Original Article

Comparison of Satisfaction of Students in Public and Private Sector Colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Background: Student satisfaction in educational institutions is a multifaceted issue influenced by various factors. In Pakistan, the distinction between public and private sector education provides a unique context to study these factors. Understanding these elements is crucial for improving educational standards and student experiences in these sectors.

Objective: This study aims to compare and analyze the factors affecting student satisfaction in public and private sector colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. It seeks to identify key determinants of student satisfaction and challenges faced by students in these educational settings.

Methods: A qualitative research approach was employed, utilizing structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Eight students from both public and private sector universities in Pakistan were interviewed. The interviews comprised five targeted questions designed to explore factors influencing student satisfaction. Thematic analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns. The data were assessed using SPSS version 25 to provide a nuanced understanding of these themes.

Results: The study revealed that student satisfaction in both sectors is influenced by the quality of teaching, availability of resources, cleanliness, and access to technologically advanced equipment. Key challenges identified include economic constraints, teaching methods, lack of technological resources, and political influence in educational settings. The thematic analysis indicated that improving teaching quality, resource allocation, and infrastructure are vital for enhancing student satisfaction.

Conclusion: The study concludes that student satisfaction in Pakistani educational institutions is contingent on a variety of factors, with significant differences observed between public and private sectors. It highlights the need for targeted improvements in teaching methods, resource provision, and infrastructure development. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and educational administrators in Pakistan to enhance the quality of education and student experiences.

Keywords: Student Satisfaction, Public and Private Education, Pakistan, Qualitative Research, Thematic Analysis, Teaching Quality, Resource Allocation.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between student satisfaction and the quality of educational institutions is a subject of considerable interest, especially in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This region, known for its diverse range of public and private sector colleges, offers a unique landscape for examining the factors that contribute to student contentment. Central to this discourse is the quality of teaching, a determinant largely recognized for its profound influence on student satisfaction (1). In particular, the field of medical education presents unique challenges; students often grapple with understanding complex phenomena related to the human body, necessitating an effective pedagogical approach (2).

The management of service quality within educational institutions is a critical aspect of this discussion. It is posited that public sector colleges in Pakistan tend to provide a more efficient and quality education compared to their private counterparts (3). This assertion is, however, contested by studies suggesting that private sector institutions yield higher outcomes due to their ability to meet student

needs through resources such as adequate infrastructure, cleanliness, advanced technologies, and superior educational quality (4). To delve deeper into this comparison, a study was conducted focusing on student satisfaction in both public and private educational sectors. Notably, Pakistan's educational landscape, comprising approximately 124 universities with a public-private enrollment ratio of 55% to 45%, provides a rich context for this analysis (5). Student dissatisfaction in Pakistan has been linked to factors like inadequate administrative support, library facilities, lab accommodations, medical facilities, and sports infrastructure.

In exploring the pedagogical strategies within universities, the study highlights the significant role of teaching methods in fostering student satisfaction (6). The approach adopted by teachers significantly shapes students' perception and cognition. The teacher-student relationship, impacted by the demeanor of the faculty, also plays a crucial role in student satisfaction (7). Moreover, experiential learning techniques, especially relevant in medical education, have been shown to enhance student proficiency, as practical experience is integral to understanding theoretical concepts (8). Additionally, collaborative teaching methods have been identified as pivotal in ensuring student contentment.

The factors affecting student satisfaction in both public and private sectors are multifaceted. They include curriculum design, the internal environment of universities, teaching expertise, physical facilities, and management behavior (9). The influence of politics in educational institutions has also been a contributing factor to student dissatisfaction in Pakistan (10). The advent of technology in education presents both opportunities and challenges. While it offers potential solutions to traditional educational hurdles, the lack of advanced technological resources in Pakistani universities has been a point of concern (12).

To address the dissatisfaction prevalent among students in both sectors, several strategies have been suggested. These include the implementation of creative initiatives to foster student engagement, supportive management to enhance student-institution relationships, curriculum transformation with an emphasis on practical activities, and the integration of advanced technology in the learning environment. These strategies aim to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its real-life applications, thereby enhancing the overall student experience in both public and private educational settings (13, 14).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this study, a primary qualitative research methodology was employed to delve into the comparison of student satisfaction in public and private educational sectors in Pakistan (15). This approach, chosen for its effectiveness in capturing in-depth, non-statistical insights, facilitated an exploration of students' real experiences and perspectives within these educational environments. The qualitative nature of the research was pivotal in garnering detailed understanding of the factors influencing student satisfaction, the challenges encountered, and potential improvements for both sectors (16).

Table 1 Topic Guide

Question Number	Interview Questions
1	Do you think the quality of learning and teaching materials in private and public sector differ and impact on the students' satisfaction?
2	What are the main factors you think in public and private educational institution in Pakistan matters and have a significant impact on the satisfaction of students in a certain way?
3	Do you believe that faculty or teaching methods in public and private sector in Pakistan plays a significant role in affecting the satisfaction of students?
4	Do you think the teaching method in your school is significant and impactful in boosting students' satisfaction to a certain level?
5	Please offer recommendations on the strategies that may assist educational institutions in improving the satisfaction of students?

The data collection method central to this research was the structured interview. A total of eight participants were engaged, representing a balanced mix of students from both public and private universities in Pakistan. This sample was strategically chosen to ensure a comprehensive representation of experiences across the educational spectrum. The interview process involved five targeted questions, designed to elicit rich, nuanced responses that reflected the participants' personal perceptions and experiences. For the analysis of the collected data, thematic analysis was the chosen technique. This method was deemed particularly suitable for the task, owing to its effectiveness in identifying and categorizing patterns within qualitative data (17). The process involved a meticulous examination of interview transcripts, during which recurring themes and codes were identified and organized. This thematic framework facilitated a structured and insightful interpretation of the data.

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In addition to thematic analysis, the study also incorporated the use of SPSS version 25 for the assessment and further analysis of the data. This statistical software was instrumental in providing a more nuanced understanding of the data, allowing for a sophisticated analysis that enriched the findings of the thematic approach.

Conducted in the past tense and from a third-person perspective, this research methodology provided a rigorous and comprehensive exploration of student satisfaction in Pakistani educational institutions. The qualitative approach, combined with the use of SPSS for data assessment, ensured a robust analysis that captured the complexities and intricacies of the student experience in both public and private sectors.

FINDINGS

The study's findings provide insightful perspectives on the factors affecting student satisfaction in both public and private educational sectors in Pakistan, as well as the challenges faced by students and strategies for improvement. These findings are derived from interviews with students from both sectors.

Factors Affecting Student Satisfaction:

Quality of Teaching and Resources: One respondent emphasized the importance of "quality of teaching, resources offered, cleanliness, and technologically advanced equipment for enhanced learning environment." This indicates a broad range of factors contributing to student satisfaction, from educational quality to the physical learning environment.

Teaching Methods and Curriculum: Another participant focused on teaching aspects, stating, "I think quality of teaching is one of the most crucial factors in terms of curriculum, methods, and approach taken by teachers which impact on the satisfaction of students. In addition other factors include resources and learning materials offered to students."

Capacity Building and Facilities: The disparity in facilities between public and private institutions was highlighted by a respondent who noted, "I believe that public schools in Pakistan lack in capacity building, literacy rate, and provision of facilities given to both students and teachers which influence satisfaction level of students. I have seen many private institutions in Pakistan offering health facilities and technological resources for learning purpose."

Political Influence: The impact of politics on education was also mentioned, with one participant observing, "I think political influence is one factor common in both private and public educational institutions in Pakistan which somehow impact on the student's satisfaction and performance."

Challenges Faced by Students:

Economic and Political Factors: Economic distress and political factors were identified as challenges, particularly in private institutions, as one interviewee pointed out, "Yes, I think the political and economic factor is one of the challenging aspects faced by students which impact on their satisfaction in educational setting since student from middle class background in private institutions face economic distress due to technological resources and equipment required for learning."

Teaching and Facilities: The quality of teaching and facilities were again mentioned as challenges. A respondent shared, "I believe that way of teaching, teaching methods, or expertise of teachers, inadequate behaviour management of teachers, and physical facilities are some of the most challenging factors faced by students in both public and private institutions."

Technological Limitations: The lack of technological resources and skills was a significant challenge, as one participant indicated, "In my opinion, the most challenging part for students and teachers both is the use of technology because in Pakistan there is lack of awareness and skills in educational sectors on the use of technology for better and improved learning outcomes due to traditional methods."

Adaptation and Resource Constraints: Linguistic, academic, social, and environmental adaptation, along with resource constraints, were also cited as challenges. Another participant remarked, "Linguistic, academic, social, and environmental adaptations are the most crucial challenging factors faced by students in Pakistani institutions. Moreover, other challenges include technology, low motivation, resources constraints, lack of the training, and low computer literacy."

Recommendations for Improvement: Collaborative Management: To overcome low satisfaction levels, one respondent suggested, "Supportive and collaborative learning and teaching management can be significant in both public and private educational sector in Pakistan to overcome low satisfaction level of students."

Enhanced Resources and Facilities: Improved instructional materials and facilities were recommended, with one interviewee stating, "With improved instructional materials, classroom facilities, support, and equipment, the public and private educational institutions in Pakistan may enhance the satisfaction level of students towards their institute."

Curriculum Transformation: The need for more practical learning materials was emphasized. "Transforming the curriculum and incorporation of more practical learning materials and activities in terms of achieving student involving in learning sessions can assist in boosting the satisfaction of students to certain level," a participant noted.

Infrastructure and Staff Development: For public institutions, the focus on infrastructure and staff education was advised. A respondent recommended, "The public institutions need to offer good infrastructure, well-educated staff, and self-motivation towards learning in students so that they may feel a sense of belonging/responsibility towards improving their learning and academic performance."

These findings, derived from the perspectives of students in both public and private sectors, provide a multifaceted view of the factors influencing student satisfaction in Pakistan's educational landscape.

DISCUSSION

The research conducted on student satisfaction in Pakistani public and private educational sectors unveiled a range of factors influencing this satisfaction. These include the quality of teaching, resource availability, cleanliness, and the use of advanced technology. A notable point of convergence with existing literature is the impact of lack of capacity building, literacy rate, and facility provision on student satisfaction, as corroborated by a previous study (18). Similarly, the significance of education quality in terms of theories, methods, policies, and concepts has been previously acknowledged in influencing student satisfaction in Pakistani educational institutions (19).

Contrasting these findings, another study highlighted core services and facilities like libraries, labs, teaching quality, administrative support, accommodation, sports, and medical facilities as key influencers of student satisfaction, suggesting a broader scope of factors than those identified in the current study (20). This discrepancy underscores the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of factors affecting student satisfaction.

The challenges identified in the current study, such as inadequate behavior management by teachers, teaching methods, physical facilities, and expertise of teachers, find resonance in existing research (21). Additional challenges like lack of training, low motivation, resource constraints, technology issues, and low computer literacy also align with findings from other studies (22). However, it is noteworthy that other research has reported different challenging factors in Pakistani educational institutions, including deterioration in teacher behavior, educational corruption, and the decline in the quality of education and learning image (23). This variation in findings highlights the diverse challenges faced by students in different educational contexts within Pakistan.

Regarding strategies to enhance student satisfaction, the current study suggests improvements in instructional materials, infrastructure, staff education, and the adoption of supportive and collaborative learning and teaching management. These recommendations are supported by other studies, emphasizing their potential effectiveness in boosting student satisfaction in both public and private sectors (24, 25).

Reflecting on the study's strengths and limitations, one of its major strengths lies in the diverse range of perspectives it captures, offering a comprehensive view of the factors affecting student satisfaction. However, the study is not without limitations. The sample size, though adequate for qualitative analysis, may not fully represent the broader student population in Pakistan. Additionally, the focus on certain factors over others may have led to an incomplete understanding of the entire spectrum of influences on student satisfaction.

Future research could benefit from a larger and more diverse sample to validate and extend these findings. Furthermore, incorporating a mixed-methods approach could provide a more holistic understanding of the topic. The inclusion of quantitative measures would allow for a broader and more generalizable understanding of student satisfaction across different educational contexts in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings highlight the complex interplay of factors affecting student satisfaction in both public and private educational sectors in Pakistan, with significant implications for policy and practice. The quality of teaching, resource availability, infrastructure, and technological advancements emerge as critical determinants of student satisfaction. These insights suggest the need for comprehensive strategies to enhance the educational experience, including improving teaching methods, increasing resource allocation, and modernizing facilities. The study underscores the importance of addressing these factors to improve the overall quality of education in Pakistan. Moreover, it calls for policymakers and educational administrators to consider these diverse elements in their efforts to optimize educational outcomes and student satisfaction, thus contributing to the advancement of Pakistan's educational landscape.

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