were substantial in completing this research paper. Special thanks are also due to all the trainees of the Promotion Linked Training (PLT) program, BS-17 to BS-18, Batch-I-2024, at Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED), Faisalabad, for offering the opportunity to conduct this research work.

This work was initiated under the guidance of our beloved supervisor, the late Dr. Abdul Sattar, whose wisdom and mentorship inspired this endeavor. We humbly dedicate this research to his memory as a tribute to his enduring influence and support.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest.

Source of Funding: None

References

1. Ahmad, I., Ali, A., Khan, I., & Khan, F. A. (2014). Critical Analysis of the Problems of Education in Pakistan: Possible Solutions. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 3(2), 79-84.

2. Ahmad, N., Anak Nugak, M., Abd Rahman, S. F., & Asiah Mohamad @ Razak, N. (2024). Exploring Challenges and Impacts: Insights from School Teachers in Virtual Learning Environments. *Arab World English Journal*, 10(7), 172-190. doi: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4918013>
3. Akram, N., Muhammad, K., & Husnain, M. (2007). Fiscal Situation in Pakistan and its consequences for Economic Growth and Poverty. *Economic Survey*, 8(3), 94-111.
4. Akram, Z., Shahzad, A., & Bibi, Z. (2015). Factors Affecting Low Enrollment and High Dropout Rate at Primary School Level in Khohat Division. *Applied Science Reports*. 11 (2), 83-86.
5. Ansari, M., Rahim, K., Bhoje, R., & Bhosale, S. (2022). A study on research design and its types. *International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology (IRJET)*, 9(7), 1132-1135.
6. Arjanto, P., & Telussa, R. P. (2024). Educational management strategies: linking infrastructure, student activities, and academic performance. *JPPI (Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia)*, 10(3), 163-174. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.29210/020244097>
7. Awan, A. G., & Zia, A. (2015). Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Educational Institutions: A case study of District Vehari-Pakistan. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(16), 122-130.
8. Banerjee, A., & Duflo, E. (2013). Poor economics. a radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty. *Society and Economy*, 35(4), 573-587.
9. Barghi, R., Zakaria, Z., Hamzah, A., & Hashim, N. H. (2017). Heritage education in the primary school standard curriculum of Malaysia. *Teaching and Teacher education*, 61, 124-131. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.10.012>
10. Benavot, A., Antoninis, M., Bella, N., Delprato, M., Härmä, J., Jere, C., . . . McWilliam, A. (2016). Education for All 2000–2015: The Influence of Global Interventions and Aid on EFA Achievements. *The Handbook of Global Education Policy*, 241-258.
11. Brunello, G., & Rocco, L. (2008). Educational standards in private and public schools. *The Economic Journal*, 118(533), 1866-1887. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2008.02194.x>
12. Christian, D. (1996). Two-Way Immersion Education: Students Learning through Two Languages. *The Modern Language Journal*, 80(1), 66-76. doi: 10.2307/329058
13. Hannum, E., & Buchmann, C. (2005). Global educational expansion and socio-economic development: An assessment of findings from the social sciences. *World development*, 33(3), 333-354.
14. Hassan Sain, Z., Geng, H., & Song, Y. (2024). Impact of English Language Coaching Classes in Pakistan: Bridging Educational Gaps and Socioeconomic Challenges. *Language, Technology, and Social Media*, 2(2), 116-127. doi: 10.70211/ltsm.v2i2.98
15. Kalim, U. (2023). The impact of school resources on student enrollment: an empirical investigation of different category public schools in Pakistan. *SN Social Sciences*, 3(6), 85. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-023-00666-y>
16. Mahmud, A., Yanto, H., & Edy Mulyono, S. (2023). Student Involvement as a Competency Catalyst: Uncovering the Influence of Infrastructure Management and Teaching Quality. *JUMPA : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 4(2), 68-81. doi: <https://doi.org/10.33650/jumpa.v5i1.9349>
17. Murtaza, K. G., & Hui, L. (2021). Higher education in Pakistan: challenges, opportunities, suggestions. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 4(2), 212-219. doi: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3833727>

18. Mwirigi, S. F., & Muthaa, G. M. (2015). Impact of Enrollment on the Quality of Learning in Primary Schools in Imenti Central District, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6, 156-160.
19. Onyema, E. M., Eucheria, N. C., Obafemi, F. A., Sen, S., Atonye, F. G., Sharma, A., & Alsayed, A. O. (2020). Impact of Coronavirus pandemic on education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 11(13), 108-121. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7176/jep%2F11-13-12>
20. Panjwani, M. M. (2024). Impact of AI in teaching and learning of CS in low-resourced schools. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 12(2), 1933-1939. doi: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.12.2.1451>
21. Rashid, A., Rashid, M., Gul, U., & Qamer, N. (2024). The COVID-19's Legacy in Pakistan's Higher Secondary Education: A Cross-sectional Study. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 44(4), 549-560. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14178555>
22. Rind, G. M. (2023). Postcolonial critiques on globalization and privatization of education in Pakistan. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 25(1), 112-120. doi: <https://doi.org/10.52214/cice.v25i1.10017>
23. Shakeel, M. D. (2018). Islamic schooling in the cultural West: A systematic review of the issues concerning school choice. *Religions*, 9(12), 392. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9120392>
24. Shpeizer, R. (2018). Teaching critical thinking as a vehicle for personal and social transformation. *Research in Education*, 100(1), 32-49. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523718762176>
25. Timidi, E. T., & Okuro, G. (2024). The Power of Education in Shaping Democratic Citizenship and Good Governance. *Studies in Humanities and Education*, 5(2), 52–62. doi: <https://doi.org/10.48185/she.v5i2.1295>
26. Tripathi, V. N. (2019). “Causes of Low Learning outcome and Low Enrolment in Government Primary Schools of Uttar Pradesh: A Study. *Journal of Emerging Technologies And Innovative Research*, 6(6), 342-346.
27. Wiggan, G., Smith, D., & Watson-Vandiver, M. J. (2021). The national teacher shortage, urban education and the cognitive sociology of labor. *The Urban Review*, 53, 43-75. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00565-z>
28. Wright, M. C., Bergom, I., & Bartholomew, T. (2019). Decreased class size, increased active learning? Intended and enacted teaching strategies in smaller classes. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 20, 51 - 62. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787417735607>
29. Yaacob, N. A., Osman, M. M., & Bachok, S. (2015). An assessment of factors influencing parents' decision making when choosing a private school for their children: a case study of Selangor, Malaysia: for sustainable human capital. *Procedia environmental sciences*, 28, 406-417. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proenv.2015.07.050>