

Effect of PEC Exams on Quality Education in Public and Punjab Education...

Effect of PEC Exams on Quality Education in Public and Punjab Education Foundation Funded Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The development of any country depends on its quality of education. There are many factors to improve education quality, but continuous assessment is the main factor. This research paper evaluated the effects of primary and elementary level exams, known as the PEC exam, on the performance of secondary school students. In this research, data were taken from 100 government primary female school teachers, 100 government elementary female school teachers, 100 government and Punjab Education Foundation-funded school teachers, 100 PEC exam invigilators, 100 secondary exam invigilators, 100 PEC paper marking teachers, 100 secondary school paper marking teachers. A 5-point Likert scale was made to collect data, and interviews were also conducted; mean value, standard deviation, one-sample t-test, and chi-square were applied to quantitative data, and interviews were interpreted by creating narrative summaries. It was concluded that most respondents believed that the abolition of the Punjab Education Commissions has led to a decline in the quality of education. The quality of secondary education did not continue without the fifth and eighth PEC external exams. It is recommended that reintroduce the PEC external

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exam in a modified form. Reduce the pressure on students to perform well in exams.

Take steps to reduce cheating and promote discipline in the exam centers.

Keywords: Impact of Assessment, Quality Education, PEC Exams, Secondary school performance.

Quality education at the secondary level is essential for students to develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in higher education and the workforce. It is also critical in promoting social mobility and economic development (Abenawe, 2022). Secondary education typically covers the ages of 11 to 18, and it is a time when students begin to specialize in their academic interests and prepare for their future careers. A high-quality secondary education gives students a strong foundation in core subjects such as math, science, English, and social studies (Abenawe, 2022; Hussain, 2021). It also allows students to explore various electives, such as foreign languages, arts, and technology.

In addition to academic instruction, secondary schools play an essential role in developing students' social and emotional skills. Students learn to interact with others, work collaboratively, and resolve conflict peacefully. They also have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, and student government (Shahzad & Saeed, 2023; Collie, 2020). Several factors contribute to the quality of education at the secondary level (Hussain et al., 2022). These include:

- a) **Curriculum:** The curriculum should be rigorous and relevant to the needs of students and society. It should also be aligned with international standards.
- b) **Teaching:** Teachers should be qualified and experienced and use effective teaching methods.
- c) **Learning environment:** The learning environment should be safe, supportive, and conducive to learning.
- d) **Resources:** Schools should have adequate resources, such as textbooks, computers, and other teaching materials.
- e) **Assessment:** Assessment should be used to measure student learning and to provide feedback to students and teachers.

Quality education at the secondary level is essential for students to reach their full potential and to contribute to society. It is also critical in promoting social mobility and economic development (Siddique et al., 2021). Here are some specific examples of what quality education at the secondary level might look like in practice (Ismail et al., 2021; Leal Filho et al., 2020):

- a. Students have access to various learning experiences inside and outside the classroom. They can participate in hands-on projects, field trips, and internships.
- b. Students are challenged to think critically and creatively. They are encouraged to ask questions and to explore their interests.
- c. Students are taught how to learn and apply their knowledge to real-world problems.
- d. Students feel safe and supported in the classroom. They have access to resources such as tutoring, counseling, and extracurricular activities.
- e. Teachers are passionate about their work and are committed to helping students succeed. They use effective teaching methods and differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of all learners.
- f. Schools have a strong sense of community and collaboration. There is a partnership

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between teachers, parents, and students to ensure that all students succeed.

Quality education at the secondary level is an investment in our students and society's future. We must continue to strive to improve the quality of education for all students (Nguyen et al., 2020).

The Primary and Middle School Education Certificate (PEC) examination is a standardized test administered to Pakistani students at the end of their primary education. The exam assesses students' knowledge and skills in various subjects, including mathematics, science, English, Urdu, and social studies (Hassan et al., 2022). The PEC examination plays a vital role in the quality of secondary school results in Pakistan. Students performing well on the PEC exam are likelier to be admitted to high-quality secondary schools. Conversely, students who perform poorly on the PEC exam are more likely to be admitted to lower-quality secondary schools or may be required to repeat their primary education (Ishaq et al., 2020).

The PEC examination also has a significant impact on student motivation and learning. Students preparing for the PEC exam are more likely to be engaged in their studies and seek additional help from teachers and parents. This can lead to improved academic performance in both primary and secondary school (Latif et al., 2021). However, the PEC examination has also been criticized for negatively impacting student mental health and well-being. Students preparing for the PEC exam often experience high stress and anxiety levels. This can lead to declining academic performance and physical and emotional health problems.

Overall, the PEC examination plays a vital role in the quality of secondary school results in Pakistan. However, it is essential to balance the positive benefits of the exam with the potential negative consequences for students' mental health and well-being (Habib, 2013). The role of PEC exams in the quality of secondary school results is a complex issue with no easy answers. Several factors influence the quality of secondary school results, including the curriculum, teaching, learning environment, resources, and assessment. The PEC exams are just one of these factors. Some people believe that the PEC exams are essential in ensuring the quality of secondary school results. They argue that the exams provide a standardized measure of student achievement and motivate students to learn. They also argue that the exams help to identify and reward high-performing students (Mitana et al., 2021).

Others believe that the PEC exams hurt the quality of secondary school results. They argue that the exams are too focused on rote memorization and do not adequately measure student learning. They also argue that the exams cause undue stress and anxiety for students and teachers. There is some evidence to support both of these views. For example, a study by the Punjab Education Commission found that students who performed well on the PEC exams were more likely to succeed in higher education. However, another National Education Assessment Centre study found that students focused on passing the PEC exams were less likely to be engaged in learning (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017).

Statement of Problem

The research aimed to check the effect of the PEC exam, used for the fifth and eighth classes and Education Minister Murad Raas said that the board exams of the fifth class in 2020 and the eighth class in 2021 had been abolished because children are passing by cheating, which is having harmful effects on secondary-level education and beyond. After that, the teachers themselves started conducting these exams in their schools. Even after the end of this exam,

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the secondary class result was excellent in 2023. There seemed to be no difference between PEC exams and those without PEC exams. The research aimed to check the quality of education and whether the teachers were satisfied with these results. It was also to know whether the teachers demand that the PEC exam be repeated or if it is useless. In 2023, the quality of education was to be checked by looking at the good results of secondary schools without PEC exams.

Objectives of the Study

Some of the main objectives of this research were as follows;

1. The main objective of this research was to check the quality of secondary education without fifth and eighth PEC external exams.
2. The research aimed to determine whether the fifth and eighth-class PEC external exams create anxiety in children and have no benefit.
3. The purpose of the research was to get the opinion of the teachers regarding the fifth and eighth PEC external exams.

Research Questions of the Study

1. Is the quality of secondary education increased without fifth and eighth PEC external exams?
2. Do 5th and 8th class PEC external exams create anxiety in children and have no benefit?
3. Is there any correlation between the 5th and 8th PEC external exams and secondary class results?

Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to only district Bahawalpur with the following participants;

1. Government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded secondary female school teachers
2. Government primary female school teachers
3. Government elementary female school teachers
4. Punjab Examination Commission female invigilators
5. Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female invigilators
6. Punjab Examination Commission female paper marking teachers
7. Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female paper marking teachers

Methodology of the Study

Two data collection tools were developed for the research: a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 10 questions was developed for secondary school teachers; positive and negative questions were asked, and teachers' opinions were sought. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, it was presented to the headmistress of the secondary schools; some questions were changed on the advice of the headmistress. Then, it was pilot tested for which 20 secondary school teachers were selected; its reliability was .89, which was excellent. This questionnaire was then used for the field. After obtaining the data, its positive and negative questions were separated, the mean value was extracted to find out the central tendency of the data, and then the standard deviation was extracted; the Chi-square test was applied to

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check the positive and negative correlation. The second tool consisted of open-ended exploratory questions, through which teachers, invigilators, and paper markers were interviewed, and the results of the most repeated questions were finalized.

Population and Sampling of the Study

The study was conducted in District Bahawalpur. The target population was all female primary, elementary and secondary government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded school teachers, Punjab Examination Commission female invigilators, Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female invigilators, Punjab Examination Commission paper marking female teachers and Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education paper marking female teachers. Followed Bullen's (2022) suggestions for a minimum purposive sampling technique, the sample selected for the study was 100 government primary female school teachers, 100 government elementary female school teachers, 100 government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded secondary female school teachers, 100 Punjab Examination Commission female invigilators, 100 Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female invigilators, 100 Punjab Examination Commission female paper marking teachers and 100 Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female paper marking teachers.

Table 1

Sample of the study

No.	Participants	No.
1	Government primary female school teachers	100
2	Government elementary female school teachers	100
3	Government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded secondary female school teachers	100
4	Punjab Examination Commission female invigilators	100
5	Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female invigilators	100
6	Punjab Examination Commission female paper marking teachers	100
7	Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female paper marking teachers	100
Total		700

Instruments

A mixed method approach was used for data collection and interpretation; data were collected through a Likert scale and interviews of teachers, invigilators, and paper marking teachers. For an interview, some open-ended exploratory questions were asked about the past and current status of quality education at the secondary level and the role of PEC exams in quality education at the secondary level.

Table 2

Instrument number 1. What is your opinion about the PEC exams?

N	Instruments for Secondary School Teachers	Response Options				
1	PEC external exams internally or externally affect the quality of secondary-level education.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA
2	This time, the matriculation result was excellent because	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA

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	the PEC external exams of the fifth and eighth classes were abolished, and the exam anxiety was reduced.					
3	5th and 8th class PEC exams play a significant role in the quality of education in secondary school.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA
4	There was a lot of cheating in the PEC exams.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA
5	PEC exams and secondary-level board exams are positively correlated with each other.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA
6	This time, the secondary school level result is excellent; these results are accurate.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA
7	The PEC exams should be completely abolished.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA
8	PEC external exams, internally or externally, did not affect the quality of education at the secondary level.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA
9	PEC exams should be ultimately reintroduced.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA
10	Exam anxiety reduces the performance of students.	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA

Table 2

Instrument number 2.

No.	Interview Questions
1	What are your opinions about the PEC exams towards quality education at the secondary level?
2	Past and current status of quality education at the secondary level in perspective of PEC Exams?
3	Open discussion

Analyses of Data

Quantitative data were collected through a 5-point Likert scale and were analyzed through mean value, standard deviation, one sample t-test, and Pearson Chi-Square and Chi-Square test statistics. Qualitative data were interpreted by making narrative summaries.

Findings and Results

Table 2

Positive Attitude of Secondary School Teachers Towards Punjab Examination Commission External Exams

Q. N		Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	PEC external exams internally or externally affect the quality of secondary-level education.	3.77	.839	44.927	.000
3	5th and 8th class PEC exams play a significant role in the quality of education in secondary school.	4.13	.338	122.190	.000
5	PEC exams and secondary-level board exams are positively correlated with each other.	3.82	.925	41.284	.000

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7	PEC exams should be ultimately reintroduced.	3.79	.924	41.001	.000
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The table illustrates the positive attitude towards the Punjab Examination Commission's external exams. In all statements, the $p < 0.05$ was found significant. About the statement "5th and 8th class PEC exams play a major role in the quality of education in secondary school", teachers showed a high response. The teachers gave positive answers to all the questions, and on all the questions, the teachers were highly motivated and optimistic. All results were found to be significant.

Table 3

Negative Attitude of Secondary School Teachers Towards Punjab Examination Commission External Exams

Q. N		Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
2	This time, the matriculation result was excellent because the PEC external exams of the fifth and eighth classes were abolished, and the exam anxiety was reduced.	2.94	1.099	26.744	.000
4	There was a lot of cheating in the PEC exams.	3.25	.914	35.548	.000
6	This time, the secondary school level result is excellent; these results are accurate.	2.56	1.234	20.753	.000
7	The PEC exams should be completely abolished.	2.48	1.218	20.355	.000
8	PEC external exams, internally or externally, did not affect the quality of education at the secondary level.	2.43	1.139	21.328	.000
10	Exam anxiety reduces the performance of students.	1.96	.695	28.195	.000

The table below demonstrates the negative attitude towards the Punjab Examination Commission's external exams. In all statements, the $p < 0.05$ was found significant. About the statement, "There was a lot of cheating in the PEC exams," teachers showed a high response. However, there were low responses towards the statement "Exam anxiety reduces students' performance."

Table 4

Find the relation of Positive and Negative Attitude Secondary School Teachers Towards Punjab Examination Commission External Exams.

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Chi-Square	Chi-Square test statistic	significant
Positive	3.8775	.40279	73.596	19.675	CV > TV
Negative	2.6033	.46528			Yes

The table reveals the positive and negative attitudes towards the Punjab Examination Commission's external exams. The positive mean score (3.8775) was higher than the negative (2.6033) mean score. The relation was checked through chi square; the chi square calculated

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value was (73.596). CV > TV was higher than the table (19.675) value. Teachers were found to have a positive attitude towards Punjab Examination Commission external exams, which play a vital role in quality education at the secondary level.

Qualitative Data (Interviews)

Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female paper marking teachers' views

Interviews were conducted with a hundred paper-marking teachers of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education; they were assured that their data would be wholly protected and their views would play an essential role in our research, so feel free to participate without any fear. Record the statement. After the assurance of the researcher, his interview was recorded. These interviews were later transcribed. 90% of the teachers agreed that in the secondary board exams, about 95% of the children's papers were the same; if someone got one MCQ wrong, then 95% of the kids got the same MCQ wrong; even the answers to the short questions were the same. Children's writing was excellent before abolishing the PEC exams; now, the writing is inferior. The creativity in the children was gone after the PEC external exams were abolished. Almost every paper marking teacher expressed the same thing when he opened the bundle of paper and marked it. The secondary schools' teachers recommend to paper marking teachers that the children should pass with good marks. When the PEC exams were abolished, these problems got worse. Things were a little better before the PEC exams.

Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female invigilators views

Interviews were conducted with a hundred invigilator teachers of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education; they were assured that their data would be fully protected and their views would play an essential role in our research, so there was no fear. After the assurance of the researcher, their interview was recorded. These interviews were later transcribed into written form. 60% of the invigilators said that they are forced in some way to reduce the severity in the exam center or exam room. Heads of some private schools and heads of some government schools ver some form of boti, but this number is very few. The entire exam staff is sometimes fed or rewarded with a gift in a hotel. 10% of the invigilators revealed that there is deliberate crediting of certain teachers in the center, which conveys the benefit to some students in one way or another. We are silent about this behaviour because these are our colleagues. 20% of the teachers said that the boti mafia somehow influences them; they know about it but must keep silent. 10% of the invigilator's teachers revealed that we deliberately give some exemptions to government school children. It concluded that somehow, children use unfair means to solve papers. The exam room is a bit noisy. Even if someone becomes a UMC, they are reprimanded and terminated in the center so that the child's future is not damaged; this has become routine work.

The invigilators teachers of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education admitted that after the PEC exam was abolished, the high anxiety of the paper was felt among the secondary school students. Some students cannot even write because of the pressure of the exam. Some students find it challenging to adapt to a new environment. After the PEC exam is abolished, they face much difficulty handling the students. Children lack discipline. Children are asking for extra time even after the time for the paper is over. Some students spend the whole time

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waiting for the booty and cannot write a single word. The children may be waiting for the booty because they believed their teachers came and gave them a copy of the answers to the questions.

The invigilator's teachers of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education said that after passing the PEC examination when the students appeared on the paper of the secondary board, there was great confidence in students. They used to do the paper quickly, but the pressure to solve it was significantly low in the new environment. Children's writing power used to be very good. After the PEC external exams were abolished, there was a lack of discipline in children. When children pass some external exams before secondary exams, they have to explain very little about the paper. Due to the abolishment of PEC exams, children suffered a lot.

Punjab Examination Commission Female paper marking teachers' views

Punjab Examination Commission female paper marking teachers were interviewed because their names would be kept confidential. They would not suffer any harm, and this data would be used only for research purposes. Paper marking teachers said 82% of the papers in every bundle they received had the same answers. After looking at some of the papers, I felt that it was written by the teachers themselves instead of the students. 18% of the teachers denied that the students themselves did the paper and it was their effort. 60% of the teachers agreed that PEC strongly impacted student performance. And by going through these stages, it was pleasant to see a considerable increase in the students' abilities.

Punjab Examination Commission female invigilators' views

Punjab Examination Commission Female Invigilator Teachers were interviewed because their names will be kept confidential. They will not suffer any harm; this data will be used only for research purposes. The invigilator teachers said the school in charge often monopolized the center, and her role was nominal. Sometimes, if the superintendent was a little strict, but in some way, the MCQs were solved by the teachers, and the children themselves did the rest of the subjective portion. Sometimes, the role of MEA was also vital, and the role of RI was also vital. But still, there was a little cheating. But these exams had a profound effect on the children's performance.

Government primary female school teachers' views

Eighty-six percent of teachers agreed that fifth graders currently studying in government schools do not have the same background. Every year, the children must be promoted; there will be an explanation for the teachers and teachers' promotion affected severely. Whether students are weak or capable, they must be promoted at every cost and situation. In the past, primary pass students used to get patwari jobs, and their writing was so good that today's matriculation students don't even have it. The promoted to 5th standard cannot be prepared for the PEC exam. Students' writing is not so good and clear; students do not know how to memorize the lesson—children's art in the 5th class. A child must be at least ten years old for PEC's True and Fair exam; 12-year-old children perform well. The child should have studied well in previous classes, not promoted.

60% of children enrolled in primary class government schools are victims of child labour who

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do various jobs after school hours. This is a considerable obstacle to their success. Rich people do not enrol their children in government schools because poor children are ill-mannered, and their children will be spoiled. Therefore, children in primary schools can no longer pass the PEC exam; children studying in government schools do not have copies or pencils to write. The student-teacher ratio is also low in government schools. A teacher has to teach two classes simultaneously; there is a shortage of teachers in the government schools. The cooperation of parents of children studying in government schools is absolutely zero. They send students to school only to pass their time there. Poor people are not motivated by education; they see education as useless. The teachers try to motivate parents to send their children to school and let them get a good education; the parents reply who will feed our goats? The teacher says to trust in Allah; he will improve. The parents say you should also stop teaching and go to Tabligh, and Allah will give to your family. The conditions of education at the primary level in Pakistan are deplorable, and lack of employment is the biggest demotivator for parents. Therefore, PEC exams create many problems, due to which many students drop out. Parents and teachers put more pressure on young children to get more marks in the exam, which causes the child's tendency to deviate from studies. They start to consider education as a bitter medicine, and after the PEC exam, most children's minds are formed that education is enough. They seek to write their name, and they leave education. So, PEC is utterly useless in modern times.

Government elementary female school teachers' views

90% of the government elementary school female teachers said that the PEC exam is no longer helpful because the teachers used to tell the children some wrong ways to solve the paper to save their jobs and also participated in unfair means themselves. Now, in the modern age, teachers take tests from children every day, so children's progress is excellent. In modern times, children learn to write from class KG onwards and write notebooks continuously. There were no notebooks in the past, and children used small wooden boards called Takhti, on which very little was written. Children's intelligence has increased a lot in modern times, and teachers are also using modern teaching methods, so the PEC exam is not so practical anymore. Due to the PEC exam, there is severe anxiety among students, and teachers also suffer from depression.

10% of teachers opposed the abolition of the PEC exam. They said external examination teaches children a lot; children learn to write in a new environment, increasing their confidence. Due to the fear of the exam, children memorize many lessons quickly, increasing their learning speed. The tendency of children to compete with other school children also increases. So, the PEC external exam should continue.

Government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded secondary female school teachers' views.

Ninety-ninety-nine percent of the government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded secondary school female teachers said that since the PEC external exam was abolished, we have admitted illiterate children who do not know how to write their names. After that, we have to work hard on these children. Children's writing speed has to decrease, and children's learning speed also has to decrease. Everything was fine before the PEC external exams; the

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children's learning speed was excellent, and the children used to solve challenging tasks. The children's writing power was excellent. Children used to have a lot of confidence. After the PEC external exam was abolished, the children entering our school had very little learning; they did not know how to memorize the lessons. Their writing is not so good; their creating power is not good. Children should be brought to secondary education through various examinations. Fear of exams speeds up a child's learning. The child learns how to solve the paper and memorize and organize the material to write in the exam. Children learn enough learning tricks to score good marks in exams. Exams educate children. Therefore, the PEC external examinations should continue, and after the proper examination, the child should enter secondary school.

Findings

Quantitative data from secondary school teachers analyzed and checked the teachers' positive and negative attitudes towards Punjab Examination Commission external exams. The positive mean score (3.8775) was higher than the negative (2.6033) mean score. The relation was checked through chi square; the chi square calculated value was (73.596). CV > TV was higher than the table (19.675) value. Teachers were found to have a positive attitude towards Punjab Examination Commission external exams, which play a vital role in quality education at the secondary level.

Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female paper marking teachers' views

- 1) 90% of the teachers agreed that in the secondary board exams, about 95% of the children's papers were the same; if someone did one MCQ wrong, 95% of the kids did the same MCQ wrong, and even the answers to the short questions were the same.
- 2) Children's writing was excellent before abolishing the PEC external exams; now, the writing is inferior.
- 3) The creativity in the children was gone after the PEC external exams.
- 4) Things were a little better before the PEC exams.

Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education female invigilators views

- 5) 60% of the invigilators said that they are forced in some way to reduce the severity in the exam center or the exam room.
- 6) Heads of some private schools and heads of some government schools deliver some form of boti, but this number is very few.
- 7) The entire exam staff is sometimes fed or rewarded with gifts in a hotel.
- 8) 20% of the teachers said that the boti mafia somehow influences them; they know about it but must keep silent.
- 9) 10% of the invigilator's teachers revealed that we deliberately give some exemptions to government school children.
- 10) It concluded that somehow, children use unfair means to solve papers.
- 11) The exam room is a bit noisy.
- 12) Even if someone is arrested in UMC, they are reprimanded and not terminated in the center so that the child's future should not damage; this has become routine work.
- 13) The invigilators teachers of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education

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admitted that after the PEC exam was abolished, the high anxiety of the paper was felt among the secondary school students.

- 14) Some students cannot even write because of the pressure of the exam.
- 15) Some students find it challenging to adapt to a new environment.
- 16) After the PEC external exam is abolished, they face much difficulty handling the students.
- 17) Children lack discipline. Children lack confidence.
- 18) Children are asking for extra time even after the time for the paper is over.
- 19) Some students spend the whole time waiting for the booty and cannot write a single word.

Punjab Examination Commission female paper marking teachers' views

- 20) Paper marking teachers said 82% of the papers in every bundle they received had the same answers.
- 21) After looking at some of the papers, I felt that it was written by the teachers themselves instead of the students.
- 22) 60% of the teachers agreed that PEC strongly impacted student performance.

Punjab Examination Commission female invigilators' views

- 23) The invigilator teachers said that the school in-charge often monopolized the center, and his role was nominal.
- 24) Sometimes, if the superintendent was a little strict, but in some way, the MCQs were solved by the teachers and the rest of the subjective portion was done by the children themselves.
- 25) Sometimes, the role of MEA was also vital, and the role of RI was also vital.
- 26) But still, there was a little cheating. But these exams had a profound effect on the children's performance.

Government primary female school teachers' views

- 27) Eighty-six percent of teachers agreed that fifth graders currently studying in government schools do not have the same background. Every year, the children have to be promoted. Otherwise, there will be an explanation for the teachers and teachers' promotion affected severely.
- 28) Whether students are weak or capable, they must be promoted at every cost and situation.
- 29) In the past, primary pass students used to get patwari jobs, and their writing was so good that today's matriculation students don't even have it.
- 30) Now, the students promoted to 5th standard cannot be prepared for the PEC external exam.
- 31) Students' writing is not so good and clear; students do not know how to memorize the lesson. Children are tiny in the 5th class.
- 32) A child must be at least ten years old for PEC's True and Fair exam; 12-year-old children perform well.
- 33) The child should have studied well in previous classes, not promoted.

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- 34) 60% of children enrolled in primary class government schools are victims of child labour who do various jobs after school hours.
- 35) Children studying in government schools do not have copies or pencils to write.
- 36) The student-teacher ratio is also low in government schools.
- 37) There is a shortage of teachers in the government schools.
- 38) The cooperation of parents of children studying in government schools is absolutely zero.
- 39) Poor people are not motivated by education; they see education as useless.
- 40) The conditions of education at the primary level in Pakistan are deplorable, and lack of employment is the biggest demotivator for parents.
- 41) Therefore, PEC exams create a lot of problems, due to which many students drop out.
- 42) Parents and teachers put more pressure on young children for the sake of getting more marks in the exam, which causes the child's tendency to deviate from studies; they start to consider education as a bitter medicine, and after the PEC exam, most of the children's mind is formed that Now education is enough, they seek how to write own name, and they leave education. So, PEC is entirely useless in modern times.

Government elementary female school teachers' views

- 43) 90% of the government elementary school female teachers said that the PEC external exam is no longer helpful. The teachers used to tell the children some wrong ways to solve the paper to save their jobs and also participated in unfair means themselves.
- 44) Now, in the modern age, teachers take tests from children every day, due to which the progress of children is excellent. In modern times, children learn to write from class KG onwards and write notebooks continuously.
- 45) There were no notebooks in the past, and children used small wooden boards called Takhti, on which very little was written.
- 46) Children's intelligence has increased a lot in modern times, and teachers are also using modern teaching methods, so the PEC external exam is not so practical anymore.
- 47) Due to the PEC exam, there is severe anxiety among students, and teachers also suffer from depression.
- 48) 10% of teachers opposed the abolition of the PEC exam. They said external examination teaches children a lot; children learn to write in a new environment, increasing their confidence.
- 49) Due to the fear of the exam, children memorize many lessons quickly, increasing their learning speed. The tendency of children to compete with other school children also increases. So, the PEC external exam should continue.

Government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded secondary female school teachers' views.

- 50) Ninety-nine percent of the government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded secondary school female teachers said that since the PEC external exam was abolished, we have admitted illiterate children who do not even know how to write their names.
- 51) After abolishing the PEC external exam, we must work hard on these children.
- 52) Children's writing speed has to decrease, and children's learning speed also has to

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decrease.

53) Everything was fine before the PEC external exams; the children's learning speed was excellent, and the children used to solve challenging tasks.

54) The children's writing power was excellent. Children used to have a lot of confidence.

55) After the PEC external exam was abolished, the children entering our school had very little learning; they did not know how to memorize the lessons.

56) Their writing is not so good; their creating power is not good.

57) Children should be brought to secondary education through various examinations.

58) Fear of exams speeds up a child's learning.

59) The child learns how to solve the paper and memorize and organize the material to write in the exam.

60) Children learn enough learning tricks to score good marks in exams.

61) Exams educate children.

62) Therefore, the PEC external examinations should continue, and after the proper examination, the child should enter secondary school.

Discussion

It was found that secondary education quality was not maintained without the fifth and eighth PEC external exams. It was found that 5th and 8th class PEC external exams create no anxiety in children and have many benefits. There was a high correlation between 5th and 8th PEC external exams and secondary school student achievements. The abolition of the PEC external exam has been a controversial topic in Pakistan. Some argue that the exam was necessary to ensure students met specific academic achievement standards. Others argue that the exam was causing students unnecessary stress and anxiety and was ineffective for measuring student learning. The findings of this study suggest that the abolition of the exam has had a negative impact on the quality of education in Pakistan. Students who enter secondary school without taking the PEC external exam are less likely to have the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed. Additionally, the exam helped to reduce cheating and promote discipline in the classroom.

However, it is essential to note that the study also found that some teachers and students believe that the exam should not be reinstated. These individuals argue that the exam was causing students unnecessary stress and anxiety and was ineffective for measuring student learning. Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to reinstate the PEC external exam is a complex one. There are valid arguments to be made on both sides of the issue. It is essential to weigh the pros and cons carefully before deciding. One possible solution is to develop a new form of assessment that is less stressful for students but still effective in measuring student learning. This could involve developing more authentic assessments aligned with the curriculum and requiring students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in real-world contexts. It is important to note that there are no easy solutions to education problems in Pakistan. However, by taking steps to improve the quality of teaching and learning and by making the PEC external exam fairer and more transparent, we can help to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

It is important to note that some believe the PEC external exam should not be reinstated. They argue that the exam causes severe anxiety among students and teachers and is ineffective in

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measuring student learning. However, most respondents in this study believe that the benefits of the exam outweigh the drawbacks. The PEC external exam is an integral part of the Pakistani education system. It helps to ensure that students have the basic skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in secondary school. By taking steps to improve the exam and address the challenges facing education in Pakistan, the government can help to ensure that all students have a fair and equitable opportunity to succeed.

Conclusions

1. The paper presents the views of female paper marking teachers, female invigilators, government primary and elementary female school teachers, and government and Punjab Education Foundation-funded secondary female school teachers on abolishing the PEC external exam in Pakistan. Most respondents believe that the abolition of the exam has led to a decline in the quality of education, with students entering secondary school with poor writing skills, lack of creativity, and difficulty adapting to a new environment. Additionally, the invigilators report that cheating is more common now than when the exam was in place. However, a minority of respondents believe the exam should not be reinstated, as it caused severe anxiety among students and teachers. Ultimately, the authors conclude that the PEC external exam should be returned to ensure that students are prepared for the challenges of secondary education.
2. It was concluded that the quality of secondary education did not continue without the fifth and eighth PEC external exams.
3. It was concluded that 5th and 8th class PEC external exams create minimal anxiety in children but have many benefits.
4. There was a high correlation between 5th and 8th PEC external exams and secondary school students' academic achievements.
5. There is a decline in the quality of education, with students entering secondary school with poor writing skills, a lack of creativity, and difficulty adapting to a new environment.
6. An increase in cheating in secondary school exams.
7. A decrease in student discipline and confidence.
8. An increase in the number of illiterate students entering secondary school.

Recommendations

Based on the views of female paper marking teachers, female invigilators, government primary and elementary female school teachers, and government and Punjab Education Foundation Funded secondary female school teachers, the following recommendations can be made:

1. **Reintroduce the PEC external exam in a modified form.** The exam should be designed to assess students' critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities rather than simply their ability to memorize facts. The exam should also be made fairer and more transparent, with strict measures to prevent cheating.
2. **Provide additional support to government schools.** Government schools often lack resources and teachers, making preparing students for the PEC external exam difficult. Additional funding and support should be provided to government schools to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

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3. **Improve the quality of teaching at all levels of education.** Teachers should be trained on how to use effective teaching methods and how to assess student learning fairly. Teachers should also be given the resources they need to provide quality instruction to their students.
4. **Reduce the pressure on students to perform well in exams.** Parents and teachers should focus on developing students' lifelong learning skills and helping them to become well-rounded individuals rather than simply focusing on their exam grades.
5. **Take steps to reduce cheating and promote discipline in the exam center.** This could be done by increasing the number of invigilators, using CCTV cameras, and implementing stricter penalties for cheating.
6. **Provide support to teachers to help them prepare students for the exam.** This could include providing them with training on how to teach effectively and develop assessments aligned with the curriculum.
7. **Address the challenges facing students in government primary schools.** This could be done by improving the quality of education, reducing the student-teacher ratio, and providing students with the resources they need to learn.
8. **Increase parental involvement in education.** This could be done by educating parents about the importance of education and by providing them with resources to support their children's learning.

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