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EXPLORING SINGLE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND ATTITUDE TOWARD STUDENTS LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Primary education is the foundation step of formal education, including various subjects, e.g., languages, science, mathematics, English, Urdu, and social studies, which require different subject teachers. Single-teacher schools face unique challenges such as limited resources (staff, teachers, etc.), a lack of support systems, and isolation, all of which can significantly impact pedagogical practices and attitudes. The study was opted to explore the relationship between pedagogical practices and attitudes of single primary school teachers. The study employed a descriptive research approach, and a survey technique was used for data collection. The population and sample were the same, i.e., 74 single primary school teachers (both male and female) in District Sargodha. Two questionnaires validated through experts' opinions and pilot tested with 0.92 Cronbach Alpha value) were used for data collection through personal visits. Data analysis was carried out using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and Pearson correlation. The findings were that the overall pedagogical practices and attitudes of single primary school teachers were effective, except for the factor of teacher behavior and a moderate relationship between the teacher's pedagogical practices and attitudes. It is recommended that single teachers be relocated from overcrowded to understaffed primary schools to improve teaching practices and attitudes toward student learning.

Keywords: Single teachers; Pedagogical practices; Attitude toward students learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Primary education is the foundation step of formal education, including a variety of subjects, e.g., languages, science, mathematics, English, Urdu, and social studies, which require different subject teachers. The teacher role is necessary at every level in formal education (Raza et al., 2022). The teacher is the key factor in achieving educational objectives and goals. So, they should not only work for duty but also work to achieve educational goals and objectives (Murati, 2015). To meet students' learning needs, teachers must have subject knowledge and be equipped with instructional techniques and skills because, for the finest concept delivery, a teacher must possess pedagogical understanding (MSQEP, 2009). The study of primary school teachers' instructional methods and attitudes has attracted more attention in recent years. This interest shows that these elements greatly influence motivation, engagement, and academic success. Several studies have revealed that teachers' educational techniques and attitudes are directly related to students' learning outcomes (McCormick et al., 2013).

Pedagogical practices are ways, methods, or approaches to achieve educational goals and are helpful in classroom management, discipline, etc. (Jarmon, 2009). Teachers' attitudes toward teaching affect student learning positively and negatively (Kahveci, 2023). Teacher attitudes play a crucial role in students' learning. Teachers with a positive attitude will be more productive for students learning (Shittu & Oanite,

2015). According to Pakistan's Quality Education Guidelines, teachers are crucial to a child's education. Each primary school should have a minimum of two teachers, two classrooms, one play area, one store room, and one head teacher/staff room (MSQEP, 2009). Single school educators are those who work alone for one school and are not a part of a larger teaching profession. These educators have distinctive viewpoints and experiences that may have an impact on the pedagogical strategies they employ and the ways in which they view instruction and learning. Challenges for single-school instructors may include experiencing scarcity of resources, isolation, and a lack of support networks. So, it is essential to investigate their educational practices and mindsets in order to comprehend how they might improve their methods of instruction and the academic outcomes of their students (Zhu, 2020).

In Pakistani primary schools, the minimum number of teachers for each primary school is two according to the student-teacher ratio (STR) applicable for more than two teachers (MSQEP, 2009). But still, there are many rural areas schools with single teachers in the 21st century. Despite the importance of teachers' pedagogical practices and attitudes in shaping students' learning experiences, there has been little research on single-school teachers' pedagogical practices and attitudes toward primary-level students' learning. Single-teacher schools face unique challenges such as limited resources (staff, teachers, etc.), a lack of support systems, and isolation, all of which can significantly impact pedagogical practices and attitudes. As a result, there is a need to investigate single-school teachers' pedagogical practices and attitudes toward primary-level students' learning in order to understand how they can improve their teaching practices, improve student learning outcomes, and support their professional development. Therefore, the study opted to explore single teachers' pedagogical practices and attitudes towards students learning at the primary level.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pedagogy is a broad term that can refer to a variety of teaching methods. When determining which style of instruction to implement, teachers consider not only the students' prior knowledge but also their environments, learning objectives, and standardized curricula established by the relevant authorities. When possible, teachers facilitate students' learning outside the confines of the classroom by going on educational field trips with them (Loughran, 2013). According to research, the relationship between a student and their teacher was directly related to the student's level of enthusiasm and attitude toward their education. Teachers who are passionate about their subject matter are especially skilled at cultivating fruitful relationships with their classes (Bardach et al., 2022). A STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education activity's pedagogical knowledge practices are connected to the student outcomes like awareness, recognition, skill demonstration, and attitudes and beliefs. Pedagogical practices are important in formal settings of education or learning, e.g., 'planning' entailed creating a student booklet as a guide for students to comprehend the tasks necessary for designing, building, and testing. The planned resources included mathematics and science concepts to help students better understand the class activities (Hudson et al., 2015). Learning is often facilitated by teachers in school settings, but it can also take place in other outdoor environments. A lesson plan is a course of study or other formal learning strategy to impart skills, knowledge, or thinking abilities frequently in schools to achieve educational objectives (Heyneman & Stern, 2013).

Bleazby et al. (2023) argued that a particular attitude and behavior could be taught or learned merely by following what the teacher does either through his or her viewpoint. In addition, they state that this can occur through the teacher's opinion. This was due to the fact that pupils look up to their teachers as an example and a role model. They also believe that teachers' attitudes directly impact their pupils' attitudes and that such attitudes are represented through students' behaviors (Ulug et al., 2011). This was a summary of their main argument. Therefore, according to Baker and Crist, the attitudes that teachers have toward their pupils affect the academic success of those kids. Single Teacher School was the name given to schools employing only one teacher. When there was only one teacher at a school, the students were on

their own for instruction on days when the teacher was absent for any reason. There are a total of 124,284 primary schools run by the public sector in Pakistan, and 36,927 of those schools only have one teacher.

According to the education atlas, the province of Balochistan has the largest percentage of single-teacher schools in Pakistan, which is equal to 57 percent. This was because the province has 5,980 primary single-teacher schools out of a total of 10,585 primary schools. Out of 42,342 primary schools in Sindh, 19,011 are single-teacher schools, accounting for 45% (AEPAM, 2017). In the province of Gilgit-Baltistan, there are a total of 713 primary schools, 234 of which are STS. Out of a total of 23,291 primary schools, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has 4,559 secondary schools. Out of the province's total of 38,427 elementary schools, 6,415 schools in Punjab only have one teacher. In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), there are 446 single-teacher schools out of a total of 4,563 primary schools, whilst, in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), there are only 282 such schools out of a total of 4,174 primary schools. No single-teacher school was in any of the 191 primary schools that make up the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) (AEPAM, 2017).

It was not only a matter of showing a specific ratio on paper when discussing the problem of the teacher-pupil ratio. It has significant implications for the standard of instruction that is provided in schools. One teacher was responsible for four different classes in a single-teacher school, whereas, in other types of schools, a single teacher was only in charge of a single class. This presents a unique set of challenges for both the teaching and administrative staff at single-teacher schools (Struyve et al., 2014). Teachers' pedagogical approaches and attitudes toward student learning are the most critical aspects in improving students' learning skills and mental growth. Both should be prioritized and well-managed, but this can be challenging for single primary school teachers owing to the pressure and stress of managing student learning and school operations. This can have an effect on teacher conduct and eventually hinder student learning. Teachers' pedagogical practices are the most crucial factor for student progress (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative research was descriptive in nature. The survey technique was used for data collection from single primary school teachers about their pedagogical practices and attitudes towards students learning in district Sargodha. All single school teachers of district Sargodha primary schools were this study's population. There are 74 primary schools (male and female) in District Sargodha, which have single teachers. The sample is the same due to the limited number of all male and female single school teachers in the Sargodha district's primary schools.

Research Instruments

A questionnaire was designed for this study in two parts, i.e., pedagogical practices and attitude towards students' learning, based on the five-point rating scale.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 7 factors i.e., classroom management (5 items), lesson plan (6 items), teaching method (9 items), teacher's behavior (6 items), instructional materials and technology (4 items), assessment (4 items), community involvement (5 items) and total 39 items of these factors. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of teachers' attitude toward students' learning, having three factors: motivation (5 items), self-esteem level (6 items), satisfaction level (6 items), and a total of 17 items.

These five experts with Ph. D. qualifications in education and having strong academic knowledge and research experience reviewed the questionnaire items and suggested changes. Pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted on a sample of 60 single school teachers (38 male and 22 female) from district Mandi Bahua-din adjacent to district Sargodha. Data from pilot testing were analyzed by calculating Cronbach Alpha to estimate the reliability of the instrument, which had a 0.92 reliability value. It showed that the instrument was reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data from the single school teachers was collected personally visiting the target primary schools (for both boys and girls) of the district of Sargodha. The relationship between single school teachers' pedagogical practices and attitudes toward students' learning was calculated using the Pearson *r* test through SPSS. Table 1 shows that teachers rated their classroom management skills relatively highly, averaging 3.492 out of 5. This suggests that teachers feel confident in creating and maintaining a positive learning environment. Similarly, teachers also rated their lesson planning skills relatively highly, with an average rating of 3.62 out of 5. This suggests that teachers are able to develop effective and engaging lessons for their students. Likewise, teachers rated their teaching methods relatively highly, averaging 3.533 out of 5. This suggests that teachers are using a variety of effective teaching methods to reach their students. In response to the factor of instructional materials and technology, teachers rated their use of instructional materials and technology relatively high, with an average rating of 3.565 out of 5. This suggests that teachers are using a variety of resources to help their students learn. Similar to this, teachers rated their assessment practices relatively highly, with an average rating of 3.3475 out of 5. This suggests that teachers are using a variety of assessments to measure student learning.

However, opposite to this, teachers rated their own behavior as teachers relatively less, with an average rating of 2.291 out of 5. This suggests that teachers feel confident in their ability to be role models for their students and create a positive learning environment. Likewise, teachers rated their involvement in the community relatively low, with an average rating of 2.952 out of 5. This suggests that teachers feel less confident in their ability to connect with the community and involve their students in community activities.

Overall, the results show that single primary school teachers feel confident in their ability to teach their students effectively, but there is a need for improvement in some areas, such as teacher behaviour and community involvement.

Table 1. Factors-wise data of pedagogical practices.

Factors	Mean	S. D
Classroom management	3.492	1.334
Lesson Plan	3.62	1.138
Teaching Methods	3.533	1.2367
Teacher behaviour	2.291	1.002
Instructional Materials & Technology	3.565	1.279
Assessment	3.3475	1.226
Community Involvement	2.952	1.3478
Total	3.2572	1.2234

Table 2 reflects that the single primary school teachers' performance regarding seven factors of pedagogical practices, i.e., classroom management, lesson plan, teaching methods, instructional material, and technology, assessment is satisfactory and good, respectively, with 89%, 97.3%, 93.2%, 91.9%, 89.2%, and teacher behaviour and community involvement were poor (with 58% and 54%).

Table 2. Factor wise and overall performance of pedagogical practices.

Level/Factors	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Total
Classroom management	10.8%	48.6%	40.5%	100%
Lesson Plan	2.7%	41.9%	55.4%	100%
Teaching Methods	6.8%	48.6%	44.6%	100%
Teacher behaviour	58.29%	9.82%	31.89%	100%
Instructional Materials & Technology	8.1%	54.1%	37.8%	100%
Assessment	10.8%	60.8%	28.4%	100%
Community Involvement	54.1%	31.1%	14.9%	100%
Overall Pedagogical Practices	2.7%	55.4%	41.9%	100%

Table 3 shows the single primary school teachers' attitudes toward students' learning for three factors: Motivation, self-esteem, and satisfaction. Teachers' responses about motivation have a mean of 3.962 and an S.D. of 1.236. This suggests that, on average, teachers are motivated to help their students learn; similarly, self Esteem Level has a mean of 4.295 and an S.D. of 1.0571. This suggests that, on average, teachers have high self-esteem in their ability to teach their students effectively. Likewise, the satisfactory level has a mean of 3.983 and an S.D. of 1.142. This suggests that teachers are satisfied with their ability to help their students learn.

The table shows that single primary school teachers have a positive attitude towards students learning. They are motivated to help their students learn, have high self-esteem in their ability to teach, and are generally satisfied with their ability to help their students learn.

Table 3. Attitude towards students' learning.

Factors	Mean	SD
Motivation	3.962	1.236
Self Esteem Level	4.295	1.0571
Satisfactory level	3.983	1.142
Total	4.08	1.145

Table 4 shows that the majority of single primary school teachers' attitude toward students' learning were good. Where 74.3% of teachers showed good attitudes, 23% showed satisfactory attitudes and only 2.7% showed poor attitudes towards students' learning.

Table 4. Attitude towards students learning.

Level	Frequency	Percent
Poor (17-39)	2	2.7%
Satisfactory (40-62)	17	23.0%
Good (63-85)	55	74.3%
Total	74	100.0%

Table 5 depicts the relationship between pedagogical practice and attitude toward students' learning. Pearson correlation coefficient $r = 0.487$ showed a moderate relationship between pedagogical practice and attitude towards students' learning that was statistically significant ($r = .487$, $p = .000$).

Table 5. Correlation between pedagogical practices and attitude toward student learning.

Variables	N	R	Sig. (p-value)
Pedagogical practices	74	.487**	.000
Attitude towards students' learning			

Table 6 shows that the factors-wise correlation exists weak to moderate as Classroom management has positive but weak relationships with motivation ($r = 0.268$, $p = .021 < 0.05$) and satisfaction ($r = 0.251$, $p = .031 < 0.05$). Lesson plan has positive but weak relationships with motivation ($r = 0.26$, $p = .024 < 0.05$), self-esteem level ($r = 0.34$, $p = .003 < 0.05$) and satisfaction ($r = 0.33$, $p = .004 < 0.05$). The teaching method has positive and moderate relationships with motivation ($r = 0.415$, $p = .021 < 0.000$), self-esteem level ($r = 0.353$, $p = .002 < 0.05$), and satisfaction ($r = 0.370$, $p = .001 < 0.05$).

Teacher behavior has positive and moderate relationships with motivation ($r = 0.420$, $p = .021 < 0.000$), self-esteem level ($r = 0.392$, $p = .001 < 0.05$) and satisfactory level ($r = 0.507$, $p = .000 < 0.05$). Instruction material and technology have positive and moderate relationships with motivation ($r = 0.402$, $p = .000 < 0.05$), while positive but weak relationships with satisfactory level ($r = 0.340$, $p = .010 < 0.05$) and self-esteem level ($r = 0.297$, $p = .003 < 0.05$). Assessment has a positive and moderate relationship with motivation ($r = 0.426$, $p = .000 < 0.05$) and a weak relationship with satisfaction ($r = 0.242$, $p = .037 < 0.05$). Community involvement has a weak relationship with only motivation ($r = 0.260$, $p = .026 < 0.05$).

Table 6. Factors wise correlations between pedagogical practices and attitude towards students learning.

Factors		Motivation	Self Esteem	Satisfaction
Classroom management	R	.268		.251
	Sig.	.021		.031
	N	74		74
Lesson Plan	R	.261	.340	.330
	Sig.	.024	.003	.004
	N	74	74	74
Teaching Methods	R	.418	.353	.370
	Sig.	.000	.002	.001
	N	74	74	74
Teacher Behaviour	R	.420	.392	.507
	Sig.	.000	.001	.000
	N	74	74	74
Instructional Material and Technology	R	.402	.297	.340
	Sig.	.000	.010	.003
	N	74	74	74
Assessment	R	.426		.242
	Sig.	.000		.037
	N	74		74
Community Involvement	R	.260		
	Sig.	.026		
	N	74		

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) **; Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) *.

Discussions

This study explored single primary school teachers' teaching methods and attitudes towards student learning. Overall, the teachers' teaching methods and attitudes toward students' learning were good, except for their behavior with students (which is one aspect of teaching methods) whereas Munir et al. (2020) concluded that teachers' behaviour has demonstrated to have a direct influence on students learning. The possible reason may be the stress of five classes, and the workload irritates the single teacher. "Single primary school teachers face a number of challenges, including heavy workloads and managing all aspects of the classroom environment." These difficulties might make it difficult for them to adopt good educational approaches and keep positive attitudes toward student learning." (Bozkuş, 2020). A moderate relationship existed between single primary school teachers' pedagogical practices and attitudes toward students learning. Teachers' pedagogical approaches and attitudes toward student learning are the most critical aspects in improving students' learning skills and mental growth. Both should be prioritized and well-managed, but this can be challenging for single primary school teachers owing to the pressure and stress of managing students' learning and school operations. This can have an effect on teacher conduct and eventually hinder student learning (Hattie, 2008).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Single primary school teachers feel confident in their ability to teach their students effectively through factors of pedagogical practices of classroom management, lesson plans, teaching methods, instructional materials, and technology and assessment, but there is a need for improvement in areas, such as teacher behaviour and community involvement. The single primary school teacher performance regarding seven factors of pedagogical practices classroom management, lesson plan, teaching methods, instructional material and technology, and assessment are satisfactory and good respectively and poor to teacher behaviour and community involvement. Single primary school teachers have a positive attitude towards students' learning. They are motivated to help their students learn, have high self-esteem in their ability to teach, and are generally satisfied with their ability to help their students learn.

A moderate relationship between a single primary school teacher's pedagogical practices and attitude towards students' learning and regarding factors of both variables as respective; Classroom management has a slight positive relationship with motivation and satisfaction. Lesson plan has a slight positive relationship with motivation, self-esteem level, and satisfaction. The teaching method has a moderate relationship with motivation, self-esteem level, and satisfaction. Teacher behavior has a moderate relationship with motivation, self-esteem level, and satisfactory level. Instruction material and technology have a moderate relationship with motivation, a satisfactory level but a weak relationship self-esteem level. Assessment has a moderate relationship with motivation and a weak relationship with satisfaction. Community involvement has a weak relationship with only motivation. Most single primary school teachers demonstrated effective pedagogical practices and had a positive attitude towards students' learning when teaching multiple grades at the same time. A moderate correlation was found between these two variables, and there were also significant relationships between pedagogical practices and attitude towards student learning when considering different factors of pedagogical practices and attitude towards students' learning.

On the basis of conclusions and data analysis, the following recommendation is made: the school education department of the Government of Punjab may improve the teacher shortfall in single primary schools by hiring new teachers or loaning teachers from schools with surplus teachers. This would enhance the teacher-student ratio and instructors' behavior and attitudes toward student learning.

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