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Factors Causing Low Performance in English at Secondary Level in Pakistan

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Abstract

The present research aims to explore the factors causing low performance in English at secondary level in Pakistan. The study is qualitative in nature. The survey technique was used for data collection. The population of the study comprises secondary level schools of Pakistan. The 60 schools and 300 teachers were selected as a sample size for data collection. An online questionnaire was developed by the researchers for data collection. The questionnaire was contained on ten close-ended and one open-ended question. The questionnaire was sent to the participants via WhatsApp and email. The congregated data was later analyzed by using SPSS latest version and presented in tables in numerical form. The results revealed that overall the performance of the students in English subject was low than other subjects of science in these schools. The findings also revealed that students interaction, parents' interaction, lack of facilities, poor management and teachers' interaction were the major factors causing poor performance at secondary level education. In the end researchers presented some recommendation on the base of these results.

Keywords:

Low Performance, English subject, Secondary Level, ESL learners

Introduction

English is frequently used for official communication in Pakistan. This makes English language proficiency a tool for success in every sphere of life in the country and the beyond (Abbas, 2016; Shakir et al., 2011). Acquisition of English language proficiency essentially reading and writing abilities are inevitable especially in the context of education. Students need to have an ability to read the text with understanding and write English with accuracy if they want to pursue higher studies. Across all the levels English is taught as a major subject in Pakistan; but the majority of the students lack the ability to perform better in English subject (Hussain et al., 2017) Although there are many elite schools in Pakistan in which English language is used as a medium of education but unfortunately the students did not perform better in English subject and obtained low marks in English subject rather than other subjects (Farhat, 219; Zainab & Perveen, 2020). The present study as an effort to explore the causes that why students get low marks in English subject than other subjects.

Secondary education is taught after the primary education, it includes intermediate classes. This type of education is transmitting from primary to post-secondary. It's also a bridge leads students towards higher education. Secondary school education is divided in two levels, lower secondary level contains from grade six to eight and upper secondary level contains on grade nine to twelve (Yousaf et al., 2021; Zafar & Ullah, 2020). In the case of Pakistan middle school grade six to eight crossponds to the lower secondary level while matriculation and intermediate classes from grade nine to twelve cross ponds upper secondary level (Shakir et al., 2012; Ullah et al., 2020). Students' performance refers to the evaluation and assessment of a student's professionalism, participation, literature evaluation, role-plays performance, and cumulative essay final examination. It encompasses both formative and summative assessments in these areas to determine the students overall course grade. Poor performance refers to the inadequate level of achievement in educational endeavors, often resulting from various factors. But low performers are students who score blew the base line level of proficiency (Ali & Pathan, 2017; Ramzan et al., 2019; Baral, 2021). The present research study is conducted to explore the causes that why students are achieving low marks in English subject than other subjects.

Problem Statement

In Pakistani context it has been seen that students performance in English subject is poor than other subjects like chemistry, physics, biology and math etc. and students get low marks in English subject than these subjects on all educational levels particularly on secondary level education. The researcher himself is an ESL teacher teaching secondary level students he also perceived this issue in his institute and decide to explore the reasons which are causing students low performance in board examinations.

Research Objectives

- The first aim of the research is to explore the factors causing low performance in English subject at secondary level in Punjab.

- The second aim of the research is to find out the reason that why secondary level students are achieving low marks in English subject compare to the other subjects.

Research Questions

1. Which factors are causing low performance in English subject at secondary level in Pakistan?
2. Why secondary level students are achieving low marks in English subject compare to the other subjects?

Research Significance

English language is one of the world languages, second most spoken language after Chinese language; and presently it's the most popular language in the world. English language enjoys official status in Pakistan. In Pakistani private educational setting English language is widely used as a medium of instruction. Moreover, English subject is taught as a compulsory subject at secondary level education. The present study is an effort to improve the English language status in Pakistani context by exploring the causes of receiving low grades in English subject than other subjects. Moreover, the present research not only explored the causes of getting low marks at secondary level education in compare to the other subjects but the researcher presented some valuable recommendations on the basis of the research findings which make this study valuable and significance for the future researchers and scholars in the realm of research field.

Research Limitations

- The present research is limited only to the six districts of Gujranwala division, while in Punjab there are eight divisions.
- The research population is also limited to the selected institutions from these districts.
- The second part of the questionnaire was also limited to only one open ended question.

Literature Review

The main function of literature review is to provide evidence from previous research works linked to the present research topic (Ahmad et al., 2021). There are some previous related studies providing best theoretical framework for the theme of present research work.

Malan, (2013) in his research article entitled “An Exploratory Study into Factors Affecting Achievement in English among Bangladeshi College Students: An

Investigation of Teachers and Students Perceptions” analyzed the factors influencing students’ performance at secondary level. Hussain and Suleman (2017) in the research article entitled “Factors contributing to students’ unsatisfactory academic achievement in English at secondary level” analyzed the factors which are causing poor performance of the students in English subject.

Shah et al, (2018) in the article entitled “Failure in the English subject in government high schools for boys in District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan” analyzed the different causes of failure of ESL students in subject of English language at high school level. But in the recent years following some researches are conducted in national and international context related to the present theme.

Khan et al. (2021) conducted research to explore the causes of student’s poor performance in English language at secondary level schools. For this study qualitative research design was used population of the study comprises the thirty-one secondary level schools of district Abbott Abad; from these schools one English teacher was selected as a research participant, in this way total a sample of thirty-one teachers was selected to contribute this research. The data was collected through interviews and analyzed in thematic way. The results revealed that the main causes of students poor performance in English subject was absence of satisfactory management, insufficient examination arrangements, and magnitude outsized classes, insufficient language teaching approaches.

Khaliq et al. (2021) directed research study to explore the factors which are influencing the English language quality as a foreign language in secondary school level education. For this survey research five point likert type questionnaire was applied to collect data. The population of the study was high schools of southern Punjab Pakistan. A sample size of sixty-seven English teachers was selected to contribute this research. The collected data was analyzed by using Statistical Package of Social Sciences abbreviated as SPSS. The findings of the research revealed that none qualified staff, inappropriate teaching methods, and lack of resources and professional trainings were the major factors influencing the quality of English language at high school level in southern Punjab.

Research Methodology

To explore the factors causing low performance in English at secondary level in Pakistan the researchers selected online survey technique for data collection. The population of this research comprises secondary level schools of Pakistan. To find the answer of first research question the researchers selected the 60 secondary level schools from all Pakistani areas to compare the English and science subject marks at secondary level in Pakistan. While to find the answer of second research question researcher

selected the 300 research contributors for data collection. The data was collected by means of an online questionnaire; the collected data was later analyzed through SPSS latest version and analyzed data was presented in tables in numerical form.

Research Findings

Table: 01

Comparison English and science subject marks at secondary level in Punjab?

District	Institutions	English subject marks	Science subjects marks
Punjab	1	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	2	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	3	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	4	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	5	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	6	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	7	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	8	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	9	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	10	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
Total	10	100%	100%

The above table show that from Punjab frequency of ten institutes were selected to make the comparison between the obtained marks of science subjects with English subject marks. The results revealed that the students achieve better marks in science subjects than English subject.

Table: 02

Comparison English and science subject marks at secondary level in Sindh?

District	Institutions	English subject marks	Science subjects marks
Sindh	1	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	2	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	3	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	4	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	5	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	6	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	7	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	8	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	9	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	10	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
Total	10	100%	100%

The above table show that from Sindh frequency of ten institutes were selected to make the comparison between the obtained marks of science subjects with English subject

marks. The results revealed that the students achieve better marks in science subjects than English subject.

Table: 03

Comparison English and science subject marks at secondary level in KPK?

District	Institutions	English subject marks	Science subjects marks
KPK	1	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	2	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	3	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	4	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	5	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	6	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	7	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	8	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	9	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	10	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
Total	10	100%	100%

The above table show that from KPK frequency of ten institutes were selected to make the comparison between the obtained marks of science subjects with English subject marks. The results revealed that the students achieve better marks in science subjects than English subject.

Table: 04

Comparison English and science subject marks at secondary level in Baluchistan?

District	Institutions	English subject marks	Science subjects marks
Baluchistan	1	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	2	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	3	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	4	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	5	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	6	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	7	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	8	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	9	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	10	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
Total	10	100%	100%

The above table show that from Mandi Bahawalddin district frequency of ten institutes were selected to make the comparison between the obtained marks of science subjects with English subject marks. The results revealed that the students achieve better marks in science subjects than English subject.

Table: 05

Comparison English and science subject marks at secondary level in Kashmir?

District	Institutions	English subject marks	Science subjects marks
Kashmir	1	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	2	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	3	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	4	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	5	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	6	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	7	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	8	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	9	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	10	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
Total	10	100%	100%

The above table show that from Kashmir frequency of ten institutes were selected to make the comparison between the obtained marks of science subjects with English subject marks. The results revealed that the students achieve better marks in science subjects than English subject.

Table: 06

Comparison English and science subject marks at secondary level in Gilgit & Biltistan?

District	Institutions	English subject marks	Science subjects marks
Gilgit & Biltistan	1	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	2	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	3	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	4	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	5	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	6	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	7	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	8	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	9	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
	10	60 to 75%	80 to 90%
Total	10	100%	100%

The above table show that from Gilgit & Biltistan frequency of ten institutes were selected to make the comparison between the obtained marks of science subjects with English subject marks. The results revealed that the students achieve better marks in science subjects than English subject.

Table: 07

Which factors are causing low performance in English subject at secondary level?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Teachers Interaction	43	50.6%	50.6%	50.6%

Students interaction	102	120.0%	120.0%	170.6%
Parents interaction	55	64.7%	64.7%	235.3%
Poor management	49	57.6%	57.6%	292.9%
Lack of facilities	51	60.0%	60.0%	353%
Total	300	100%	100%	100%

The total frequency of the 300 ESL teachers participants were selected to answer the above statement, in the response of this open ended question the frequency 43, percent & valid percent 50.6% which makes cumulative percent also 50.6% responded teachers interaction. The frequency 102, percent & valid percent 120.0% which makes cumulative percent 170.6% responded students' interaction. The frequency 55, percent & valid percent 64.7% which makes cumulative percent 235.3% responded parents' interaction. The frequency 49, percent & valid percent 57.6% which makes cumulative percent 292.9% responded poor management. The frequency 51, percent & valid percent 60.0% which makes cumulative percent 353% responded lack of facilities.

Discussion of the Findings

The researchers' selected ten institutes from the selected Pakistani schools of secondary level to make the comparison between the obtained marks of science subjects with English subject marks. Total 60 Pakistani schools of secondary level education were selected to make the comparison between the marks of English subject with the marks of subject of science biology, chemistry and physics etc. From these 60 secondary schools 10 schools were equally selected from each Pakistani province and states; as Punjab, Sindh, KPK, Baluchistan, Kashmir and Gilgit Biltistan. The overall results revealed that the students achieve better marks in science subjects than English subject. Furthermore researchers tried to explore the factors causing low performance in English subject at secondary level. For this purpose through randomization selection the 50 ESL teachers were selected from each Pakistani province and states; as Punjab, Sindh, KPK, Baluchistan, Kashmir and Gilgit Biltistan. The sample size of 300 ESL teachers was selected to find the answer of the open-ended question. The frequency of 102 responded students' interaction; the frequency of 55 responded parents' interaction; the frequency 51 responded lack of facilities; the frequency 49 responded poor management; the frequency 43 responded teachers interaction.

The some results of the present studies match and some results differ with some previous research studies conducted on different levels and in different contexts. Hussain and Suleman (2017) analyzed the factors which are causing poor performance of the students in English subject; similarly the present study analyzed English subject. Shah et al, (2018) analyzed the different causes of failure of ESL students in subject of English language at high school level; but the present study analyzed factors causing poor

performance in English subject at secondary school level. Khan et al. (2021) conducted research to explore the causes of student's poor performance in English language at secondary level schools; similarly the present study analyzed English subject.

Conclusion

Exploring the factors causing low performance in English at secondary level in Pakistan is the purposive of this qualitative in nature study; in which survey technique was employed for assembling data from secondary level schools of Pakistan. Online resources were used for this purpose. Congregated data was later analyzed by using SPSS latest version and presented in tables in numerical form. The findings revealed that overall the performance of the students in English subject was low than other subjects of science in these schools. The findings also revealed that students interaction, parents' interaction, lack of facilities, poor management and teachers' interaction were the major factors causing poor performance at secondary level education. On the base of these findings researchers presented following recommendations.

Recommendations

On the basis of research findings researchers presented some recommendations to overcome on this problem in the future.

- The teachers must help students prepare for an unfamiliar exam format by providing them examples of the kinds of the exam questions you will ask in, and do so in advance of the exam.
- Parents need to cooperate with their children and school management.
- Students should become attentive to their study and focus on their study.
- Modern examination system should replace to traditional examination system.
- By avoiding outsized classroom and using new linguistic instruction techniques

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