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Students' Community Participation and Acceptance: A Correlational Perspective at Secondary School Level in South Punjab

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Abstract

In recent decades, schooling has been redefined as a social as well as an academic enterprise. The research objective was to find out relationship between students' community participation and acceptance at secondary school level in South Punjab, Pakistan. A correlational research design with quantitative nature was used. Population of research was all secondary school students of South Punjab. Multistage random sampling technique was used to select the representative sample. The sample size was 800 secondary school students with equal gender allocation. Two self-developed Likert-type instruments was used to collect the data through survey method. The instruments were validated by the opinion of experts. Internal consistency of instruments was measured by Cronbach alpha (acceptance, $\alpha = .862$) and (community participation, $\alpha = .908$). Descriptive and inferential statistics was used for data analysis. Results revealed a strong positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .729$, $p < .001$). The study recommends that educators strengthen peer respect, empathy-based classroom practices, and participatory learning experiences to enhance civic commitment and psychosocial adjustment among adolescents.

Keywords: Community Participation, Emotional Health, Environmental Adaptability

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Introduction

Education is a transformative process for the communities to empowers individuals through collective development. It does not only equip, but instill knowledge, skills, values, virtues and behavior that ensure responsible members of society. In this sense, the scope of curriculum is tasked with facilitating learners to appreciate humanity, responsibility to one other and learning environments (Mezirow, 2007). Hence, a well-crafted curriculum may incorporate learning activities that promote social responsibility, responsiveness, collaborations and inclusion amongst students. The interest and need based attraction required for the teen agers to participate in developmental activities. In the essence of this approach, the students attract each other for collaborative activities. In this way community participation takes the way open for collaborative play. Community participation is process to involve students' active participation in social, cultural and developmental activities that impact positively on their locality and sense of belonging to others (Zanbar, 2020). Such involvement enables students to practice their bookwork to real context, thus learning how to empathize, work in a team, and show leadership and responsibility. Educational institutions advocate the community-based learning, empower students to appreciate the interdependence between society and education, reiterating the learning not only confined within the systems but extend into the community (Chowdhury & Alzarrad, 2025).

Acceptance is core of intrinsic willing to perform the task, satisfactory liability, and agree with the statement of counter. It refers to students' being embraced and internalized in the system as viable organs of development. Student's participation in community programs, volunteering events and service-learning bridge this existing food gap (Aftandilian & Dart, 2013).

Learners feel part of the community be recognized which in turn strengthens the bond among themselves and promotes positive learning environment through knowledge to action linkage (Honig et al., 2001).

Community participation development enables students to have a feel of belonging the society as they have to proceed the life in it. This type of exposure develops attachment, relatedness, and

mutuality (Osterman, 2000). It promotes students' sense of common problem-solving and shared accountability through volunteer work, school-building projects, and proactive civic involvement, which encourages acceptance of others, regardless of their background or doctrines (Epstein, 2014). In this context, "acceptance" refers to the ability to value differences, comprehend the perspective of others, and maintain harmony in society. However, acceptance is not standalone. Several psychosocial and contextual factors, including environmental adaptability, exposure to social radicalism, personality traits, etc. It also regarded students' acceptance ability (Perlaviciute & Steg, 2014). Indeed, in the current education, community participation and acceptance are critical elements of systems since incorporation community service, outreach programs are common across many local curricula. Thus, apart from maintaining academic excellence, these systems develop responsible, humane persons fit enough to integrate and support the development of society.

In short, the contextual background of the study was southern Punjab, there is limited literature evidence for students' community participation and acceptance especially at secondary school level. The contextual attraction for the study based on two reasons. The first reason was backwardness community approach and second one was limited or lack of resources. It meant less progression of the area might highly concerned with psycho and social setup of the individuals. For the reason, this study was conducted to investigate the correlation between students' community participation and acceptance at the secondary school level in South Punjab. Both investigative variables were in psychosocial perspectives. This study was considered better for the development of literature.

Statement of Problem

A vast number of students remain uninvolved in collective activities oriented on the welfare of society as a whole. There might be many reasons behind it, as lack of involvement may be accredited to the lack of opportunities, lack of institutional support, or poorly designed curricular architecture. The communal activeness values scholarly success over responsibility for the community. Hence, community participation and acceptance are the essence for the

secondary level learners for their development perspectives. Therefore, these phenomena got the attraction of the researcher to investigate in correlational perspectives. It might improve students' adequate sense of placement in community.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between secondary students' community participation and acceptance at secondary school level in South Punjab.

The research question

1. Is there any relationship between secondary school students' community participation and acceptance in South Punjab?

The significance of the Study

This study may be important for providing empirical evidence about the students' community participation and their level of acceptance in a school. By understanding how acceptance might be nurtured, through community participation when exposed to different schools and culture, one can easily guide the approaches and policies formulated by the educators and policymakers. In South Punjab, where schools represent cultural and socio-economic diversity, it may essential to understand how the aspect of acceptance can be nurtured through high community participation. A study may guide South Punjab schools in the creation of a collaborative model; social dynamic, emotional reality, and an acceptance framework that might embrace the cooperative learning difficulties and civic engagement programs. Pragmatically, teachers and school leaders may use the study findings to advance the value of participatory approaches to secondary student attitudes and reduce the sense of intolerance and exclusion. The study may enhance school authority and inclusiveness by providing a correlation perspective to the understanding of being accepted.

Review of Related Literature

Education is a vital tool creating young people who are caring citizens and responsible participants in their communities. Learners are instilled with a sense of social cohesion and fellowship, fueled with the

spirit of giving back in them by the attitude of love, respect, and tolerance to everyone. The role for the curriculum is to prepare and instill rapport for social welfare and service in its young folks. A proper curriculum is designed not only to fill learners' minds with knowledge from books but also to fill hearts with love, cooperation, and social conscience (Wolk, 2013). This aspect encourages learners to take part in most social adjustments and enjoy shared responsibility and togetherness. The environment created in the learning institutions offers most people under it a test to live and interact with people from all walks of life, all on one roof (Temple, 2009).

Attitudes such as social justice, volunteerism, and ethical governance, when cultivated, promote a state of mind that sees individuals volunteer more, resulting in more service towards the community (Briggs et al., 2010). It ensures that everyone lives in a happy harmonious environment and drives both educators and the communities towards resource sharing to achieve common goals thereby enriching those who live around (Patel, 2020). These plants a seed of compassion for your community in learners as they get a chance to understand life outside learning institutions through engagement with community members and social workers. Such experiences instill our young people with the belief of "I am vitally necessary," that everyone should do good to their neighbor and that the progress experienced under a good uniformity is based on mutual understanding. Similarly, human ends are transformed through education where one learns respect, flexibility, and response to people's positive attitude through change (Sterling, 2014). Thus, people understand other people's views without critical judgment and coexist in unity, hence, the curriculum promotes inclusive abilities (Hayat & Ullah, 2024). Hence, as common entities in community engagement, education and curriculum are tools of preparing a creator in young people. They act as links that the responsibility of undertaking caring, cooperative people of character are passed through them among the learners, which in turn makes the community a strong environment well-woven and the nation's building blocks (Hopma & Sergean, 2015)

Students' Community Participation

Community participation is an essential aspect of democratic

education and social development. It includes the right to support or directly run the schools, vote for the composition of provision of school districts, capacity to sought-after change of leadership, and direct alterations in a school at an institution-wide degree (Abbass, 2012). Community participation is also a tool that scholars consider a facilitator of service-based formation and service delivery (Cao & Kang, 2024). Indeed, such participation has been rated one among other effective approaches to achieving sustainable social development. Simmons et al., (2011) defined community participation as a clear approach to clearly defining a community-based approach to reducing capacity. The literature also covers the possible limitations of community participation. The levels of community engagement are superior, while unequal power distribution and lack of representation are noted issues (Head, 2007). Communities differ in terms of the level of engagement, and it is important to understand these challenges to ensure they are included in free and participatory discourse (Eversole, 2011).

Community integration in environmental representational practices, infrastructure preservation, and social expenditure is defined as the pattern to make sure these projects will be delivered sustainably. Policy-related publications typically emphasize collective action in field-work situations as a means to accomplishing sustainable results. Conklin et al., (2015) stated that such research usually focuses on adding value to the voices. The scholars encourage other vested interests, including policymakers and other stakeholders, to think about how they can contribute to this process as well. In the healthcare domain, the emergence of environmental adjustment is evaluated in relation to the output. According to the research, the role of community participation in forming community health is indeed a concern of analysis (Rifkin, 2014). Community involvement in healthcare enables culturally tolerant intervention and enhances access to local health awareness by using those experiences. The issue of environmental modification is increasingly recognized across the academic literature, with study on the role of psychology and environmentalism in health-conscious regions around the world being a widespread emphasis (Barani, 2024).

Community Participation in Extremist Groups

Despite the negative connotations, community participation

in the field of social extremism entails group involvement in various projects and endeavors, most often related to the cause of the extremist group. In this sense, the attention given to the individual's side of the matter by Bincy (2023) identifies that community participation boosts self-acceptance and morale through togetherness. However, participants are often isolated from the general population and encouraged to reinforce their convictions (Sealy et al., 2023).

Acceptance ensures the psychological readiness of a person toward diversity, respect for others, and peaceful coexistence among students (Shmeleva et al., 2015). For example, acceptance not only provides peace of mind but also reduces the risk of disorders and social withdrawal. Psycho-emotional acceptance has been a key concept in religious practices and beliefs, such as Catholicism, for many years (Hina & Ahmad, 2024). To be more precise, in cases of bodily or mental suffering, a person is often expected to accept and be "all right" with the situation. For example, Corbin (1916) noted that acceptance itself can be the best response to hardship, as it strengthens reasoning and resilience. Thus, there is intuitive logic in advocating acceptance in cycles of physical or mental suffering.

According to Taylor et al. (2019), acceptance begins to develop with the expansion of the spectrum of opinions to which students are constantly exposed and the common performance of tasks. It is the opposite of prejudice, rigidity, intolerance, and other qualities often found in extremist groups. When an individual is sufficiently accepted and valued by his or her surroundings, he or she tries to express acceptance in return in the form of empathy and understanding (Smith & Anderson, 2020). South Punjab might also benefit from the developmental approach, as acceptance formed through community-centered programs can become the remedy for sectarian or cultural otherness (Ahmad & Khan, 2022). Schools that help develop participation-dependent behaviors in students lay a foundation for safe and harmonious interaction and coexistence among pupils (UNESCO, 2020). On the opposite side of the spectrum is acceptance's logical antonym—social extremism. It manifests itself when an individual becomes predisposed to rigidity and stands against the principles of pluralism, diversity, and the construct of reasoned discussion that are central to social norms, as noted by Metsäpelto et al. (2020) and

supported by Rahman (2021). According to Nivette et al. (2021), fear of alienation, isolation, and a lack of belonging often encourage people, especially the youth, to turn to extremism. Similarly, Brown and Lee (2020) argue that exclusion and marginalization contribute to the radicalization process by fostering resentment and identity crises among young individuals. If students are unable to participate in or benefit from cooperative experiences within their communities, they turn to different, less beneficial groups out of the need to fit in (Hassan & Ali, 2022).

The literature identifies five components of extremism: conservatism, hostility and intolerance, obedience to authority, rigidity, and strength and toughness (Taylor et al., 2019; Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019). Within them, acceptance opposes hostility and rigidity. Most important is the community, which might diminish this factor (Putnam, 2020). Therefore, participating in the community is an effective method to prevent radical behavior because the social and psychological needs of students' needs that rigidity and hostility often manipulate may be addressed in this way (Moghaddam, 2021). Hanson and Gerald (2018) provide a summary of community participation within extremist communities' perspective on the concept of community. They point out that even in the "worst" situation, there is a system of acceptance that is based on the fellowship of members who value the same ideals, often significant in terms of excluding everyone else. For a person who is denied the opportunity to join the community, importance equates to recognition, which is often easier to obtain in dysfunctional groups (Koehler, 2020). This process is the reason why participation exacerbates infrastructural and ideological isolation (Neumann, 2020).

According to Ford (2021), students and young adults who are forming their identities are at an even higher risk. Therefore, positive community engagement should involve critical thinking, empathy, and awakening a sense of civic responsibility while deterring the misalignment of students towards participation in extremism. In schools, various structured participatory programs based on collaboration and shared responsibilities can help students fulfill their need to belong and, thus, develop in a healthy way by rewarding their constructive community engagement (Ali & Rahman, 2022).

Environmental Adjustment as a Factor of Emotional Health

Environmental adjustment characterizes how people adapt emotionally and socially to the surrounding conditions. According to Hay et al. (2020), positive physical and social environments promote people's well-being, whereas inflexible and stressful surroundings make people anxious and intolerant. From an educational perspective, positive environmental adjustment is associated with cooperation and acceptance (Taylor & Brown, 2019). Fried et al. (2021) revealed that schools demonstrating the highest levels of participation according to students' feelings had lower hostility and higher emotional balance. Green and Thompson (2020) also observed that well-adjusted students who felt at home in schools acquired prosocial behavior and developed stronger social connections. In a contrasting environment, students can acquire intolerance and be more prone to social withdrawal or surrender to extremist beliefs; therefore, environmental adjustment is both an indicator and a consequence of acceptance.

Acceptance by Personality

Personality determines a person's attitudes towards their community and other people's desires to be accepted. John and Gosling (2018) described agreeableness, openness to new experiences, and conscientiousness as predictive factors of tolerant and cooperative behaviors. Thus, it is the foundation of adaptability and empathy, which are closely linked to participation and acceptance (Miller & Zhao, 2020). Five-Factor Model also affects an individual's suitability for a community. A student with high openness would appreciate diversity and enjoy community participation, and with high agreeableness, they would have fruitful relationships (Kaiser & Keijsers, 2019).

The South Punjab aspect, therefore, was to investigate the effect of participatory education on people's resilience, countering of social extremism, and the mitigation of school rivalries and oppression (Ahmad & Khan, 2022).

It is included that indeed, behavioral and cognitive therapy outcomes show that a lack of psychological acceptance in the face of experimentation or abuse can predict mental problems. Experimental research has demonstrated that acceptance and activation may serve as

predictors of behavioral outcomes. In the second part of this discussion, a behavioral interpretation and understanding of the concept of psychological acceptance are provided.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design was correlational. The nature of the study was quantitative based on survey to find the correlation between students' participation in community tasks and acceptance.

Population

The population was 2040569 students (Boys = 1085187, Girls = 955382) of 1112 secondary schools (Boys = 594, Girls = 518) from 13 districts of South Punjab. The population was unknown as it was more then five thousand.

Sampling technique

The multi-stage random sampling was the sampling technique. At first stage four districts, at second stage 40 (Boys = 20, Girls = 20) secondary schools as 10 (Boys = 5, Girls = 5) secondary schools from each district, and at last stage 20 students from each selected schools were selected randomly to make the total of 800 sample size.

Sample Size

Table 1.
Sample Size of Secondary School Level Students

Districts	Boys Secondary Schools	Girls Secondary Schools	Total Secondary Schools	Boys Students	Girls Students	Total Selected Students
4	20	20	40	400	400	800

The sample was 800 secondary level students of 40 secondary school from four districts selected randomly. Due to unknown population equal weightage were given to boys and girls schools and students in the sample.

Research Tools

Two questionnaires at five-point Likerts scales were self-developed data collection. Tools were validated by the opinions of experts and

reliability was measured with Cronbach alpha. Cronbach alpha results were acceptance, $\alpha = 0.862$ and community participation, $\alpha = 0.908$. This confirmed the consistency of research tools.

Results

Table 2
Relationship of Community Participation and Acceptance

Measure	N	Mean	SD	*r*-value	Sig
CP	800	14.78	3.36	0.729**	0.001
AC	800	27.22	2.94		

Table 2 value shows a strong positive Correlation r = 0.729; p =0.001 of students' community participation and acceptance.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to find out the relationship between community participation of students and their acceptance. Students being community members participate in social activities for the welfare of each other, which aligns such activities with the social development as given by Bandura (1986). Students participated in social and communal activities at a great extent because of emotional phase of life. Socialization at secondary school level is common that engage students in collaborative activities. Secondary level schooling is considered as a hub of their participation and acceptance. Acceptance is need of the life stage and they wanted to establish at high level. Both phenomena are psychosocial in nature and are associated with each other for the psychosocial development. The study results indicated that students' community participation and acceptance were significantly and positively correlated. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), community participation is associated with intrinsic motivation, emotional development, and social progression. Moreover, the participatory contexts help develop democracy and interpersonal understanding. Students' acceptance tendency associates them with other individuals. In this way adjustment with fellows displayed a positive attitude toward diversity. Students who are more active in social and communal activities tend to demonstrate greater acceptance and tolerance toward others. Intrinsic amusement was necessary to attract the students toward positive development. The

study results are in line with the findings of Vygotsky (1978), who asserted that cognitive and emotional development is grounded in social interaction. Similarly, Tinto (2017) found that acceptance and inclusion within school communities are imperative factors in academic success and psychological well-being. Putnam (2016) and Ostrom (2019) reported similar findings, demonstrating that participation fosters trust, social capital, and respect among peers.

Conclusion

The research purpose was to find out the relationship between students' community participation and acceptance at secondary school level. A correlational research design was used. The population of the study was all the students of secondary school level in Sothern Punjab. Multistage random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Total 800 students were selected randomly from district Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan. Results of study reveal that consistent patterns of engagement, with moderate variability suggesting a shared sense of social responsibility among students., The strong positive correlation between community participation and acceptance was found.

Recommendations

- Schools and community centers should organize participatory programs that encourage collective action for social development rather than extremist ideologies.
- Counselors and educators should use behavioral and cognitive approaches to strengthen students' mental resilience. Acceptance-based therapy and group counseling can reduce emotional stress and prevent radicalization.
- Families, schools, and community organizations should work together to ensure that young individuals experience balanced emotional environments, enhancing their social adjustment and moral stability.

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