



What Makes Teachers Effective: Perception Of Students Of Private Secondary School of Karachi

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ABSTRACT

Effective teaching is one of the significant factors that can facilitate student's learning outcomes. This study explored the perceptions of male and female students about teacher effectiveness in selected secondary schools in Karachi. The study is qualitative exploratory, and data was collected through semi-structured questions during in-depth individual interviews of twenty-two students, ten males, and twelve females, studying in grade 10 in four private secondary schools in Karachi. The researcher organised the generated data for analysis through coding. The five emergent themes determined the perceptions of both male and female participants about teacher effectiveness in teacher-student relationships, instructional strategies, equality and justice, teacher personality, and discipline and control. The results also indicated no significant variations in differences in gender perceptions within the themes. This suggests that while preferences may differ, effective teaching relies on qualities valued by everyone. The study concluded with implications for school administrators, principals, and teachers to include students' voice and their needs for teachers equipped with desired traits for their students' high academic achievement and well-developed personalities.

Keywords: Effective Teaching, Secondary School Students, Students' Perceptions, Teacher Effectiveness, Teacher Quality.

Introduction

Education is a process of growth, and teachers are the most critical component of any education system that grooms the personality of students and prepares them to play their role in society (Hyun & Sajjad, 2018). Various research shows that students' learning is greatly affected by teachers' performance, as



teaching effectiveness is neither a static construct nor merely dependent on extensive experience in teaching. Effective teachers have a significant impact on students' academic achievement (Rockoff, 2004).

Students have their own unique and individual perspectives about teacher effectiveness. Two students may give very different opinions of the same teacher regarding his/her teaching effectiveness. Individuals, including students, have preferences in various aspects of life, such as food, clothing, and activities. Similarly, students have preferences for certain traits in their instructors, which influence their evaluations of teaching effectiveness. First impressions and evolving relationships between students and instructors shape students' opinions. A study of 195 teachers over 13 years found that, despite individual differences in teaching effectiveness, teachers' effectiveness remained consistent over time (Marsh, 2007). Another study by Lavin et al. (2012) identified expertise in content, communication skills, and class preparedness as the most important traits for good teaching, while rank, attire, and research record were rated least important. However, opinions varied widely, with each trait appearing in both the top and bottom rankings among different students.

According to the study conducted by McIntyre and Battle (1998), females give more importance to teachers' personality traits than male students. This is supported by Lavin et al. (2012), who conclude that females prefer organization, preparedness, and personal characteristics of effective teachers, whereas males emphasize qualifications and experience.

There are different opinions of what constitutes effective teaching and as primary stakeholders, the students' voices cannot be under-estimated. However, the reliability and validity of how students rate their teachers are not fully recognized, as according to Maulana et al. (2014), students reflect their expectations while evaluating their teachers. In contrast, Brok et al. (2005) posit that evaluation by secondary students of their teacher behavior has an adequate level of reliability and validity and is predictive for research on evaluating teachers. Supporting students' voices, Zimmerman et. al (1992) suggests that students' ratings may need to be more precise when they judge teachers for their knowledge and planning. However, he argues the student evaluation can be considered when they evaluate the classroom teaching strategies and the content knowledge of the teachers. The journey of being an effective teacher is multidimensional, with constant new developments. There are different opinions about what constitutes effective teaching. Students are the main stakeholders, and so their opinions need to be included in the academic literature related to teacher effectiveness.



Grade 10 is a crucial year as the students appear for their respective board exams and depend upon how effectively the teachers prepare them. The study aims to provide unique information to assist school administrators and principals in hiring teachers according to their students' needs. Research measuring effective teaching practices and teacher quality has also included measurements of student preferences for classroom learning environments and experiences, as well as assessments of student goals, motivation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Sutcliff, 2011).

There are limited studies that have examined secondary school students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in Pakistan. Punjab's public school teachers are evaluated by their principals on a generalized Performance Evaluation Report (PER), and probably not a valid measure of teacher quality. Research by Akram (2019) employed students' ratings for measuring teacher effectiveness set by evaluation standards by the Ministry of Education (2017) Pakistan to provide another valid and reliable tool for of measuring teacher effectiveness and students' performance.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the perception of students of grade 10 studying in four private secondary schools in Karachi in an attempt to fill a small segment of the gap. The study also offers foundations to teachers to revise their preferences of the characteristics of effective teaching through the lens of their students' perspectives and bring significant improvement in their personality as well learning and personality development of their students.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

What are the characteristics of an effective teacher in the opinion of male and female students of grade 10 studying in private secondary schools in Karachi?

Literature Review

There are various qualities that make teachers effective and all individuals have their opinions and preferences. The effect of teaching is the manifestation of mutual interactions between personal and environmental factors (Kyriakides & Creemers, 2009). However, the most dominant among all factors, according to Hanushek et al. (1998), "even if teachers were randomly distributed among schools and all of the between-school variation in achievement were to result from other school inputs, differences in teacher quality would swamp all other school inputs" (1998, pp. 30–31). Self-development is part of the



teaching process, which requires effective interpersonal communication skills to leave a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Frymier & Houser, 2000), and that students academic, cognitive, and affective outcomes are influenced by their teachers' demeanor (van de Grift et al., 2014) and her personality (Kim et al., 2019).

Students' perception of effective teachers is also influenced by their own paradigm, such as students like teachers who teach according to their learning style (Lavin et al., 2012) and students' academic learning results more than external observations of teachers (Maulana et al., 2014). In the context of Pakistan, a study correlating students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Akram et al., 2017) found a positive relationship between teacher effectiveness indicators and student achievement in English and mathematics.

Universally, there are various parameters to evaluate teacher performance, such as classroom observation and self-assessment (Keane & Labhrainn, 2005). The relation between the students' low performances may be directly proportional to the poor performance of the teachers largely due to students' dependence on them (Stronge, 2013). Van de Grift et al.(2014) concluded that teaching-learning strategies are one of the few skills that teachers find challenging to master.

Many studies conducted on the evaluation of teachers by the students have also analyzed for student biases based on their gender. There are mixed responses to such studies. Findings of many studies conclude that female students give a better rating to their teachers than their counterparts (Lavin et al., 2012), whereas Sutcliff (2011) found there was no substantial difference in the perceptions of males and females. However, findings by Lavin et al. (2012) reveal that the perception of female students is different from male students regarding teaching effectiveness. Females value certain traits more than males, such as the professionalism of the teachers, their prompt feedback, coming prepared to the class, well-organized presentations, timely feedback, class preparedness, organized presentation, responsive, well-dressed, high academic standards, out-of-class accessibility, respect, enthusiasm, clear presentations, concise explanations, encouraging, fair, and engaging. On the other hand, males rated high for relaxed demeanor, educational credentials, established research record, sense of humor, experienced lecturer, and work experience.

Government educational institutes in Pakistan use the Performance Evaluation Report (PER) to evaluate teacher performance, whereas the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) is the only primary means of



assessing secondary school teachers' performance which does not serve the purpose (Zia, 1994). The Ministry of Education (2009) has developed national professional standards for teaching, which are based on the characteristics of effective teaching and help teachers identify their professional needs. However, few studies have been conducted in Pakistan to investigate these standards from the perspective of secondary students and if there are differences in their opinions and needs based on gender.

Methodology

A qualitative exploratory approach has been employed for the purpose of the current study to investigate the similarities and differences in the perceptions of secondary students of grade 10 studying in private schools in Karachi regarding teacher effectiveness.

Ethical consideration was given due importance following the ten principles from the guidelines of nine different research associations for social sciences (Bell & Bryman, 2007). These include safety, respect, full consent, privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, no exaggeration of aims and objectives, declaration of any conflict of interest, transparent communication with participants, and no bias in the representation of primary data findings.

Participants

A purposive sample of 22 participants consisting of 10 males and 12 females from four private secondary schools in Karachi was used to interview individual students. It is important to recognize and select individuals or groups who have sufficient knowledge about or have experienced a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). All participants names have been changed to ensure privacy.

Data Collection

The students' responses were collected through 45-minute individual semi-structured interviews to capture their experiences, activities, behavior, perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Elias & Merriam, 2005).

Data Analysis

The primary data were analyzed through the coding method consisting of words and phrases (Saldana, 2013), which assisted in formulating the themes and finding the relationship between apparently different concepts (Creswell, 2015; Saldana, 2013). The results are presented and discussed based on coding and themes derived from the codes.



Findings

A review of the responses did not indicate any extreme difference between high and low values of factors between male and female students. In most instances, there were slight variations as presented under each theme.

Student-Teacher Relationships

Results indicate that a strong relationship between teachers and students is the most dominant factor for both genders. However, girls are more sensitive about relationships as they consider teachers as mentors who guide them. Eight girls and four boys mentioned social issues in school like bullying and making fun of students by their peers. Resultantly, they feel as humiliated as other students making them feel embarrassed and lose their confidence. Both males and females perceive that an effective teacher promptly intervenes, takes charge of the situation, and controls the bullies. Such a teacher is emphatic and cognizant of students' family issues as well as their moral guidance in the school environment, as Tania (name changed to protect privacy) noted:

We do have issues both at home and in school. Then there are lots of issues where boys harass girls as well as girls harassing other girls. The school does not have cameras, and we don't know what is happening. We need teachers. We can't share such things with our parents.

Ashraf was a victim of bullying but found one of his teachers as a saviour:

I can only talk to one of my teachers, who is very non-threatening and friendly. I feel comfortable talking to him about boys who bully me and about some other boys. I think an effective teacher knows how to relate to his students.

Both male and female respondents prefer teachers who are friendly and encouraging and maintain an environment where students can share their ideas. Good relation also means that effective teachers reward students for their efforts, as Hamid opined:



We need motivation every day. When they motivate us to work hard, we do and get good grades they appreciate us and reward us when we get good grades, like a treat to give us early off to play.

Both male and female respondents were also consistent in their response that effective teachers maintain an environment of calmness and joy for the students with their quiet demeanor and jolliness. Muhammad defined such a teacher:

She should be jolly and not always dull and boring. The class feels calm and not rowdiness.

Most males and females also associated good relationships with teachers respecting students and avoiding vulgar language, as Huzaifa commented:

They should respect students and use suitable language. They should avoid abusive words.

Instructional Strategies

Students took the opportunity to state their preferences in terms of the strategies effective teachers use. Most of the responses dealt specifically with teaching and learning styles, as respondent Alia simply remarked:

An effective teacher has a unique teaching method. He/ she is able to satisfy all students.

Results indicated high levels of concern amongst both boys and girls about the teacher's ability to relate the content matter to daily life versus theoretical knowledge and engage students through a variety of strategies and activities. Alia and Huzaifa responded:

Teachers should not be bookish but teach with real-life examples. They should use many different strategies and design activities that engage students in practical learning. An effective teacher knows that all students are different.



Volume 2, number 2, October 2024

The Journal of Arts Sociology and Humanities (THE JASH)

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While girls mostly referred to PowerPoint and WhatsApp, male respondents admired teachers who are able to create experiences through the use of technology that engages and appeals in multiple ways.

Haroon elaborated:

They use visuals like PowerPoint presentations, videos, website links to subject resources, online classes, WhatsApp groups, YouTube, etc.

Instructional strategies also include sports when it comes to male respondents, whereas none of the females talked about physical activities. Boys place high value on play as Muhammad exclaimed:

They should entertain and play games with the students and give them free time to play any physical game. It sort of gets boring as well. We can't always study.

All participants also agreed that teacher effectiveness includes their availability beyond classroom teaching. Female respondents were more sensitive towards the issue and complained about teachers who do not give time after class or school. Students also consider a teacher as effective when s/he provides extra information beyond books. Maria voiced:

They should be available when we need them. Some teachers have extra responsibilities in school, and they can't give us quality time in class, and they have no time after the period.

Ahmed complained:

One of our teachers is always tired when we ask her for help. If teachers are always busy, how can we approach them when we need help beyond the classroom?

Respondents also perceive that effective teachers are experts in many ways, as Huzaifa was more concerned from the exam perspective:

They not only have in-depth knowledge but also have command over their subject and experience to teach students according to the board's requirements. They help us solve past papers and provide prompt feedback for improvement.



Personality

Besides internal personality traits, girls were also focused on how effective teachers look as well as how they carry themselves, whereas most boys focused on teachers' good sense of humor. Rumaisa declared:

...Whether male or female, they should have an aesthetic sense of dressing and not repeat the dresses too often. I like cleanliness and even hairdo. They have a graceful personality not only by wearing good dress but the way they walk and carry themselves.

Ahsan enjoyed learning from teachers who are fun:

I think teachers with a good sense of humor make learning an interesting activity. I don't like teachers who are too serious, as if they are bored and tired of teaching us!

Both genders consider the personality of an effective teacher as a role model. Dania and Harith commented,

An effective teacher demonstrates himself as a role model and guides students to the Islamic way of life. Teachers should practice what they say so students want to copy them.

Both genders consider a teacher to be an effective teacher when she holds him/ herself in high self-esteem as well as respects the students. Shahid responded:

Effective teachers value themselves and respect their students. They encourage students by being there whenever they need help instead of labeling them as inattentive or careless!

Both genders endorsed the use of good language and criticized teachers who used abusive language or slang words. Parvez comments voiced by three male and two female respondents:

A teacher should not use vulgar and offensive language and jokes. I have heard teachers hitting students, even in grade 10. I don't like teachers who use slang words like تو ابے، I don't like when they use abusive (گالی) words!"



Equality and Fairness

Results show that both male and female respondents feel strongly about equality and fairness in the class. Maria noted:

Though a particular student is not weak, due to discrimination and favoritism, s/he is discouraged, and this affects the studies.

Female respondents believe that favoritism is tied in with gender bias as well by insulting boys while ignoring the misbehavior of girls. Tania was emphatic:

A teacher should not insult boys in the class and ignore whatever girls do.

Bias is also favoring students who get good grades, as Haroon complained:

A teacher should not discriminate and categorize students into nerds and students they think are weak. Students lose confidence when the teacher labels them.

Another form of discrimination was lamented by both genders when teachers divide students into front and backbenchers and make their own perceptions about them. Muhammad observed:

Teachers' behavior is good with frontbenchers. They think frontbenchers are more studious while backbenchers are not good, which is not true.

Females are more sensitive to self-esteem and respect boys as well. Effective teachers are fair in their treatment, as Irum commented:

When a student asks a question, she answers with love and does not make fun of her or him by using words such as short, old, dumb, etc.

Shahid felt effective teachers are not gender biased nor discourage outliers.

One of my teachers is non-responsive to me due to my out-of-the-box thinking. He is biased and explains to girls and is strict with boys.

All respondents agreed that an effective teacher is fair and unbiased.



Classroom Discipline & Self-Control

Effective teachers maintain discipline. Though both are very concerned about classroom discipline, male respondents admitted their rowdiness but laid more stress on maintaining a learning environment: Pervez acknowledged:

Disciplining students makes a teacher effective as it is very important. However, boys are naughty and don't pay attention, whereas girls are hard-working and quiet. Boys make a lot of distractions, whereas girls ask questions which help us gain more information.

Respondents from both genders agreed that effective teachers are firm and friendly and set clear rules and expectations, or else they lose their control. Huzaifa commented:

When teachers don't set rules nor let the students know what is expected of them, then there is chaos. When the teacher enters the classroom, students are talking and then rush to open their bags and books. Much time is wasted then.

Female respondents were more conscious of teachers maintaining their own self-discipline, as Dania remarked:

A teacher knows when to respond and should know how to ignore students who purposely disrupt the class. An effective teacher is also able to accept mistakes and laugh at her/ himself.

Both males and females rejected the teacher's aggressive behavior under any circumstances, as Faria noted:

Though she is good most of the time, an effective teacher is not aggressive when students misbehave, nor does she lose her temper and start screaming. She should remain calm and calm down the students as well.

Discussion

Findings reveal that the responses of both male and female participants were based on their personal experiences and expectations from the teachers. When the researcher posed the research



question, the first opinion of both male and female respondents was about the teacher's relationship with their students. To them, an effective teacher is first a friendly communicator and only then s/he can impress students with her/ his intellectual persona. Research supports that students value their relationships with their teachers more than their scholarly and professional qualities (Tischler & Vialle, 2009). Teachers often ignore their tone and body language which may be unknowingly threatening but result in creating a distance between the teacher and students. However, analysis of their further responses unraveled other complex aspects of interpersonal relationships as elements of personal, intellectual, and professional began to combine. A negative manifestation of ineffective learning is a relationship without mutual respect.

Students lack interest in studies, as Van de Grift et al. (2014) confirm that students' academic, cognitive, and affective outcomes are influenced by their teachers' disposition and leave a marked impact on student's overall personality and academic results. The strong perception of interpersonal relationships indicates that teacher training programs should incorporate emotional intelligence and educate teachers on the importance of understanding their own feelings and developing a rapport with their students. Teachers often undermine the power of negative emotions and words, which can drastically affect their relationships with students. Students' emotions are significantly affected when teachers use foul language, show unnecessary anger, and use them as a control mechanism. Research on student-teacher relationships recommends training in personality development to be made a part of the teaching process as teachers' interpersonal communication skills leave a huge impact on student learning outcomes (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Students look up to their teachers for their personal mentoring as well as guide in developing positive social behavior. There are many studies that now focus on the mental and emotional well-being of students for students, and it is important that teachers provide support during these years in matters other than academics as well (Kidger et al., 2009).

Regarding instructional strategies, all male and female respondents perceive them as one of the major parameters to determine teacher effectiveness. The ability to relate the content matter to daily life is the most significant skill of effective teachers, as perceived by both male and female



respondents. Dewey has stressed providing meaningful experiences to the students that relate to their lived world instead of the alien world of adults (Dewey, 1986). It is vital for teachers to go beyond theoretical academic material under the pressure of completing the syllabus and depriving students of practical as well as cross-curricular integration. Information technology is a fast-emerging tool that has stirred students into using it for academic purposes. Teachers who make use of it within and beyond classrooms are considered effective by both male and female respondents. Male respondents were more enthusiastic about using technology in a variety of ways, especially connecting with teachers beyond classrooms. Preference should be given to the dynamic participation of students in a technology-friendly environment where they can collaborate and share knowledge (Montrieux et al., 2015). It is important for teachers to apply a variety of teaching strategies, as respondent students believe that effective teachers address the needs of every student. In a study on teaching skills of student-teacher, Van de Helms and Maulana (2014) confirm that teaching-learning strategies are one of the few skills that teachers find challenging to master.

A teacher's personality is one of the most influential factors that make them effective. Student respondents perceived the personality from many angles. The student respondents considered fairness and equality as an important trait of effective teachers. Whereas the findings revealed that female respondents perceive inequality in more than one way, male respondents talked about teacher's favoritism and biases toward high achievers. Ybarra (2012) endorse that females consider teachers to have bias more frequently than their counterparts. It is important for teachers to be non-judgmental and fair, as students have a considerable sense of perceived fairness and equality. It is a common observation that students frequently judge teachers according to their perceptions and often use the words such as 'fair and unfair'. They are highly affected by their perceived as well as actual partiality and often lose interest in their studies.

Another dominant theme of teacher effectiveness revealed from the findings was classroom discipline and self-control. Both male and female respondents value the teacher's control over the classroom ambiance by setting clear rules and expectations without being aggressive. Female respondents find effectiveness is also about maintaining self-control in a non-threatening



environment. However, female respondents consider it an effective strategy to not only maintain one's persona but also to take charge of one's response to anger provoked by a classroom situation. Studies also suggest that maintaining discipline in classrooms has multiple challenges. Wolhuter and Steyn (2003) categorized student discipline as factors related to the learner, teacher, school, and home. This is confirmed by Barbetta et al. (2005), who assert that discipline problems should not deprive the child of education. Discipline, from this perspective, is based on a belief that guidelines for proper conduct are necessary for students to perform their daily activities in school. As such, effective teachers should manage themselves and consciously monitor their self-control by not being unnecessarily provoked by student misbehavior, as it affects their relationship with other students as well.

Findings supported by data revealed that both male and female students have a very clear perception of the characteristics of effective teachers. Results do not indicate any extreme difference between high and low values of factors between male and female students in most of the instances. Females were found to be more perceptive as they expressed the finer details of a character more than their counterparts. All twenty-two respondents expressed quite similar ideas about teacher effectiveness with variations in how specific they were in their definition, how they experienced the same characteristic in a different way, differences in their expectations in similar situations, and how coherently they were able to express their opinions. The results are supported by a study that concluded that despite some gender-based differences, both groups agree on the key factors that contribute to effective teaching, indicating universal traits that appeal to all students (Lavin et al., 2012). This suggests that while preferences differ, effective teaching relies on qualities valued by everyone.

Implications and Conclusions

Many insights are achieved from this study, which is pertinent for school heads and teachers to consider during the teacher selection and teaching process. Effective teaching is about more than focusing on the transmission of information to help students achieve good grades in standardized systems of examination. The data gathered from both the male and female students have given



insights by which this research has contributed to exploring various dimensions of the qualities of effective teachers. The study also helped to understand the expectations of students from their teachers, which, if fulfilled, will not only enhance motivation but will help in better academic outcomes as well as personality development.

The study is also an attempt to fill a small gap in scholarly literature in Pakistan. The researcher found numerous studies on the topic in Western literature but few in this context. However, the findings cannot be generalized due to a small sample of four schools and twenty-two participants and the study being specific to students of grade 10 in private schools only. Further research is required with a large sample size at all levels of schooling in both the public and private sectors in Pakistan, employing a mixed methodology.

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Volume 2, number 2, October 2024

The Journal of Arts Sociology and Humanities (THE JASH)

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