

Beyond Access: Tackling Bullying to Ensure True Inclusion in Pakistan's Educational Landscape

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Though Pakistan has been making progress in the field of inclusive education, mere integration of diverse learners in regular classrooms does not mean inclusive education. This paper claims that bullying is one of the major factors that hinder the process of comprehensive educational inclusion in Pakistan. There are, however, many challenges that hinder the implementation of inclusive education, including social exclusion, discrimination, and bullying of disabled and marginalized learners despite policies that promote their integration into regular schools. This opinion paper assesses the current phenomenon of inclusive education in Pakistan and its relation to bullying. It examines how ignorance of society, unawareness, and insufficient training of teachers lead to schools that cultivate bullying, especially of children with disabilities or those from different ethnic groups. The paper argues that the idea of inclusive education cannot be said to be fully realized if the bullying issue is not tackled, given that victims of bullying are, in essence, excluded from the learning process. In order to address this problem, the authors suggest several measures: policy changes, implementation of extensive anti-bullying programs, increasing the level of teacher awareness and preparedness in diversity and inclusion, as well as community involvement. In this way, Pakistan can move from adopting education as a right on paper to the provision of quality education that is more than just enrolling students and ensuring that they attend classes but that learners feel protected, appreciated, and supported to excel academically. This paper thus seeks to generate further dialogue among educators, policymakers, and researchers on the importance of tackling bullying as a core component of the inclusive education agenda in Pakistan and, hence, towards the formation of a more equitable and inclusive education system.

1. Introduction

Pakistan has been making a lot of efforts in the recent past to ensure that all children have access to education irrespective of their disability, economic status, or ethnicity. The country has adopted various measures to ensure that learners with disabilities, as well as those from other vulnerable groups, are enrolled in the regular classes (Hameed & Manzoor, 2019). However, merely having diverse learners in general schools does not necessarily mean that they are included. This paper posits that bullying is a major hurdle that has to be overcome in order to attain real educational inclusion in Pakistan.

Though there are several policies put in place for the inclusion of students with disabilities and other minority groups, these students still face social exclusion, discrimination, and bullying in schools. Such negative experiences erode the very principles of inclusive education and thus deny needy learners an equally effective chance to learn (Muhammad et al., 2024). The failure of schools to eradicate bullying behaviors suggests that the problem is not only endemic in the schools but also in the larger society of Pakistan and also points to a gap between policy formulation and implementation in the education system of Pakistan.

This paper aims to understand the current situation of inclusive education in Pakistan and its relation to bullying. It will examine how prejudiced social values, lack of sensitization, and insufficiency of teachers' preparation enable a school culture that fosters bullying with special emphasis on students with disabilities or from different ethnical backgrounds. Through the above factors, the paper will establish that the issue of bullying has not been well tackled, and hence, the agenda of inclusive education is still a pipe dream.

In order to address this problem, the paper will suggest a number of measures, which include policy changes, effective anti-bullying prevention programs, diversified teacher training, and community involvement. Thus, making an effort to ensure that all the students are safe and accepted will help Pakistan shift from merely ensuring access to education to ensuring the inclusion of every learner in the system.

This paper will first give a brief on the current state of inclusive education in Pakistan and then shift focus toward the phenomenon of bullying in inclusive education. It will then move to describe the causes of bullying in Pakistani schools and how it affects inclusive education. The paper will also use case studies to explain first-hand experiences of bullying in Pakistani schools. Then, it will outline a multifaceted approach to combating bullying, identify potential difficulties with the approach, and suggest potential lines for future research. This paper, therefore, offers a contribution on the importance of tackling bullying as a key component of inclusive education in Pakistan to enhance equitable and inclusive education systems in the country.

2. Literature Review & Results

2.1 Current State of Inclusive Education in Pakistan

Inclusive education in Pakistan has gone through certain changes in the recent past on the basis of international norms and domestic policies. Pakistan, being a part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), has tried to implement the concept of inclusive education in its educational sector (Government of

Pakistan, 2020). The Education Policy of 2009 and the subsequent policies have also stressed the provision of access to education to every child irrespective of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or any other disability.

Some of the measures that have been implemented in this regard include the Inclusive Education Strategy and Action Plan that has been adopted in different provinces of Pakistan. For instance, the Punjab Special Education Policy 2020 plans to provide quality education to all children, including children with disabilities, in normal schools (Muhammad et al., 2024a). Likewise, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have come up with policies on inclusive education; this shows that there is a senior-level understanding of the need for inclusive education within the provinces.

The above policies have, however, helped improve the enrolment of disabled and other vulnerable groups of students in general or regular schools. As stated by ASER (2021), in recent years, there has been a steadily rising trend of children with disabilities enrolled in conventional schools all over Pakistan. This is a movement from the traditional model of segregated special education to the inclusive type of education.

However, the problem that arises is that the enactment of inclusive education policies is quite a complicated process. The first issue is the inadequacy of social systems in the form of schools, which do not have the right infrastructure or support to cater to these students. Educational facilities do not have adequate infrastructure, including ramps, accessible washrooms, and devices that are critical for physically disabled students (Pasha, 2012). This is because, often, the physical environment of the school is not disability friendly, leading to the complete exclusion of the disabled students despite being enrolled in the normal schools.

One of the major problems is the lack of qualified teachers who would be able to teach in inclusive classrooms. Although education policies in Pakistan lay emphasis on training teachers, a large number of these teachers are still ill-equipped to cater to the needs of disabled children or children from different cultures (Fazal, 2012; Thakur & Abbas, 2017). The lack of preparation for this aspect creates a problem that results in students with special education needs not being well supported, and thus, they may not achieve well academically or socially.

In addition, there is an apparent gap between policy expectations and practices in most Pakistani schools. Policies may promote inclusive practices, but in reality, the practice may not be as inclusive due to inadequate awareness, attitudes, and resources. Numerous schools still exist, which are in a de facto segregation where students with disabilities or from minority groups are physically present at the school but marginalized in many aspects of school life (Hameed & Manzoor, 2016).

This difference between policy and practice is especially salient in the social processes that take place in schools. While in the general classrooms, learners with disabilities or from vulnerable groups feel lonely, stigmatized, and bullied. All these are unpleasant incidents that are against the principles of inclusive education that seek to ensure that all learners are welcome and accepted (Muhammad et al., 2024b, 2024c; Pirzada et al., 2024).

In conclusion, it may be stated that even though Pakistan has set up policies for inclusive education and enhanced enrollment of learners with diverse needs in general schools, there are certain issues that need to be addressed in order to make these policies functional. This paper has provided a review of the current state of inclusive education in Pakistan, which is mixed in the sense that while there has been some success in ensuring that students with disabilities are admitted into schools, there are still a lot of barriers that limit the quality of education that such students are able to receive.

3. Understanding Bullying in the Context of Inclusive Education

This paper focuses on bullying, a global problem in educational contexts that is of special interest in the context of inclusive education in Pakistan. For the purpose of understanding how it affects inclusive practices, it is necessary to first understand what bullying means, its prevalence in Pakistani schools, and the effect it has on SED children and other marginalized children.

Bullying is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional, frequent and involves an imbalance of power between a bully and his/her target (Olweus, 1993). At the school level, it can be in the form of physical assault, name-calling, social isolation, and online harassment. To the disabled students or the students from the minority, bullying experience is even worse because they are discriminated in at least two ways (Sentenac et al., 2013).

Bullying is highly prevalent in Pakistani school, although the current studies are not very effective in providing clear account on the prevalence of bullying. The study conducted among students in Lahore, Pakistan revealed that 41% of the students were bullied by their fellow students and the rates were higher among students with disability (Shujja & Atta, 2017).

A few of the problems involving students with disabilities other vulnerable groups include the following: the problem of bullying in Pakistani schools. Bullying children with disabilities is when children in a class imitate the disabled child, mock his or her disability or even ostracize the disabled student from the other children. (Hameed & Manzoor, 2019). This problem is fueled by the ignorance of one's peers and, at times, teachers on the various disabilities that an individual may have.

Also, students from religious or ethnic minority groups suffer from bullying as a result of their cultural or religious identity. This can be in the form of listening to negative remarks, being excluded by others, or even being physically harmed on the basis of one's identity (Pirzada et al., 2024). In addition to the academic outcomes, such experiences have an impact on the students' sense of belonging and their well-being.

The existence of multiple forms of oppression increases the vulnerability and the effects of bullying for people with disability. For instance, a girl with a disability from a religious minority group will face triple marginalization and bullying, which will complicate her educational experience even more (Fazal, 2012).

Bullying is one of the factors that hinder the success of inclusive education and thereby limits the integration of students with disabilities. While the policies may address the physical aspect of the school or academic accommodations, the social aspect of schools

is left oddly untouched. Despite the fact that students with disabilities are placed in inclusive classrooms, they still face exclusion and marginalization through bullying behaviors.

Bullying has a number of implications for inclusive education. It can lead to absenteeism; for example, the victims may choose to miss school to avoid being harassed. This is contrary to the objective of inclusive education, which aims at promoting regular school attendance and participation of all learners. Also, it is also important to note that bullying can lead to poor academic performance since the bullied students may not be able to focus or even engage in class activities due to fear (Pasha, 2012).

Probably the most significant is that bullying affects the social and emotional inclusion of individuals. Inclusive education, on the other hand, is a process of teaching all students together in the same classrooms, while bullying makes them feel threatened, rejected, and ostracized. This also impacts their educational experiences in the short term and may further impact their social development and future prospects (Aslam et al., 2022; Siddiqui et al., 2021; Rajpoot et al., 2021).

To grasp the concept of bullying in inclusive education in Pakistan, it is also important to consider bullying as a structural problem that mirrors the culture of the society toward the 'other.' That is why the problem of bullying should be solved not only to protect individual students but also to achieve the objectives of inclusive education and create real inclusive learning environments.

3.1 Factors Contributing to Bullying in Pakistani Schools

The problem of bullying in Pakistani schools, especially affecting students with a disability or other minorities, is influenced by numerous social, cultural, and systemic factors. It is, therefore, imperative to know these contributing elements in order to design the right ways of dealing with bullying and creating real acceptance.

The first of the reasons is the lack of change in the traditional world views on the matter of diversity. Pakistan, like other societies, has not been very accepting of disabilities and differences in the past (Pasha, 2012). These attitudes are based on ignorance, myths, or beliefs that hold that disabilities are punishment or curse. These attitudes can be embedded within the schools and affect the ways that students view and interact with their peers with disabilities or from ethnically diverse backgrounds. According to Fazal (2012), negative attitudes in society were a strong determinant of bullying of students with disabilities in Pakistani schools.

The above-mentioned aspect is compounded by ignorance of the general student population, teachers, and even school administrators. There seems to be a lack of awareness as well as knowledge of the various forms of disabilities among the general population in Pakistan, and, therefore, misunderstandings and prejudice are widespread. This lack of information can lead to negative but inadvertent actions like staring at, ignoring, or uttering wrong remarks to students with disabilities (Hameed & Manzoor, 2016). Also, people are not well informed of the experiences of religious and ethnic minorities, thus creating an environment for discrimination.

The teachers' lack of preparation regarding inclusion and anti-bullying policies is another issue. Although inclusive education has been given a pass by the Pakistani educational authorities, most teachers have no idea how to deal with diverse learners or handle cases of bullying in classrooms. This lack of preparation hampers teachers to be in a position to identify, prevent, or manage incidences of bullying, especially those that affect disabled or minority students.

The ethos of the school can either support or hinder the occurrence of bullying incidents. Unfortunately, most Pakistani schools still do not have a well-engrained culture of inclusion and tolerance. The lack of proper anti-bullying guidelines, ways to report bullying, and consistent punishment allows for bullying to be normalized or at least unnoticed (Shujja & Atta, 2017). Also, many schools in Pakistan have a centralized structure that often leads to power relations, which makes it hard for the victim to report the abuse or for the witnesses to come forward.

Other conditions include socioeconomic status, where the bully and the victim come from different social classes. In the context of a country with a highly stratified economic system, learners from low-income families, who are likely to be people with disabilities or from ethnic and/or other vulnerable groups, can also experience bullying based on their perceived position in the social hierarchy. Combining this with other forms of exclusion based on such factors as race, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation can potentially increase the chances of being bullied.

The media cannot be ignored either, as it has played a great role in shaping popular culture. One can notice that the media in Pakistan, TV shows and movies included, contribute to prejudices against disabled people and minorities. These portrayals may affect young people and their perspectives and may lead to prejudiced behaviors in school.

Moreover, there are not many positive examples of persons with disabilities or from the minority to follow, especially in the positions of power within schools and society in general, which only reinforce prejudiced notions and beliefs. When students do not see diversity in leadership positions, this may enhance their perceptions of prejudice and restrict their vision about the abilities of people of diverse backgrounds.

Most of the Pakistani schools have adverse physical environments that also facilitate bullying. Large classes, limited space, and poor supervision in playgrounds and other open areas make it difficult to prevent bullying situations from happening. This is especially so in schools where some students may be experiencing physical disabilities that may require them some assistive devices or special arrangements to move around safely.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the factors that may contribute to bullying in Pakistani schools in connection with inclusive education are numerous and are connected with certain features of the culture and society. These factors cannot be addressed by simple solutions that only aim at eradicating bullying; rather, they need a holistic approach in order to address the core beliefs, knowledge deficits, and institutional features that enable bullying. Thus, until these factors are recognized and tackled, Pakistan remains far from being able to provide an environment in schools that is safe, supportive, and accepting for all students.

3.2 Impact of Bullying on Inclusive Education

Bullying in the schools of Pakistan is a constant problem that poses a significant threat to the achievement of inclusive education. The problem can be felt in many different ways and at different levels, and it goes beyond mere discomfort or distress and challenges practically all the principles and goals of inclusive education.

In particular, social isolation and exclusion are the most conspicuous and tangible effects of bullying on disabled and other vulnerable learners. Bullying tends to take the form of being intentionally left out of group work, group assignments as well as casual conversations during free periods. This is contradictory to the principles of Inclusive education which seeks to bring every learner to feel that they belong to a group. Learners with disabilities in inclusive Pakistani schools felt lonely and socially isolated more than learners without disabilities because of being bullied and socially excluded.

Consequently, bullying has negative effects on students' learning and their participation in class. Consequences of bullying include distraction in class, low motivation, and poor academic performance. For students with disabilities, who might already have difficulties with learning, bullying makes it even worse and hinders them even more. Also, the fear of being bullied causes students to stay away from school to avoid being bullied.

Such students' mental health is impaired, and the effects last a long time, even after leaving school. These individuals are likely to experience heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Pasha, 2012). For students with disabilities or minorities, these mental health effects may be exacerbated by the combination of bullying and prejudice or prejudice-related stress. There was evidence that students with disabilities who had been bullied in schools in Pakistan had higher rates of depression and anxiety disorders in young adulthood than their peers who had not been bullied (Fazal, 2012; Thakur & Abbas, 2017).

The future implications of the phenomenon of bullying within the framework of inclusive education are rather negative for the victims. Long-term bullying experience results in negative self-schema, which in turn puts a cap on students' possibilities and their belief about their potential. This can lead to lower levels of educational and career aspirations as well as continued marginalization and achievement for people with disabilities and members of minority groups. In addition, such a school experience as bullying can result in students' isolation and their inability to build relationships in the future, which in turn affects the quality of life and social adaptation.

Bullying also has implications for the school environment and the effectiveness of inclusive education policies. When bullying is rampant, it generates a culture of fear, and students feel unsafe and vulnerable, not only the targets but also observers and the rest of the learners (Hameed & Manzoor, 2019). Such an environment creates a sense of pessimism that may weaken initiatives aimed at supporting the culture of inclusion in the school community.

In addition, such a phenomenon as bullying can hinder the process of implementation of inclusive education measures by parents and teachers. The parent of a disabled child may be reluctant to send his or her child to a mainstream school because of fear of bullying and social isolation. Indeed, parents of children without disabilities may also

be against inclusive classrooms if they think that these are chaotic and can cause their children to be bullied by children with disabilities.

This form of violence also affects teachers and other officials of the school in one way or the other. Resolving long-standing bullying can cause stress and burnout among educators, especially those who are not well prepared to handle such cases. This can lead to demotivation towards the adoption of inclusive practices and a tendency to go back to the conventional and exclusive models of education.

Therefore, the effects of bullying on inclusive education in Pakistan are real and far-reaching and have implications for the learner, the learning environment, and the overall policies on inclusive education. It hampers the learning process, affects mental health, and further sustains the process of social exclusion. It is, therefore, not only a matter of safeguarding particular students but a vital approach to enhancing the effectiveness of inclusive education and helping to build non-discriminatory conditions for learners in Pakistan.

4. Case Studies: Examples of Bullying in Pakistani Schools

The following two case descriptions are offered to show how bullying can be operationalized in the inclusive education context in Pakistan. These examples are rather compelling in picturing the difficulties that students with disabilities and those from minorities have to encounter, thus underlining the need for intervention.

Case study one: Student with physical impairments.

Amira is a fourteen-year-old girl with cerebral palsy; she is enrolled in a regular school in Lahore. Although the school has shown general compliance with the principles of inclusion, Amira experiences harassment on a daily basis. This is because her fellow students imitate her walking and talking style, making it seem as if she is some kind of an animal. At group tasks, Amira gets left out quite often, and other students say that she will only make everyone else slow.

The physical environment of the school, with no ramps and facilities that are friendly to people with disabilities, also adds to Amira's isolation. It is also worth mentioning that she has problems with movement, which makes her lag behind during break time, making her an easy target for mockery and isolation from the other children. Others have gone to the extent of hiding her walking stick and wheelchair and pretending it is a prank while this has made Amira very uncomfortable and inconvenienced her in many ways.

Most people in the teaching profession are likely to empathize with such victims, and yet they are often at a loss on how to put a stop to the bullying. Some have tried to address the issue by giving group assignments, but since no measures have been put in place to ensure students learn how to treat each other in the group, the efforts have been less than useful. This is due to Amira's anxiety, which has worsened over the course of the past few months and affects her academic performance; her parents want to transfer her to a segregated special education facility even though they want her to have an inclusive education.

From this case, one can see how the concrete barriers, peers' attitudes, and teachers' unpreparedness can create an unwelcoming environment for students with disabilities and thus hinder the idea of an inclusive education (Pasha, 2018).

Case study 2: Student from a religious minority group

Rahul is a 12-year-old boy from a minority Hindu community; he studies at a government school in Lahore province. Despite religious freedom as enshrined in the constitution of the country, Rahul continues to suffer from religious discrimination. Students often tease him and force him to engage in activities that are connected with the majority religion, even if he does not wish to do it.

Bullying does not end with words but also includes social exclusion. Other students will not eat with Rahul during lunch breaks and say that eating with him would be unhygienic as he belongs to a different caste. This exclusion is rather frustrating for Rahul, as it happens in the full sight of teachers who rarely interfere because either they are prejudiced themselves or they fear discussing the religious topic with students.

Rahul has also experienced problems at school; some of his classmates do not want to work with him on assignments or do not include him in study groups. It is important to note that when Rahul tried to complain to the school management about bullying, he was simply advised to 'grow some skin,' and that is just the way life works in a multicultural society.

The constant bullying has affected Rahul's psychological well-being and his self-esteem. He has developed what can be labeled as internalized stigma as he has become a recluse and has also said that he wants to conceal his religious identity. Both his parents are concerned about his safety, but at the same time, they want him to get a better education and hence are in a fix on whether to let him continue in the same school or transfer him to some other school.

This case shows how the problem of religious intolerance can be transformed into bullying in schools and, thus, demonstrates the difficulties in providing students with inclusive education in the context of religious tensions in society.

These case studies thus reveal the social, cultural, and institutional factors that define Bullying in Pakistani schools. The authors show that even though policies are inclusive in theory, the real lives of disabled students and those from minority groups are far from the policy statements. The cases also point to the necessity of whole-school approaches to anti-bullying measures that go beyond the behavioral level and penetrate into the cultural and organizational contexts that permit bullying to occur.

Through the consideration of these real-life examples, educators, policymakers, and researchers will be in a better position to understand the real-life barriers to inclusive education in Pakistan, with a special emphasis on bullying as a significant factor in the development of inclusive learning environments.

4.1 Multifaceted Approach to Addressing Bullying

Bullying as a challenge in inclusive education in Pakistan is a multifaceted problem that can be solved only with the help of a complex approach. To this end, such a strategy has

to encompass the changes of the policies, advancements in the schools' prevention and reaction to the given matter, advancements in the teacher training, and also the direct involvement of the community and the awareness raising campaigns concerning the problem and the factors that contribute to its occurrence.

Policy too is also very instrumental in giving the framework to anti-bullying measures. It is in this regard that measures that will help achieve this need to be taken and one of the ways is strengthening anti-bullying legislation. Although, Pakistan enjoys general laws relating to child rights; however, what is needed is the specific and broad anti-bullying law which would go a long way in resolving the problems encountered by the disabled children and other children from such backgrounds. This legislation should expound on the following: The legal meaning of bullying, forms of bullying namely, physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying, and actions, which should be taken by schools (Government of Pakistan, 2020).

Another policy reform is the inclusion of measures against bullying into inclusive education policies. The current inclusive education frameworks should be extended to also cover social inclusion which may include ways of dealing with bullying and other forms of negative interaction among learners. For example, the Punjab Inclusive Education Policy could be revised and contain clear provisions that ensure the protection of all students, as well as measures for the prevention of bullying (Special Education Department, 2019). School level anti-bullying programs are useful in ensuring that the policies are well implemented. School-wide initiatives should concentrate on changing the school culture in order to embrace tolerance and acceptance. This includes adopting strategies that have been proven to work, such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which have been found to effectively reduce bullying in various educational settings (Bradshaw et al., 2015). The following programs must be tailor made for Pakistan so as to consider the culture and the overall problems of the country.

Another important part of school-based interventions is peer support systems. Making pairs or making friends can also promote healthy interactions between the students with and without disabilities, as well as between the students from different groups. According to Sentenac et al. (2013), such programs are effective in preventing bullying and, at the same time, enhance the student's ability to understand other people.

It is, therefore, important that teachers are given proper training in order to help them know how to deal with bullying issues if they occur. The following should also be incorporated into the pre-service teacher education programs: diversity, inclusion, and bullying prevention. Thus, these modules should include the definition of bullying, its types, ways to identify learners with disabilities and learners from minority groups, and ways to address bullying.

They should make the in-service professional development on bullying prevention to be required and continuous. This training should be applied training that will enable the teachers to learn how to make the class inclusive, how to manage the class and how to deal with cases of bullying. Game and scenario activities with the use of actual happenings in

Pakistani schools may greatly help enhance teachers' readiness to face challenges in the classroom.

It is important to involve the community so as to ensure that everyone is in a position to support the child after leaving school. It is important that parents and members of the community be informed about the aspects of inclusion and the negative consequences of bullying. This can be done through educational programs for parents, community-based interventions, and mass media advocacy campaigns that aim at changing the wrong perception about diverse groups (Pasha, 2018).

The use of partnerships between schools and other organizations in society can enhance the fight against bullying. Coalitions with disability rights organizations, race/ethnicity minority rights organizations, and mental health workers can help schools obtain more information and further support on how to prevent bullying. Such partnerships can also assist in developing support groups for bullied students and their parents and guardians (Hameed & Manzoor, 2019).

Technology can, therefore, be used to enhance anti-bullying campaigns. Creating mobile applications or websites that enable students to report cases of bullying can help the students report cases without thinking of repercussions. Also, by posting on social media and telling positive stories of inclusion and diversity, it is possible to influence people's perceptions.

It is quite important to implement regular assessments of the effectiveness of the measures taken against bullying and alter them if necessary. Schools should ensure that there is an organized way of recording cases of bullying in their institutions, with a special focus on the disabled and minorities. Such data can help in the current revisions to policies and programs.

Therefore, to fight against bullying within the framework of inclusive education in Pakistan, it is necessary to implement changes at the legislative level, and at the level of schools to improve teacher training and to engage the community. Thus, Pakistan can proceed to develop effective strategies for the formation of an open and tolerant society where every student with different abilities and backgrounds will be able to study without prejudice and fear of bullying.

4.2 Challenges and Considerations in Implementation

While a multifaceted approach to addressing bullying in inclusive education settings in Pakistan holds great promise, its implementation faces several significant challenges. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is crucial for the success of any anti-bullying initiative.

Resource constraints represent a primary challenge in implementing comprehensive anti-bullying programs. Existing difficulties mentioned above in funding, school infrastructure and staff resources do not allow Pakistani schools, especially those, located in rural areas, to invest in the development of such programs (Pasha, 2018). The cost incurred in training teachers and preparing new teaching materials, as well as the cost of implementing the new policies are often very expensive, especially to schools that are cash

strapped. Furthermore, the time that needs to be devoted to training as well as programme enactment may be regarded as time that has been spent on academic learning and hence invite resistance from administrators and teachers who have been set academic performance goals. (Ahsan et al., 2018).

In response to this challenge, policy makers and institutions of education require should therefore consider anti bullying as an important issue that needs investment in education budgets. To reduce some of these financial challenges, new ideas including the optimal use of technology where training is delivered via computer and agreeing with Non-Governmental Organizations and international organizations could be explored. Further, substantiation of connection between positive school climate and improving academic performance may help case usage of resources toward anti-bully programs.

Other factors that ought to be considered included. Cultural sensitivity is another very important factor as the county implements anti-bullying programs. This is because cultural and religious differences exist across the country so strategies that can be implemented in one area may not be applicable in the other. For example, debate about gender related harassment or religious persecution requires sharp consideration that any further agitation may boomerang besides perpetuating discrimination.

To come up with culturally appropriate anti-bullying interventions a lot of consultation with the local community, and cultural advisors is done. Programs should not be cast in stone to be implemented in other countries as they should allow variation while holding some standard. Education to teachers and school staff should be given in cultural awareness and how we should be sensitive while practicing interventions that eradicate things like since in most cases, we do it in ways that are so wrong with regard to their culture (Hameed & Manzoor, 2019).

Another set of complexities relates to the evaluation of the monitoring and evaluation of the anti-bullying initiatives. From the studies it is revealed that majority of the Pakistani schools are not having systematic data management procedures to address the bullying happenings in schools including the students with disabilities or belonging to the minorities. This lack of data also creates problems when trying to evaluate the efficacy of different forms of intervention regarding changes necessary in the future.

Effective monitoring encompassing technical requirements as well as strong organizational culture and value systems were identified as important for successful implementation of this duty by schools. Bullying itself may be underreported due to people's reluctance to report the incidents since it may tarnish the image of the school or admit to having such issues. To overcome this challenge, there is the need to establish a culture of safe reporting possibly through developing reporting channels that are anonymous and constantly reminding the workforce that the data is collected for improvement purposes instead of getting the staff into trouble.

The deeply set culture that society has towards people with disabilities and other differences prove to be a major barrier towards supporting and implementing proper anti-bullying programs. It is a process that takes time and is certainly not limited to school because it involves restoring the beliefs and the behaviors of people. Such optimism must be

done bearing in mind that the effectiveness of some short terms goals programs that have a promise could produce poor results if not sustained by society improvement.

This is a tough challenge that needs time and joint work of schools, families and the communities. Gentle and sustained social marketing, including the infusion of such values into the general school curriculum, and provision of positive examples in related aspects of life may go a long way in the evolution of such attitudinal change. One has to accept gradual transformations and know that progress gradually requires time, and it is a gradual process.

Other factors include political will, policy continuities, among others. Due to the political instability in Pakistan, the government from time-to-time changes and this can bring in new policies hence have an impact on the implementation of long-term programs in education. There is nothing as elasticity than policies this is why, it is important that anti bullying measures are put in black and white since they are independent of political influence.

The final challenge is the need to replicate successful pilot projects at the national level. Where in a highly controlled centered and well-resourced pilot such strategies could work, they may hit several demerits during cross implementation in different school settings. Organization, capacity and local variations in personnel, training and resources are important factors that need to be addressed in order for successful anti-bullying programs to be scaled up.

In conclusion, it can be stated that despite a number of difficulties and complexities in practicing the principles of the inclusive education system, as well as in implementing comprehensive anti-bullying programs in Pakistan, these difficulties can be efficiently addressed and solved. To manage these challenges, planning, resource management, culture and sustainability aspects are some of the crucial approaches that need to be adopted by all the stakeholders involved in the delivery of service. If these implementation challenges are effectively addressed, Pakistan can hope to initiate creation of nondiscriminatory and nonprejudiced Pakistani education contexts free of bullying.

5. Conclusion

In this regard, one of the major issues that has to be grappled with on the journey towards true inclusive education in Pakistan is that of bullying, especially as it impacts the learners who are disabled or those from minority groups. This paper has discussed how this challenge is complex in its manifestation and how it erodes the social justice principles of inclusion and fosters more discrimination.

Inclusive education in Pakistan has improved in terms of policy development and the integration of learners with special needs but the practice remains poor in developing truly inclusive schools. The contrast between policy objectives and implementation is best captured by the persistence of bullying that affects vulnerable students. It also impacts the overall purpose of inclusive education because it doesn't provide equal opportunities for students and hinders the learning process of students.

In this paper, the factors that have been found to be pertaining to bullying within Pakistani schools are societal perspectives, ignorance, lack of teacher training, and systemic

problems. These factors foster an environment that gives room for bullying, especially for disabled students and those from other minority groups. This bullying has far-reaching effects on the affected children and can cause social isolation, poor academic performance, psychological problems, and other negative effects even in the future.

These examples described in this paper paint a clear picture of real-life incidences of bullying in inclusive education environments. They emphasize that more efficient measures should be developed that can help to change not only a particular student's behavior but also the society that allows such bullying.

In order to address this issue, we have recommended a number of measures that include policy changes, effective anti-bullying programs, teacher training and community involvement. This approach acknowledges the fact that the fight against bullying has got to be done on different fronts, be it at the national level or the class level. Nevertheless, many challenges are inherent when adopting such strategies, for instance, lack of resources, cultural issues, and the fact that change is a continuous process.

Looking to the future the following are some of the areas that can help in the development of future strategies to prevent bullying in inclusive education settings. These are analyzing the effectiveness of interventions in longitudinal studies, examining the aspect of intersectionality in bullying experiences, and investigating the part played by technology in either promoting or preventing bullying.

The challenge for all the stakeholders in Pakistan's educational system is, therefore, clear and present. It is, therefore, important for policymakers to promote anti-bullying strategies within the inclusive education framework while supporting the policies with the necessary resources and strategies. Therefore, school administrators and teachers should be empowered concerning the knowledge, skills and resources that will help in the provision of safe and embracing environments for the students. Involving the parents and the members of the community as stakeholders for positive attitudes and to combat prejudice and discrimination.

The goal of real change in the Pakistani educational environment for inclusiveness is the establishment of a society in which every learner, irrespective of his or her needs, origins, or characteristics, can enjoy the learning process. This vision can be realized only if there is a deliberate attempt made to eradicate bullying as one of the barriers to inclusion. Companies can help create cultures of acceptance and courtesy, thus making schools key to changing society's perception and developing a more open-minded society.

Thus, fighting bullying is not only about saving particular students; it is about the development of the concept of inclusive education for the formation of a fair society. It is, therefore, important that as Pakistan moves forward in its provision of education for all, the issue of bullying cannot and should not be overlooked. Safely, accepting, and, most importantly, inclusive learning environments can only be achieved by enabling every child to achieve their potential and shape the future of the country.

5.1 Future Research Directions

Taking into consideration the present state of affairs as regards Pakistan which still

seems to be grappling with the problem of failure to implement successful anti-bullying policies in the context of inclusive education, certain propositions of further research can be made. Such research directions could be beneficial for providing directions to policies and practices, thus assisting in the construction of safer and more inclusive learning environments for all of the learners.

More work has to be done on the longitudinal assessment of the effectiveness of interventions in Pakistani schools regarding anti-bullying programs. Although short-term assessments help in giving a brief understanding of the outcomes, it is the long-term change in behavior and school climate that defines the effectiveness of the program. Further studies should follow students for several years and investigate whether anti-bullying programs change not only students' well-being but also the whole school climate.

These longitudinal studies should look at different outcomes, such as the number of bullying occurrences, academic achievement of the target group, mental health, and social integration. There is a need to gather data at certain intervals of time so that the researchers can determine which aspect of the anti-bullying programs is most effective in the long run and which one has the least effect or even adverse effects.

Analyzing the potential intersectionality of bullying experiences is another important research avenue that deserves attention. Although some research is available on bullying of students with disabilities or from ethnic minorities, there is a lack of research on how these students' identities intersect with each other in the context of bullying. For instance, the study can look at the differences between a girl with disability from a religious minority, a girl with disability but from a religious minority and a girl with disability from a different Religion.

This form of analysis is helpful when developing the interventions to enable them serve the need of these students because they are socially excluded in more than one ways. It also can assist the researcher to get more understanding about bullying and social acceptance of this type of behaviour (Hameed & Manzoor, 2019).

Both technology and cyberbullying belong to a relatively new area of interested in the Pakistani context, and, therefore, they require research focus. With the increasing usage of digital devices and the internet among the youth in Pakistan, it becomes important to know about cyberbullying and its characteristics and effects. Further studies need to establish how the conventional forms of bullying link with cyberbullying since students with disabilities or those from marginalized groups are at high risk of harassment.

Further research in this area could include an evaluation of how effective digital literacy interventions are at reducing cyberbullying, the extent to which social media sites contribute to or help prevent online bullying, and how safe and appropriate online practices can be developed for Pakistani students. This study can be useful for the formulation of general anti-bullying measures that encompass both off and online conduct.

One more area that could be investigated in the future is the assessment of the effectiveness of teachers' training in the sphere of inclusive education and anti-bullying measures. Although the requirement for better teacher training is envisaged throughout the country, its efficacy has not been explored much in the Pakistani context. Research should

compare different training models with regard to the changes in teachers' attitudes, skills, and practices in inclusion and bullying prevention.

This research could encompass a variety of training methods, such as workshops, online modules, or mentorship programs. It should also assess the extent to which the skills and knowledge learned are retained in the long run and how well the teachers are able to implement the learned knowledge and skills in actual classroom settings.

Another important area that has to be studied in the future is the contribution of school leaders toward the creation of inclusive and safe schools without bullying. Future research could look at how various types of leadership and management affect the culture of the school, the teachers' perceptions, and the students' behavior when it comes to bullying and inclusion. This study could help design leadership training and school policies that support inclusion by preventing bullying (Pasha, 2018).

Last, future research should be directed toward the exploration of community prevention strategies for bullying and supporting inclusion. In such a case, the researcher may have to carry out an analysis of the efficacy of parent education programs, community mobilization, and others such as school and community relationships. Knowing who and how to involve communities in anti-bullying interventions can help in designing more culturally appropriate and long-term interventions.

Therefore, these future research directions present possibilities to enhance the understanding of bullying in inclusive education contexts in Pakistan and to design more efficient measures for the prevention of bullying and the provision of supportive educational environments for all students. Thus, following these lines of inquiry, researchers can provide meaningful insights into practice and policy, thus helping Pakistan advance toward the goal of meaningful educational inclusion.

6. References

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