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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Education Reform, Pakistan, Development, Policy Recommendations, Student Outcomes	The education system in Pakistan has not been able to cater for the needs of its immense population. Through interviews with the national and state stakeholders, this study examines current efforts to reform system-building in place including unique successes and challenges encountered along the way as well as lessons learned for policy going forward. The research offers a consideration of current state and initiatives within educational reform, providing prospects for sustainable development in education. Curriculum improvement, teacher training policies & infrastructure building are some of notable attainments. Yet, enduring problems like inadequate funding, political instability and cultural resistance continue to slow advancements.
<b>ARTICLE HISTORY</b> Date of Submission: 08-06-2024 Date of Acceptance: 30-06-2024 Date of Publication: 30-06-2024	The cartoon from my name is forgetful recommends cooperative approach involving all stakeholders along with the greater investment in education if long-term success and equity are to be assured for Pakistan's education system. In this linking, findings indicates that persistent effort of financial improvement should be perpetuated, ensuring cooperation and an equity-oriented approach must be continued to bring desired change towards an appropriate way.
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## INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, the education system is known to be marked by large inequalities in access and quality between regions and socio-economic strata (Khan, 2012; Ali & Shafiq 2017). In wake of continued challenging in socio-economic settings (mainly poverty, regional conflicts and political instability) educational disparities are only heightened more thus provoking the reduced capacity system to deliver consistently high, equitable quality education (Ahmed & Rauf, 2020). The education sector

of Pakistan includes public and private institutions with a diversity in challenges (Jamal & Raza, 2020). Although numerous reform initiatives have attempted to tackle these problems, the system persists with its archaic course curriculum, insufficient infrastructure and lack of adequate teaching staff (Saeed & Malik 2022). Recent studies have emphasized even greater disparity at the regional level, with rural areas and conflict zones registering significantly lower enrollment rates as well as higher drop-out (Hassan & Iqbal, 2023). Besides, the socioeconomic and cultural aspects including gender biases as well as traditional norms have always refrained certain segments from educational endeavors (especially girls) leading them to lower literacy rates as well as enrollment in the schools (Naeem & Tariq 2021).

The educational reform is an essential element for every sector of socio-economic development and national progress in Pakistan. The education is an important key to the success of all people in any nation and Public education has always been regarded as a catalyst for the citizen empowerment, economic improvement, and poverty alleviation (Jamil, 2013; Shah & Rizvi, 2011). The education to economic progress nexus has been emphasized in recent research indicating that developments via improvement in educational system fosters workforce competency, innovation and competitiveness at a global level (Iqbal & Khan 2022; Saeed & Malik 2022). As a result, the education reform is necessary to ensure social cohesion and create equality among every member of society. Reforms can thus enhance TELRA, which may result in a shift towards creating an equitable and inclusive society by providing access to high-quality education for all students without consideration to their socio-political background (Rehman & Khan; 2016; Ahmed & Rauf, 2020). Besides, dealing with structural challenges of outdated curricula and poor facilities is needed to bring Pakistan system of education in line with the global norms calling for industries' changing skill needs (Malik & Aslam 2020; Hussain, 2023).

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The continuous push for the education reforms is essential to ensuring that our country grows and prospers long into the future. This study will primarily analyze the Educational Reforms in Pakistan how far they have been implemented so, and what is level of their effect on educational growth. The research aims to determine challenges and achievements of these initiatives so that comprehensive analysis of ongoing reforms can be made; lessons learned may help in highlighting what works for them or not work at all (Farooq, 2021). The also seeks to provide guide practical recommendations for policymakers and educators action of sustainable sustainability and effectiveness of education reforms (Ali, 2022; Saeed & Khan, 2023). It aims to further contribute towards existing knowledge by including the latest insight and perspective as recently available 2020–24, which makes this paper a new though-relevantly related analysis on the education system of Pakistan (Iqbal, 2022; Rehman & Khan, 2023). Educational reform in Pakistan needs to understand the various features that compile together and design strategies requisite for providing the affordable education to all citizens in one way or another thereby empowering the nation overall socio-economic development (Hussain & Rizvi, 2024).

The education reform in the Pakistani context became the center of government policy. However, despite the numerous attempts by state authorities it remained limited in its effect. Many initiatives

aimed at enhancing the provision of education services have been developed in the context of the country's school system (Rehman & Khan, 2019). These include reforming curriculum, providing training for the teachers, and infrastructural development. As Ahmad (2015) states, "The National Education Policy of 2009, the most recent official high-level statement about sector's development, explicitly states that there must be universal primary education and that there must be a gender parity in the sector". Several initiatives to address the education sector's myriads of problems such as inadequate funding, political interference and a lack of accountability in execution have been launched over different periods however after decades still this remains an issue (Khan & Saeed, 2020). In addition, problems faced by rural and conflict-affected areas deepen regional disparities in education access (Ali & Ahmed, 2022). Besides, continued presence of parallel madrassa system that is largely unregulated and often falls outside national curriculum regardless of Hindus or some sects within Islamic culture contributes to gradually fragmented education reform landscape (Shah & Rizvi 2014).

Overall, quality of education continues to be woeful, with accounts suggesting that student dropout rates continue to remain high alongside low literacy numbers (Bari & Sattar, 2019). The inadequate trained teachers and infrastructure; this is other reasons that do not prevent education sector from progressing ahead. Ensuring this provides a challenge for Pakistan to achieve its goal of providing good education for all (Rehman & Khan, 2022). These challenges are exacerbated even more with the help of social-cultural obstacles especially relevant to girls' education which is still one major barrier when it comes to impeding in achieving gender parity in education (Malik & Ahmad, 2021). Even with these challenges, there have also been some success stories and best practices in other areas of the education sector. Waiting for Urban Lessons, The Punjab Education Reform Program, in particular, affects urban student learning (Rehman & Khan, 2019). But their achievements were local and did not meet national structural requirements (Jamil, & Hussain, 2021). Therefore, the decentralization of education in some provinces has also resulted in local improvements in school management and accountability (Shafiq, 2023). Nevertheless, these endeavors find it difficult to provide the sustained attention due to the irregular applications along with short-term vision (Raza & Anwar, 2024).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To conduct exhaustive study of education reform in Pakistan, a mixed-methods research design has been employed incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods. We thought that this design captured the richness of the phenomenon and could be generalizable to a lot of what we saw in both broad patterns and specific cases across education. This qualitative work (case studies, interviews & focus group discussions) is designed to probe stakeholders, policymakers, educators and students among them. Otherwise, studies that investigate research hypotheses over surveys and quantitative analysis give us more general knowledge of the trends and outcomes that can be applied across the regions/demographics.

### Justification for Mixed Methods

The mixed-methods design was chosen because the researchers deemed it necessary to offer a more comprehensive view of phenomenon under study. One-size-fits-all proposals for education reform

will similarly not lead all the way, even half a century. While qualitative data provides us with rich insights, it is difficult to generalize the findings. On other hand, quantitative data will give general trends but typically do not give detailed reasons and kind. Whereas one looks at what, another delves into the how and yet another remains focused on why so that when blended we can offer rich textured explanation of progress in terms of effectiveness and challenges for an educational reform intervention in Pakistan.

### Data Collection

**Interviews:** Key stakeholders, policymakers, educators and community leaders were the subjects of semi-structured interviews. They chose this instrument for its adaptability, so the interviewer could ask follow-up questions and pursue ideas that came out of participants' responses. These interviews solicited perceptions of both experiences with execution and challenges met during participating in the education reform strategies as well as recommendations for creating more operative policy. **Convenience/Deliberate:** The sets of structured questionnaires were given to the larger samples of the students, teachers and parents from diverse regions in Pakistan to collect the required data and generalize the findings. These surveys specifically are meant to gather quantitative data measuring student outcomes i.e., enrollment rates, literacy levels because of these reforms, school infrastructure improvements etc.

Surveys are designed in a very formal way which means more questionnaire responses remain the same and this helps to do it with latest statistics regarding the appearance of patterns. **Using Focus Group Discussions:** this was done with teachers and students for more comprehensive understanding of collective experiences regarding educational reform. We used this method because we wanted to start a conversation, as not all the varied viewpoints of other people would have emerged if we just interviewed them one by one or surveyed everybody. **Secondary data:** The primary study was complemented by the analysis of secondary data from government reports, policy documents and academic articles. The process provides historical and policy context so that the study can trace how education reform efforts in Pakistan have changed over time & evaluate them against international best practices.

### Research Instruments

The selection of instruments was guided by our desire to measure both subjective experiences and objective outcomes in education reform efforts. Data gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions enables a probing of individual and intersubjective perspectives which is essential for understanding of contextual factors that determine whether or not reform efforts are successful. They result in standardized data from large sample which is useful because it guarantees survey findings are reliable, representative and be generalized to larger populations and allows the study to place its results in policy and historical context so that scholars can get closer be inclusive issues of interest.

### Sampling & Analysis

To achieve this, stratified sampling was utilized to ensure sample represented as much participant diversity across socio-economic, region & education settings. The sample comprised 200 individuals

including students, teachers, parents and policymakers. This sample size was considered suitable to enable meaningful statistical exploration and deep and rich source of qualitative data for in-depth analysis. Interviews, focus groups and surveys were methods used in gathering this qualitative data that were analyzed using thematic analysis and statistical analysis for the quantitative component. Qualitative data were studied with thematic analysis & quantitative included regression equations and ANOVA to assess linear relations among variables concerned with education reform initiatives on student outcomes.

### FINDINGS OF STUDY

#### Current State of Education in Pakistan

Currently, state of education in Pakistan reflects large discrepancies in access, quality & outcomes. Urban areas have better educational infrastructure, and literacy rates are higher there. Areas that are both rural and conflicted are regions where education provision is the lowest. The distinction between private and public education also serves to intensify inequality: private schools have more resources and ensure better outcomes. This imbalance is especially applicable when considering the gender of Pakistani students. Girls' access to education is even less efficient than boys' access to it; according to Pakistan Education Statistics report, NER of girls is almost ten points below that of boys, at around 50%. Moreover, girls' dropout rates at higher education levels are also higher than those of boys. At the same time, in Pakistan's rural regions, girls are frequently expected to marry young and take care of the household rather than going to school. All of these issues serve to increase the gender gap in educational attainment and exacerbate these pre-existing inequalities prevalent in Pakistani society.

#### Evaluation of Reform Initiatives & Impact

The education reform projects in Pakistan demonstrated ambivalent trends. On one hand, increase in rate of school enrollment is observed, and new schools and advanced facilities are built. On the other hand, teachers' absenteeism and lack of curricular relevance diminish interventions' effects. The decentralization of pilot projects in the Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces "resulted in several localized successes and insights". At same time, the process is characterized by slow and inconsistent step. The impact of education reform on student outcomes is positive but it varies with some regions experiencing positive impacts than others. Bari and Sattar state that unsubstantial and inconsistent implementation capacity throughout implementation process creates inequality in the distribution of resources which interferes with the effectiveness of reforms. There is a need for further research to determine whether recent initiatives will have long-term impact or not on student performance & educational attainment.

#### Policy Recommendations for Improvement

To improve the education system in Pakistan, policymakers should work to achieve nationwide access to education and concentrate their efforts on ensuring that education becomes accessible to all marginalized groups. In addition, the increased funding and accountability ensured through the Administration Reforms can improve the quality of the provided education, and the change in the education policies so that education becomes compatible with the standards of modern educational

system and with the needs of labor market. The sustainable development should be applied over all sectors, including education. To make it possible, we should include community, improve teacher training, and integrate the new technologies within classrooms. In addition to that, it is possible to apply public-private partnerships to improve the quality of education. It is clear that for education reform to achieve some of its goals, other goals must be addressed after the obstacles and challenges have been identified. Thus, one of the key points is research focused on the long term. It is important to verify what changes have occurred over the years as a result of the introduction of a particular reform. When it comes to comparing the efficiency of a model in different regions, the two stages are important because they allow students to study the causes of such results. For Pakistan, it may also be beneficial to examine the peculiarities of NGOs' work related to the promotion and support of educational reform.

Table 1 Key Social Media Impacts on Mental Health

Impact Area	Positive Effects	Negative Effects	Key Insights from Study
Social Comparison	Motivation for self-improvement	Lower self-esteem	Social comparison significantly influences mental health,
Cyberbullying	Awareness of cyber safety	Increased anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts	Cyberbullying is critical factor negative impact mental health.
Sleep Disturbances	None	Poor sleep quality, increased stress and irritability	The late-night social media use correlates to sleep disturbances.
Access to Mental Health Resources	Greater accessibility to support and resources	Overreliance on online resources without guidance	Social media can be a valuable resource for health awareness.
Community Building	Sense of belonging and support	Pressure to conform to community standards	Online communities offer both support & stress rely on context.

## DISCUSSION

### Relation to Previous Research

The results of this study are consistent with many fundamental themes discussing the educational reform in Pakistan from earlier research. Further, there are localized successes evident from other past studies too such as [Rehman and Khan \(2019\)](#) which showed the decentralization efforts led to significant success in the provinces of Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. The study, just like that of [Ahmad \(2015\)](#), brings to fore persistent problems of underfunding and political interference which continue to bedevil the education sector. Jamil's work highlights that the relevance of ensuring alignment between education reforms & socioeconomic development objectives must continue to be priority, which is similarly echoed here in this study's call for reform strategies that prioritize sustainability alongside inclusivity.

### Compared to Prior Work

Although this study replicates many of the difficulties reported in prior research, it also sheds light upon new aspects that are separated from past studies. This work emphasizes a different aspect of madrasa education (curriculum development and teacher training) which has largely been absent in earlier works and was avoided by the study conducted by [Malik \[2017\]](#) that focused mainly on the challenges surrounding madrasa education. Additionally, this study created a more nuanced



version of the differences in education between genders than previously recognized (especially for rural regions hereafter), much scarier was that now their gaps proved broader than those that were even formerly reported. In this connection, this disparity highlights that much has improved since 1990, but there are still serious systemic issues to address in increasing the girls' access and retention of the education.

### Future Direction of the Research

These findings suggest that work is needed to understand downstream effects of recent education reform initiatives in Pakistan. The OLS applications in SONHS and Collaborative Nursing generally demonstrated the effects of reform measures within a single semester time frame, but not long-term impacts (Aslam & Atherton, 2014). In this linking, there is dire need of further research on the work of NGOs in facilitating reform appears warranted as this theme is largely underexplored within written literature.

### CONCLUSION

The Education Reform Process in Pakistan is a multi-dimensional challenge that needs continuous struggle and effective strategy making and serious commitment from all stakeholders. The study outlines the important successes and continued frustrations in the sector, signaling that while a few interventions have yielded returns others are struggling to leave an aggregate impact on meeting educational necessities of the country. Although the reforms have helped boost enrollment rates and improve infrastructure in places, gains made through these reforms are largely undone by a lack of funding, and political volatility regionally. One of important findings of this research is the difference amid policymaking and application. While government has brought forward various measures to improve the learning outcomes, inconsistent and disjointed enactment of these reforms across states has meant results have varied. Urban areas have reaped more gains over these reforms, leaving rural and conflict-affected regions with an exacerbating set of challenges. The study also stresses the need to tackle systemic problems like teacher truancy, obsolete curricula and running of dual-stream madrassa system that functions in isolation from their national curriculum. These are challenges that keep holding back efforts in education, unless we confront them head-on as part of our development effort.

More broadly, the findings indicate that future educational reforms should take a more inclusive approach to ensure all corners of society benefit from these policies. Better funding is also needed to ensure that all the regions have access in an equally fair manner. Finally, the implementation of educational policies demands a thirst for accountability and transparency as far as outcomes are concerned rather than just outputs. Summing up, though Pakistan's Education reform seems to be a successful approach, we still have a long journey ahead and many obstacles on the way. All parties, government, educators, policymakers and communities must re-invigorated efforts to scale up this change from the nascent realities to make Pakistan a country where each child gets his or her right and opportunity for decently quality education compatible with the aspirations of social equity, respectable economics citizenship and national progress. Longitudinal data from the reforms we describe here should be followed up, and new ways to try to provide education that is fit for all pupils should also be explored. In this regard, a world-class education sector, it requires sustained

and coordinated efforts from all levels of the government in Pakistan to uplift its people into what they can become.

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