

Investigating Student-Related Challenges: Insights from Principals and Teachers in Quetta's Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding student-related challenges in public secondary schools in District Quetta, Balochistan. Grounded in the need to bridge the administrative-classroom gap, this quantitative research utilized a descriptive design with a stratified random sample of 100 principals and 100 teachers. Data were analyzed using SPSS, with ANOVA employed to identify significant differences in stakeholder perspectives. Results indicate that while both groups share similar views on student responsiveness to teaching, part-time work prevalence, and the academic impact of time constraints, significant divergences exist regarding general student characteristics and behaviors. Specifically, ANOVA results revealed statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in perceptions concerning student energy and intelligence ($F=6.565$, $p=0.011$), timely task completion ($F=39.747$, $p=0.000$), prevalence of problematic behaviors ($F=13.935$, $p=0.000$), and the burden of socio-economic backgrounds ($F=14.756$, $p=0.000$). These findings suggest that principals generally maintain a more optimistic outlook, whereas teachers' perceptions are rooted in direct classroom experiences. The study underscores the need to foster collaborative communication channels between school leadership and teaching staff to create unified, effective support systems that address the multifaceted needs of students in public secondary education.

Keywords: Student-related challenges, Public secondary schools, Principals' perspectives, Teachers' perceptions, Educational management, Comparative analysis, District Quetta.

Introduction

Education is the basic foundation for all development at the individual and national levels. In the case of the secondary school system, the perception of the role of the principal as an instructional leader is critical in order to ensure that there is high-quality education delivered in these institutions and that these institutions are serving as effective agents for social change and individual development (Niazi, 2025). The current environment in schools is becoming more and more complicated due to the variety of academic, behavioral, and personal issues faced by students. Though the importance of leadership in achieving student success is well recognized, the reality is that there is still a gap between the perception of the issues from the side of administration and their understanding on behalf of teachers (Johnson & Brown, 2025). While the effectiveness of school performance depends upon the institution's stability, the issue of "student-related problems," which appears in the classroom, requires a more complex approach to its solution. Thus, this research is aimed at identifying the perspectives of principals and teachers concerning student-related problems in public secondary schools (Salehi, 2025).

Literature Review

The relationship between school leadership and student performance is well-documented in educational management literature. Scholarly consensus suggests that while the impact of a principal on student achievement is often indirect, it is mediated through the school environment and the professional culture they foster (Bellibas et al., 2022; Taole, 2022). Within this framework, principals act as the primary overseers of academic and administrative operations, making their perception of student-related problems a critical factor in how the school responds to crises (Watto et al., 2023). Existing research highlights that principals and teachers often hold distinct vantage points regarding student difficulties. While principals are frequently tasked with the administrative and logistical management of institutions—often grappling with resource allocation and policy compliance (Donkoh et al., 2023; Odide et al., 2022)—teachers are the primary frontline observers of student cognitive, social, and behavioral development (Chapagai, 2024). The literature suggests that a "leadership gap" often exists when management structures fail to incorporate the perspectives of teachers, who are closest to the classroom-level realities of student struggles, such as time management deficits, socioeconomic barriers, and low academic engagement (Gardner-McTaggart, 2020). Modern leadership paradigms, including distributed and learner-centered models, emphasize that school success is no longer a top-down endeavor (Shamim et al., 2023). Scholars argue that managing student problems—particularly those involving emotional or behavioral disorders—requires a synergistic, collaborative approach between school leaders, teachers, and parents (Sunko et al., 2021; Aladejebi, 2024). However, the literature reveals a tension: while schools emphasize "common goals," they often prioritize institutional objectives over individual student needs (Hart et al., 2022). Consequently, research emphasizes that effective school climate management depends on the strength of communication—both vertical (principal-to-teacher) and horizontal (teacher-to-teacher)—in identifying and mitigating obstacles to student progress (Baker & Green, 2022).

Research Objective

The objective of this study is to investigate the perceptions of public secondary school principals and teachers regarding student-related problems. This research aimed to identify the nature and severity of challenges associated with student behavior, academic performance, and engagement as experienced by school stakeholders.

Research Methodology

The study investigates the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding student-related challenges within public sector secondary schools in District Quetta, Balochistan. Employing a descriptive, quantitative research methodology, the study examines the similarities and differences in how these two stakeholder groups perceive issues such as student behavior, academic performance, and engagement. By identifying these gaps in perception, the research highlights the challenges and collaborative opportunities present in current school management and classroom environments.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study comprised the principals and teachers of the 113 public secondary schools in District Quetta. A sampling frame was established to identify individuals who work directly with students and who possess insights into the behavioral and academic hurdles students face. A total sample of 200 participants was selected, consisting of 100 principals (40 male, 60 female) and 100 teachers (40 male, 60 female). A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure a representative sample across gender. Data concerning stakeholders'

perspectives on student challenges and their professional experiences were collected through a structured questionnaire.

Demographic Characteristics

The sampling, which comprises N=200, with 100 school principals and 100 teachers sampled out of the 113 secondary schools in the district, provides a balanced demographic representation, making it reliable. In this case, females accounted for 60%, and the remaining 40% were male respondents in both categories. This is further reinforced by the equal split among the respondents with regard to their professional standing; half of the total sample are principals, while the other half are teachers. Regarding teacher respondents, a remarkable 57% fall within the age category of 30-40 years, 32% are 40-50 years old, and 11% are 50-60 years old. On the part of principals, there is an almost similar age distribution with 61% being 30-40 years old, 28% 40-50 years old, and 11% are 50-60 years old. Education-wise, a remarkable 90% of the teachers have a Master's Degree, showing that the population is very educated, while 6% have M.Phil. and 4% have Ph.D. Degree. The same case applies to the principals, although their qualifications are not as strong as those of the teachers, where 46% have master's degrees, 51% have M.Phil. Degrees and 3% have a Ph.D. Degree. Also, most of the teachers have professional credentials, with 58% having a B.Ed. qualification and 42% having M.Ed. qualification, while all the principals are equipped with M.Ed. qualification. Further, the proportion of urban respondents is significant, as 78% are from urban schools, whereas 22% are from rural schools, thereby clearly representing the urban and rural nature of both sets of respondents. The aforementioned data indicate the strength of this sample set.

Results

Table 1 presents the findings concerning perceptions of Student-Related Problems within public secondary schools, comparing the perspectives of principals and teachers.

Principals' Perspective

Principals presented a somewhat different perspective on certain student characteristics and challenges. While principals generally agreed that students are energetic and intelligent (39% agree, 28% strongly agree), they were more optimistic regarding timely task completion, with 40% strongly agreeing. Similar to teachers, principals expressed doubt regarding student responsiveness to teaching (50% disagreed). A smaller proportion of principals (38%) perceived students as engaging in part-time work, with 19% disagreeing. Regarding problematic student behaviors, principals' responses mirrored those of teachers, with 56% agreeing and 18% disagreeing. Principals also strongly agreed (50%) that most students come from poor and middle-class families. Finally, principals largely agreed (48% strongly agree) that students who work part-time face academic difficulties, consistent with teachers' perceptions.

Teachers' Perspective

Teachers' responses reveal a nuanced understanding of student characteristics and challenges. Teachers expressed mixed views regarding students' energy and intelligence, with a combined 52% disagreeing (39%) or strongly disagreeing (13%), while 24% agreed. Perceptions of students' timely task completion were largely negative, with a combined 72% disagreeing (44% disagree, 28% strongly disagreeing) and only 4% strongly agreeing. The majority of the teachers (75%) disagreed regarding student responsiveness to teaching (disagree, 50%, strongly disagree 25%). The prevalence of students engaged in part-time work was acknowledged by 34% of teachers, although a larger proportion (40%) disagreed. A majority of teachers (56%) agreed that some students exhibit problematic behaviors, although a notable minority (24%) disagreed. Teachers

overwhelmingly agreed (72% strongly agree) that most students come from poor and middle-class families. Finally, nearly half of the teachers (48% strongly agree) affirmed that students engaged in part-time work experience had academic difficulties.

Table 1: Perception of Public Secondary Schools' Principals and Teachers Regarding Students-Related Problems. (N=100 Principals and 100 Teachers)

Question	Options	Principal	Teacher	Total	Mean $\pm$ SD
Public school children are always energetic and intelligent	Strongly Agree	28(28.0%)	24 (24.0%)	52(26.0%)	3.57 $\pm$ 1.29
	Agree	39(39.0%)	24 (24.0%)	63(31.5%)	
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	28(28.0%)	39 (39.0%)	67(33.5%)	
	Strongly Disagree	5 (5.0%)	13 (13.0%)	18 (9.0%)	
They always complete their tasks on time	Strongly Agree	40(40.0%)	4 (4.0%)	44(22.0%)	3.53 $\pm$ 1.47
	Agree	17(17.0%)	24 (24.0%)	41(20.5%)	
	Undecided	10(10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (5.0%)	
	Disagree	22(22.0%)	44 (44.0%)	66(33.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	11(11.0%)	28 (28.0%)	39(19.5%)	
They respond well to what is taught to them	Strongly Agree	22(22.0%)	8 (8.0%)	30(15.0%)	2.47 $\pm$ 1.46
	Agree	3 (3.0%)	36 (36.0%)	39(19.5%)	
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	50(50.0%)	38 (38.0%)	88(44.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	25(25.0%)	18 (18.0%)	43(21.5%)	
My school students are part-time workers.	Strongly Agree	8 (8.0%)	6 (6.0%)	14 (7.0%)	2.88 $\pm$ 1.43
	Agree	38(38.0%)	34 (34.0%)	72(36.0%)	
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	19(19.0%)	40 (40.0%)	59(29.5%)	
	Strongly Disagree	23(23.0%)	20 (20.0%)	43(21.5%)	
Public school children are mostly problematic.	Strongly Agree	19(19.0%)	20 (20.0%)	39(19.5%)	3.05 $\pm$ 1.45
	Agree	29(29.0%)	56 (56.0%)	85(42.5%)	
	Undecided	12(12.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (6.0%)	
	Disagree	18(18.0%)	24 (24.0%)	42(21.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	22(22.0%)	0 (0.0%)	22(11.0%)	
We have students come from poor and middle-class families	Strongly Agree	50(50.0%)	72 (72.0%)	122(61.0%)	4.08 $\pm$ 1.28
	Agree	34(34.0%)	24 (24.0%)	58(29.0%)	
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	6 (6.0%)	4 (4.0%)	10 (5.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	10(10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (5.0%)	
Children who are part-time workers mostly face academic difficulties	Strongly Agree	34(34.0%)	48 (48.0%)	82(41.0%)	3.98 $\pm$ 1.16
	Agree	48(48.0%)	24 (24.0%)	72(36.0%)	
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Disagree	6 (6.0%)	24 (24.0%)	30(15.0%)	
	Strongly Disagree	8 (08.0%)	8 (08.0%)	16 (5.0%)	

Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the public secondary schools' principals' and teachers' perception of the Student-Related Problems of their schools.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the public secondary schools' principals' and teachers' perception of the Student-Related Problems of their schools.

The following ANOVA results address the hypothesis, comparing principals' and teachers' perceptions of student-related problems in their schools.

Table 2: ANOVA Results: Comparing Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions of Student-Related Problems (N=100 Principals and 100 Teachers)

Statement	Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Public school children are always energetic and intelligent	Between Groups	12.500	1	12.500	6.565	0.011
	Within Groups	377.020	198	1.904		
	Total	389.520	199			
They always complete their tasks on time	Between Groups	73.205	1	73.205	39.747	0.000
	Within Groups	364.670	198	1.842		
	Total	437.875	199			
They respond well to what is taught to them	Between Groups	4.805	1	4.805	2.464	0.118
	Within Groups	386.070	198	1.950		
	Total	390.875	199			
My school students are part-time workers	Between Groups	2.645	1	2.645	1.513	0.220
	Within Groups	346.230	198	1.749		
	Total	348.875	199			
Public school children are mostly problematic	Between Groups	22.445	1	22.445	13.935	0.000
	Within Groups	318.910	198	1.611		
	Total	341.355	199			
We have students who come from poor and middle-class families, so they have a burden on their shoulders	Between Groups	15.680	1	15.680	14.756	0.000
	Within Groups	210.400	198	1.063		
	Total	226.080	199			
Children who are part-time workers mostly face academic difficulties due to a shortage of time	Between Groups	0.020	1	0.020	0.012	0.914
	Within Groups	342.600	198	1.730		
	Total	342.620	199			

Table 2 displays the ANOVA result, indicating the significant levels of differences in perceptions between school principals and teachers regarding various statements related to student-related problems. A significance value (Sig.) less than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant difference in perceptions, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for that specific statement. Conversely, a Sig. A value greater than 0.05 suggests no statistically significant difference, supporting the null hypothesis. The results reveal statistically significant differences in perceptions for four statements: "Public school children are always energetic and intelligent" (Sig. = 0.011), "They always complete their tasks in time" (Sig. = 0.000), "Public school children are mostly problematic" (Sig. = 0.000), and "We have students come from poor and middle-class families, so

they have a burden on their shoulders" (Sig. = 0.000). Therefore, for these four statements, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that school principals and teachers hold significantly different perceptions. However, no statistically significant differences were found for the statements: "They respond well to what is taught to them" (Sig. = 0.118), "My school students are part-time workers" (Sig. = 0.220), and "Children who are part-time workers mostly face academic difficulties due to a shortage of time" (Sig. = 0.914). For these three statements, the null hypothesis is supported, suggesting that school principals and teachers share similar perceptions. In conclusion, the findings suggest that while school principals and teachers share similar perceptions on some student-related issues (responsiveness to teaching, the prevalence of part-time work, and the academic impact of part-time work), they hold significantly different views regarding students' general characteristics (energy and intelligence), task completion habits, problematic behaviors, and the impact of socio-economic background. This highlights potential discrepancies in how these two groups perceive and understand the student population they serve.

Discussion

Different perspectives on student-related issues reveal both converging and diverging viewpoints among teachers and principals. Principals generally exhibit more optimism regarding students' energy and intelligence compared to teachers, a disparity that may arise from their differing daily interactions with students. Principals focus on potential, while teachers address diverse learning needs, highlighting the need for open communication and collaboration to foster a shared understanding of student strengths (Ishimaru et al., 2022; Kraft & Papay, 2024). A significant difference also exists regarding students' timely completion of tasks, with principals more optimistic than teachers. This reflects teachers' greater awareness of the challenges students face in terms of time management and self-regulation (Diamond, 2020; Duncan et al., 2023). Creating a supportive classroom environment and teaching time management skills are crucial for effective interventions (Duncombe & Michaelson, 2021). Enhanced collaboration between principals and teachers is essential to align their views on student needs and support systems (Martin, 2023). Both groups largely agreed on student responsiveness to teaching, indicating a need to reassess pedagogical strategies (Bozorg Aliabadi & Weisi, 2023). Research supports differentiated instruction to boost engagement and responsiveness (Carter et al., 2023; Zens, 2021). Although minor differences exist regarding students' part-time work, both groups acknowledge its negative impact on academic performance and the need for support strategies to balance jobs and school responsibilities (Saddique et al., 2023). Furthermore, both principals and teachers recognize the significant influence of socioeconomic backgrounds on students, aligning with research indicating that such disparities profoundly affect educational outcomes (Klein & Sosu, 2024; Reardon, 2022). While common perceptions exist, notable differences persist in views on student energy, task completion, and the effects of part-time work. Researchers believe that part-time jobs can detract from academic focus (Verulava & Jorbenadze, 2022), while others argue that they can develop time management skills and responsibility (Wadood et al., 2022). The relationship between part-time work and academic performance is complex, with mixed findings on its impacts (Al Shloul et al., 2024; Wangdi, 2022).

Conclusion

This research demonstrates empirically the presence of a perceptual gap in the views held by principals and teachers about student-related problems in public secondary schools in Quetta district. Both stakeholder groups are aware of the strong impact of socio-economic limitations and the common practice of working part-time jobs among students, but their perceptions about student behavior and classroom participation are completely different. ANOVA statistics indicate that these differences are indeed statistically significant in certain areas, such as intelligence, task

completion, and behavior of the students. Principals who are mostly concerned about organizational issues have a more positive perception, while teachers, whose work involves daily interactions with students, face many more challenges in teaching. It can be seen from this "leadership gap" that there might exist some systemic problem that could hinder the efficiency of existing support systems in the school. Therefore, the transformation of these perceptions into a unified system is vital to create the appropriate educational atmosphere.

Recommendations

To address the perceptual gaps that have been highlighted and improve school management in the process, it is recommended that educational authorities incorporate collaboration as a strategy of governance through joint consultative committees that would bridge the communication gap that exists between the administrators and the faculty members, taking into consideration not only the strategic objectives but also the realities on the ground. School principals need to incorporate a decentralized approach to decision-making by encouraging teachers to offer their insights into effective student support mechanisms that they could adopt. In light of the findings of the study about the negative effects of socio-economic constraints and part-time work on students' performance, schools need to design evidence-based and differentiated approaches to instruction as well as academic support that cater to the students who are working outside of school. Professional development programs should be conducted to develop common frameworks of thinking among the school staff about the development of the students.

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