

Large Class Size Challenge and its Impact on the Performance of Government Primary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

A large class size refers to an educational setting where the students outreach a teacher's capacity to deliver quality instructions, affecting the performance of teachers, leading to challenges in government primary schools in Pakistan. This study explored the large class size challenge and its impact on the performance of government primary school teachers. The objectives were: to analyze the influence of large class size on the performance of teachers and to assess the challenges teachers face when dealing with large class size. The study employed descriptive research design followed by quantitative approach. The population included primary school teachers particularly from taluka Matiari district of Sindh province of Pakistan. The sample was selected using rule-of-thumb approach. Closed-ended questionnaire was used to gather data. Using SPSS software descriptive and inferential data was analyzed. The study provided rich quantitative insight, regarding large class size, its challenges, its various effects on teachers performance that influence performance of teachers and teaching effectiveness at primary level. Findings revealed that teachers face excessive student-to-teacher ratio, affecting their wellbeing, resulting mismanagement and undisciplined class impacting teaching effectiveness. Solutions involved enhanced infrastructure, organized teacher recruitment reform, team-teaching approaches, optimizing teaching-learning environments, and progressively reducing class size to sustainable levels.



Introduction

The education sector continues to grapple with numerous challenges, among which large class size stands out as a critical concern. This issue remains highly debated, as research suggests that large class size is a debated problem for teachers. Excessive student enrollment leads to overcrowded classrooms, which negatively impacts the teaching-learning process. Larger class sizes reduce individual attention, strain resources, and hinder effective classroom management, eventually compromising educational quality. Managing large classes continues to pose significant challenges for teachers, administrators, and stakeholders (Abubakar et al., 2023).

At primary level students from multifaceted cultural and social backgrounds are gathered to learn in a particular place. Large classes can result in many obstacles for teaching, particularly where there is an academically diverse student groups (Blatchford & Russell, 2020). When considering class sizes, the Law on Primary Education mandates that no class should have fewer than 20 students (UNICEF, 2022).

The normal class size varies in different countries. A class containing 30 students is usually regarded as standard in many educational systems (Hadi and Arante, 2015). If a class surpasses 30 students it may be regarded as large class. A large class possesses 60 and 149 students (Wang & Calvano, 2022). Class size is considered as an educational strategy that may represent as a moderate ratio of students in every class in a school (Adeyemi., 2022).

On the other hand Hadi and Arante (2015) highlighted the absence of a universally recognized parameter or interpretation of what constitutes a large class. While no universal standard defines large class sizes, European educational systems typically maintain 20-40 students per classroom, just the same majority of teachers across the world have over 40 students and some have 100 in their class (Wadesango, 2021). In the educational system of Pakistan, classes with 30-35 students are typically classified as large (Jokhio et al. 2020).

Managing larger classes is considered as challenging and affecting teaching practices in secondary schools of Islamabad (Shahab, 2023). Similarly, in Sindh province a significant increase in student enrollment in government schools has been also observed. It has been noted that a number of students in each class has exceeded manageable limits, adversely affecting classroom management, teaching quality, learning outcomes, and individualized student assessment. Consequently, teachers find it increasingly difficult to deliver effective instruction. Therefore, this study was designed to critically investigate the challenge of large class size and its multifaceted impacts on teaching effectiveness, instructional quality, and overall teachers' performance in government primary schools.

Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the influence of large class size on the performance of teachers.
2. To assess the challenges teachers face when dealing with large class size.

Hypothesis of the study

1. H_0 There is no significant challenge for teachers due to large class size.

Rationale of the study

This study addresses the issue of large class size challenge and its impact on teachers' performance. Examining the factors contributing to the prevalence of oversized classrooms in educational institutions by helping teachers in formulating effective classroom strategies to use in

large class sizes. The study also provided guidance for classroom management to create conducive learning environment to improve teachers' performance and to implement different ideas to increase effectiveness in teaching and learning. Class size serves as a key determinant of educational quality, affecting a teacher's ability to maintain order, deliver effective lessons, and foster student success (Kusi, 2019). In smaller groups, teachers can devote significantly more individual attention to all the pupils (Ayeni & Olowe, 2016). However, in large size class teacher has to face challenges in managing classrooms, controlling pupil, in planning and assessment. Small classes facilitate one-on-one interactions, leading to a more academically stimulating environment (Senyagwa, 2021).

Literature Cited

Classroom space significantly influences teaching effectiveness. Research by Blatchford (2007) highlighted that overcrowded classrooms restrict teachers' movement and limit their ability to implement diverse instructional strategies. In classes with 32 or more students (ages 4–11), students' exhibit more disruptive behavior and reduced attention spans due to physical constraints. Conversely, smaller classes enhance learning environments. Graue (2007) found that with fewer students, teachers can design certain specific functional learning spaces and organize students into collaborative groups. Research by Abubakar et al. (2023) and (Kusi, 2019) validates the size of a class has a crucial role in three main areas of education including classroom management and discipline, instructional effectiveness, and student achievement. The research studies from Taha (2021) and Uhrain (2016) also highlight that large size classes make it more challenging for teachers to maintain discipline in a class, generally shifting attention from learning to behavior management. An oversized class refers to any learning environment where student enrollment exceeds the teacher's capacity to provide equitable, quality instruction to all students (Wang & Calvano, 2022).

Additionally, Halbach (2001) in North Carolina surveyed 140 teachers and concluded that small classes consist of 15 or less students improve classroom discipline, as teachers can establish stronger personal connections with students. Similar findings emerged in a New York replication study (Finn, 2003), where personalized teacher-student relationships reduced behavioral issues. For optimal learning especially in early grades teachers must adapt classroom layouts (e.g., rearranging desks, facilitating role-play, and group activities). However, large class sizes restrict spatial flexibility, hindering these dynamic teaching methods (Senyagwa, 2021).

In Japan, higher student-teacher ratios increase stress as teachers grapple with time-consuming tasks (Hojo, 2021). According to the Department of Education Order No. 62 of Series 2004, specifies the least number of classes should be fifteen (15), with the greatest capacity of sixty-five (65) students per classroom, while maintaining an ideal average class size of forty-five to fifty (45–50) learners. This measure aims to distribute students across multiple sessions, thereby decreasing class sizes and improving the overall learning environment (Cervantes, et al., 2022).

A teacher's emotional wellness plays a crucial role in classroom teaching effectiveness, as their mood directly affects their relationship with their students. Regardless of many hurdles of profession, they often hide their hardships and emotional strain maintaining a composed and professional attitude for their students and coworkers, even during period of significant strain. Thus, teachers may better nurture the hearts and minds of learners by prioritizing their well-being (Manlongat, et al., 2021).

Teachers in overcrowded classrooms frequently face difficulties in addressing heterogeneous learning abilities and behavioral challenges, typically lacking adequate teaching strategies for these complex environments (Mahmood et al., 2022). Research conducted in Pakistan highlights large

class size challenges, showing that teaching in overcrowded classrooms is unsustainable. Educators face significant difficulties in classroom organization, maintaining discipline, delivering lessons, and assessing student progress effectively (Khan & Iqbal, 2012). The research conducted by Syed, Asad, and Jamal (2023) highlights that large size class poses which notably hinder both student learning outcomes and teaching quality. Their findings further indicated that overcrowding creates challenges that operate at four different levels (1) effective classroom management, (2) implementation of cooperative learning techniques, (3) teaching under limited resource environment and (4) maintaining active student involvement across different learning environments. On the other side, findings supported by empirical evidence say that smaller class sizes foster stronger teacher-student relationships, improve teacher student engagement, and provide more individual attention. These findings indicate that alleviated class sizes greatly enhance both teaching efficiency and student achievement (Aremu and Salami, 2013; Kusi, 2019; Owoeye and Yara, 2016; Uhrain, 2016). It has been debated that large classes give rise to multifaceted challenges to teachers compared to smaller classes (Venketsamy R. 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by constructivism theory. As Cherry (2022) explains, Constructivism is a learner-centered educational philosophy that posits knowledge cannot be passively transmitted from teacher to student through direct instruction alone. In a large class size, applying constructivism theory can pose challenges. Constructivism emphasizes student-centered learning and active participation of students. In a sizable class, individualized attention may be limited, making it difficult to facilitate personalized learning experiences. Therefore, this study adopted constructivism as its theoretical foundation because this theory empowers teachers to cultivate an interactive educational atmosphere that promotes active student participation in meaning-making processes.

Method

This study used descriptive research design followed by quantitative approach to gain an overall and fully comprehension on the topic. A closed ended questionnaire consist of five-point likert scale extending from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was employed. The targeted population for this particular study was all the primary school teachers from taluka Matiari district of Sindh province including both gender schools. The total population of teachers was 615. As per the sample driven by rule of thumb technique 20 % of sample for quantitative data was to be collected that was in total 123 teachers. Simple random sampling technique was utilized to collect quantitative data of both male and female primary school teachers by means of on spot selection technique. The quantitative data were analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics through SPSS software. After measuring the normality assumption of the data, the descriptive statistics were conducted to determine the percentage of level of agreement of the items based on likert scale 5.0. In descriptive statistics frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation was carried out. Research hypothesis was tested using inferential statistical methods, including regression analysis, ANOVA, and correlation coefficient analysis.

Conceptual Framework

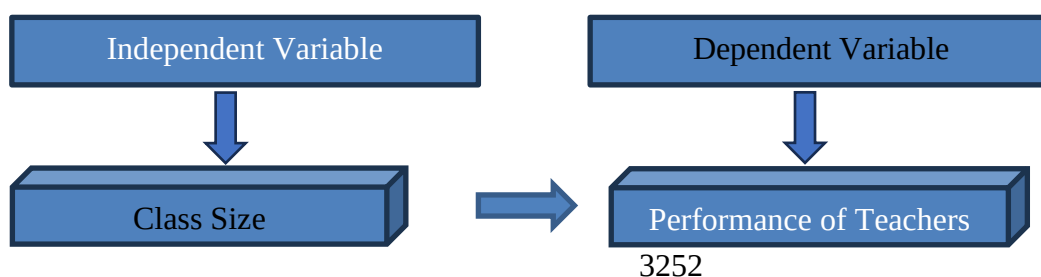


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework

Data Analysis

Table 1: Survey Results on Large Class Size in Primary Schools of Taluka Matiari (N=123)

Survey Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Classrooms in my school are overcrowded with students.	1 (0.8%)	6 (4.9%)	19 (15.4%)	77 (62.6%)	20 (16.3%)	3.89	.760
The students' population in my class affects my teaching.	2 (1.6%)	27 (22.0%)	4 (3.3%)	59 (48.0%)	31 (25.2%)	3.73	1.117
The students' population in my class also affects my attitude and health.	6 (4.9%)	29 (23.6%)	11 (8.9%)	48 (39.0%)	29 (23.6%)	3.53	1.224
Paying individual attention to all the students in large size class is difficult.	1 (0.8%)	10 (8.1%)	7 (5.7%)	67 (54.5%)	38 (30.9%)	4.07	.875
Managing workload in large size class is challenging.	3 (2.4%)	6 (4.9%)	6 (4.9%)	78 (63.4%)	30 (24.4%)	4.02	.844
Classroom management is difficult in large size class.	3 (2.4%)	8 (6.5%)	11 (8.9%)	76 (61.8%)	25 (20.3%)	3.91	.878
To maintain discipline in large size class is hard.	3 (2.4%)	10 (8.1%)	13 (10.6%)	62 (50.4%)	35 (28.5%)	3.94	.969
Large size class is usually noisy due to indiscipline.	1 (0.8%)	5 (4.1%)	7 (5.7%)	70 (56.9%)	40 (32.5%)	4.16	.772
Students' concentration (focus) diverts due to excessive number of learners in a class.	10 (8.1%)	7 (5.7%)	6 (4.9%)	76 (61.8%)	24 (19.5%)	3.79	1.081

Implementing student-centered approach in large size classroom is hard.	1 (0.8%)	7 (5.7%)	21 (17.1%)	71 (57.7%)	23 (18.7%)	3.88	.806
There should be more sections than to have more students in a class.	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.6%)	1 (0.8%)	69 (56.1%)	50 (40.7%)	4.34	.663
School administration and government attention towards large size class challenge is required.	1 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.6%)	64 (52.0%)	56 (45.5%)	4.41	.613

Interpretation of Result

The descriptive statistics table provides insights into various aspect of large class size that affects teachers' performance based on rating provided by 123 individuals. The respondents rated their opinion on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. The mean and standard deviation values offer a summary of ratings for each question. The statistical findings indicate that teachers overwhelmingly agreed that overcrowded classrooms impact effective teaching also revealing a strong and consistent perception among teachers that large size classrooms are recognized as a serious problem, with 78.9% agreeing or strongly agreeing that classrooms are overcrowded with mean of 3.89. This overcrowding is associated with substantial pedagogical and managerial difficulties: over 85% of teachers find individual attention difficult, nearly 88% struggle with workload, and approximately 89% reported that overcrowding leads to noisy classroom environment with the highest-rated problem statement with mean of 4.16. Discipline and classroom management are also widely cited as challenging, while student concentration and the implementation of student-centered approaches are negatively affected. The personal impact on teachers' attitude and health, though still acknowledged by a majority of respondents 62.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing, shows greater variability with mean of 3.53, along with standard deviation of 1.224, indicating differing individual experiences. With mean scores mostly above 3.5 is evident that teachers often struggle with maintaining effective classroom management, providing individual student attention, maintaining discipline, and implementing student-centered approaches in large size classes. Crucially, there is near-unanimous support for structural solutions: 96.8% respondents favored creating more sections, and 97.5% call for greater administrative and government attention with mean of 4.41, the highest of all items. Collectively, the findings underscore that overcrowding in classrooms is perceived as a major barrier to effective teaching, teachers' well-being and effective classroom management, and that teachers urgently demand institutional intervention to address this issue.

Hypothesis Testing

To examine the impact of large class size on teachers' performance, a null hypothesis was formulated and tested using regression analysis and correlation in SPSS software. This statistical approach allowed researchers to investigate: (1) whether large class sizes present significant challenges for teachers. The regression analysis and correlation provided quantitative evidence to validate or reject hypothesis, offering empirical insights into the relationship between class size

and teachers' performance metrics and enabling data-driven conclusions about classroom overcrowding consequences.

Regression Analysis

Variable; Performance of Teachers

The null hypothesis is stated thus,

H- 1: There is no significant challenge for teachers due to large class size.

A regression analysis was carried out at the 0.05 % significance level to evaluate the hypothesis of the study and meet its research goals.

Table 2: Regression Analysis Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.204 ^a	.042	.034	.8153
a. Predictors: (Constant), Class Size				

R = 0.204, which shows a weak positive correlation between class size and performance of teachers. R Square = 0.042 indicates that class size explains only 4.2 % of the variance in performance of teachers. Adjusted R Square = 0.034, which suggests that the model is slightly adjusted for the number of predictors.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.492	1	3.492	5.253	.024 ^b
	Residual	80.427	121	.665		
	Total	83.919	122			
a. Dependent Variable: Performance of teachers						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Class Size						

F-value = 5.253 with **p-value** = 0.024 indicates that the model is statistically significant, and class size affects performance of teachers.

Table 4: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.005	.385		7.810	.000
	Class Size	.223	.097	.204	2.292	.024
a. Dependent Variable: Performance of teachers						

The **coefficient for class size** is 0.223 (p-value = 0.024), which means that for every unit increase in class size, teachers' performance increases by 0.223 units, though the effect is small.

CONCLUSION: H₀ 1 is rejected. There is a statistically significant relationship between class size and performance of teachers.

Discussion and Conclusion

Large class size significantly impact teachers' performance by increasing workload and lowering overall instructional quality. A study by Marias (2016) highlights critical staffing shortages at one school where 24 teachers serve 1,300 students, resulting in excessive professional demands that compromise instructional quality. Large class size creates stress and exhaustion among teachers while dealing with it, leading to decreased motivation and discipline issues among students. Resultantly, hinder individualized student support, leaving struggling learners behind and failing to challenge high performers this consonant with the results of Ayoub, (2019) teaching under such conditions proves highly stressful due to multiple compounding challenges, including, severe resource constraints that limit instructional materials and support services, limited parental academic capital that reduces home learning support, and extreme student heterogeneity requiring differentiated instruction far beyond typical classroom capacities. In overcrowded classrooms teacher faced numerous management challenges, such as time management, maintenance of discipline and order, confronting individual differences, motivating students, dealing with absenteeism, bunking, planning effective lesson plan, and so on (Mahmood et al., 2022). Overcrowding in class creates chaotic environments that reduce student confidence and academic performance. While some schools deploy co-teaching or redistribute students, many lack adequate classrooms and teaching materials.

Thus, it was concluded that class size in government primary schools significantly is challenging and it impacts teachers' performance. Large class size creates multifaceted burden on teachers, affecting their physical and mental health, classroom management, classroom teaching and learning effectiveness. In large class teachers find it challenging to provide individual attention, manage excessive workload, and to maintain classroom discipline. These issues negatively impacts teaching quality and well-being of teachers thoroughly. Resultantly, large class size declines the quality of education, reducing individual attention and disrupting the classroom environment. Hence, large class size has become a major barrier for the effective education in government primary schools.

Moreover, teachers encounter ample difficulties while handling diverse classrooms and maintaining classroom discipline. Despite a wide range of challenges, teachers try to make use of innovative strategies, positive reinforcement, and collaborative learning techniques to foster a dynamic teaching environment. They implement various approaches to maintain student attention and individual participation, particularly in classes abundant with students. These persistent challenges emphasize the urgent need for teacher's training specially to deal with large size class and structured institutional support to assist teachers to manage overcrowded classrooms effectively to facilitate teaching learning experiences.

On the other hand, small class sizes enable teachers to enhance their teaching methods, improve classroom management, and ultimately grow into more skilled and proficient teachers. With fewer students to manage, teachers can dedicate more attention to develop their pedagogical expertise, applying innovative teaching strategies, and building stronger relationships with individual student. This professional development not only enhances teaching quality but also results in more enriching and personalized learning experiences for students as well.

Recommendations

The following measures are recommended to address challenges of large class size.

1. Educational policymakers need to prioritize class size reduction in early grades to reduce teacher workload and foster instructional effectiveness.

2. To mitigate the challenges of large class sizes, higher authorities need to focus on building additional classrooms in schools with high student ratio. Such an investment in school infrastructure will allow for better classroom management and improved educational outcomes.
3. To improve learning outcomes and teacher well-being, targeted teacher recruitment should be implemented in schools with oversized classes, ensuring manageable student-teacher ratios.
4. Innovative educational strategies such as team teaching, smaller breakout sessions, and technology-supported teaching should be adopted by educational institutions.
5. Immediate training initiatives should be prioritized to help teachers developing expertise in managing large classrooms, including innovative student engagement techniques and effective behavior management approaches.
6. Resolving this challenge demands coordinated efforts among policymakers, administrators, and teachers to achieve sustainable improvements in instructional quality and student achievement.
7. Collectively, these recommendations aim to establish an enhanced support system for teachers, paving the way for better educational results in primary schools of taluka Matiari. By adopting these recommendations, the negative effects of large class size on teachers' performance can be mitigated and primary schools can foster more effective education system, enabling teachers to succeed despite current challenges.

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