

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Defining School Mission on Students' Academic Achievements at Secondary School Level in District Mardan

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of defining school mission on students' academic achievement at the secondary school level in District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A quantitative approach was employed to conduct this correlational survey. A structured survey instrument, consisting of 20 validated items, was used to collect data. The instrument included a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from "Never" to "Always") for the first objective and a five-point Likert scale (ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree") for the second objective. Data were collected from 335 teachers across 118 secondary schools using a stratified random sampling technique. The analysis, including Regression and Pearson's correlation, revealed a strong positive relationship between effective communication of the school mission and students' academic success. However, it was also found that the communication of school mission statements at the secondary school level in this context is often inadequate or poorly implemented, which contributes to the development of an unskilled workforce. In reflection of the findings, it is recommended that instructional leaders place greater emphasis on effectively communicating the school's mission to school staff and the community, as this is critical for achieving desired educational outcomes and ensuring student success.

Keywords: School Mission, Students, Academic Achievement, Secondary School Level, Mardan, Education

Introduction

Education, a gateway to prosperity, integrity, peace and development of any country, is the principal objective of every state as confirmed by Pakistan's National Education Policy (Adnan et al., 2023). Once, the founder of Pakistan said, "Education is a matter of life and death for Pakistan" (Adnan, 2023); however, Pakistan still has the largest population of unskilled people in the world (Zaka & Munir, 2019). The reason is that Pakistan is spending a scarce amount of 1.7%, which regionally ranked Pakistan at the bottom in terms of educational funding (Abbasi, 2023; Ahmadani, 2023; Adnan, 2023). In such a panic situation, the delivery of quality education through effective institutions is a goal of every potential leader (Adnan et al., 2023; Ali, 2017).

The potential leader develops instructional leaders (Niqab, 2015) that translate educational vision into reality (Rodrigues & Lima, 2021) by introducing the true spirit of education through smart indicators like defining school mission, managing instructional programs and creating a positive learning climate (Adnan et al., 2023; Ali, 2017; Hallinger, 2010). In the stated indicators, the current article focuses on defining a clear school mission as it has an exceptional contribution to overall organizational outcomes. According to Adnan

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et al. (2023), the instructional leader follows the stated indicator (defining school mission), mainly focusing on the worth and effectiveness of instructions and students' outcomes. The effective communication of a school's mission plays a pivotal role in its overall effectiveness. Central to this is the emphasis on students' academic achievement, which serves as a cornerstone across all dimensions of the institution.

Research studies evidently showed that students' academic achievement is a significant contributor to school improvement (Ali, 2017). Students' academic achievements refer to students' academic accomplishments. Students' academic achievements, according to Ward et al. (1996), are the degree to which they succeed in their particular subject areas in a formal setting. Students' academic achievements represent performance outcomes that show how well a person succeeds in accomplishing objectives that were the centre of attention in learning environments (Steinmayr, 2015). There are different indicators through which students' academic achievements can be measured: general indicators such as instructional leadership behaviour and role, curricular-based criteria such as grades or performance on an educational achievement test, and cumulative indicators of academic achievement such as educational degrees and certificates (Adnan, 2023 Ali, 2017). In all these, the impact of general indicators such as instructional leadership behavior and role (defining school mission) is kept in consideration to comprehend students' academic achievements.

The significance of a school's mission statement in the context of education cannot be ignored. A well-written mission statement serves as a ray of optimism, outlining a school's core values and objectives while also having a big influence on students' academic paths. In order to determine the degree to which a clearly stated mission affects student success, this study aims to explore the impact of defining a school mission on students' academic success in the context of district Mardan.

Objectives of the Study

The key objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the influence of defining school mission on students' academic achievements at the secondary level education in district Mardan.
2. To find out whether the school mission is communicated at the secondary level of education.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following were the key hypotheses:

- H₀1. School mission communication has no significant impact on student's academic achievements at the secondary school level in district Mardan.
- H₀2. The school mission is not significantly communicated at the secondary school level.

Literature Review

The impact of a clear school's mission on students' academic achievements has been a subject of considerable research and scholarly debate. The mission statement of a school is a foundational document that describes its educational philosophy, goals, and core values. When effectively formulated and executed, this mission statement has the potential to greatly impact a number of student outcomes, including academic achievements (Adnan et al., 2023).

Numerous theoretical frameworks guide the investigation of how school mission influences students' academic achievements. According to Deal and Peterson (2009), an explicit and compelling mission statement shapes the overall school's culture, providing direction and consistency to educational practices. This alignment creates a favourable environment where pupils are more likely to succeed academically due to shared goals and expectations.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) place a strong emphasis on transformational leadership theories, suggesting that school leaders are essential in defining and operationalizing the mission. Transformational

leaders increase student engagement and academic success by inspiring and motivating stakeholders to achieve shared objectives.

Empirical studies provided concrete proof of the impact of the school mission statement on students' outcomes. Research by Marks and Printy (2003) found a correlation between better academic achievement and the leadership styles of principals, including their dedication to the school's mission. Their results demonstrated how crucial leadership is in converting mission into action that directly helps students.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) examined empirical research on principals' leadership and school effectiveness, emphasizing how effective principals are in matching school missions with teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Their analysis of research conducted between 1980 and 1995 showed that academic achievement is typically higher in schools with clear mission statements.

School's Mission and Students' Academic Achievements

The below literature demonstrates the role of a school's mission in students' academic achievements.

- ▶ **Clarity of Purpose:** A well-defined mission statement gives all parties involved a sense of purpose and direction and a framework for developing curricula and instructional strategies. Students are aware of behavioural and academic expectations, which promote a positive learning atmosphere.
- ▶ **Motivation and Engagement:** Students are more likely to feel inspired to achieve academic success when they align with the school's mission and values. Increased efforts, involvement in co-curricular activities, and a positive attitude towards learning can all result from this intrinsic motivation.
- ▶ **Curriculum Alignment:** Instructional strategies and curriculum development are guided by the mission statement. It maximizes students' learning experiences by ensuring that instructional strategies and course materials are in line with the school's educational goals.
- ▶ **Community Support:** A robust mission statement attracts like-minded instructors, pupils, and parents who are dedicated to the school's vision. A cooperative atmosphere where everyone strives to improve students' academic performance is fostered by this community support.

In a nutshell, Research indicates that mission statements can enhance students' Academic achievements. They establish a sense of purpose and cultivate an environment favourable to education (Smith, 2019). However, the explicit impact of these mission statements on students' academic achievements in Pakistan is still not well understood. This study is carried out by means of the present literature and primary data collected to examine how the communication of school missions impacts students' academic achievements in public sector schools.

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, we used the Quantitative method based on a Correlational Survey to identify the impact of a clear school mission on students' academic achievements.

Population

All the Public sector secondary school teachers (male and female) from both urban and rural areas of district Mardan constituted the population. According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (E&SED) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's annual statistics report for 2017-2018, there are 2644 teachers in 167 secondary-level schools in the district of Mardan.

According to this report, 151 secondary level schools (Boys: 76 & Girls: 75) were located in the rural division having 2262 working teachers (Male: 1357 & Female: 905), whereas 16 secondary level schools (Boys: 11 & Girls: 05) were located in the urban division having 382 working teachers (Male: 273 & Female: 109).

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The stratified sampling technique was utilized in this study to look at the nature of the population. The sample size was determined by the Krejice & Morgan (1970) table. The sample size for the gender population (2644) was 335, while the sample size for the school population (167) was 118.

According to the stated figures, 107 secondary schools fell in the rural stratum, with 54 boys' schools having 172 teachers and 53 girls' schools having 115 teachers. On the other hand, 11 schools fell into the urban stratum, with 08 boys' schools having 34 teachers and 03 girls' schools having 14 teachers. The average respondents' rate from each sample school was 3 to 4.

Table 1
Sample Size

S.#	Division	Schools’ Frequency		Teachers’ Frequency	
		Boys’ Schools	Girls’ Schools	Male Teachers	Female Teachers
1	Rural	54	53	172	115
2	Urban	08	03	34	14
3	Total	62	56	206	129
4	Grand Total	118		335	

Source: (Krejice & Morgan, 1970)

Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument is a primary and original source, directly collected by a researcher through observation, survey, questionnaire, case study and interview, depending on the researchers' need. In the present study, a pre-developed close-ended instrument with seven (7) options (Never, Almost Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Frequently, Almost Always, Always) rating having ten validated items for objective no. First and foremost, a self-developed close-ended instrument with five (5) options (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), with ten validated items for objective no. Second was utilized for the collection of data from public sector school' teachers. The researcher personally administered and collected the instrument to subjects solely for the purpose of a greater response rate and valid and reliable data as well.

Instruments’ Validity, Pilot Study and Reliability

To confirm the instruments' validity, the face validation technique was justified by the two experts from Pakistani Public Sector University. A simple rule-of-thumb method was utilized for a pilot study to evaluate the suitability of the instrument in the context. Fifty participants (25 male and 25 female) were taken into consideration, their responses were statistically analyzed, and the Cronbach alpha value obtained was .805.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following the ethical philosophy for the collection of data from participants, the data was collected personally by the researcher from participants and analyzed through SPSS using the Regression and Pearson's *r* statistics.

Results

As discussed, the present study aimed to explore the influence of defining school mission on students’ academic achievements at secondary level education in district Mardan. As the study was correlational in nature, Pearson's *r*-test was used to determine the correlation between the school mission statement and the academic achievements of students, while Regression was used to confirm the direct or indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

The rule of thumb correlation for Person’s *r* according to Hinkle et al. (2003) is given below. Pearson's *r* correlation is represented by *p* and has a value between -1 and +1. The + (plus) and - (minus) symbols show the worth of the relationship/direction between variables as listed in the table below.

Table 2
Description of Correlation Values

S.#	Value	Descriptions
1)	$\rho = 0 \text{ To } 0.29 \pm$	Low Positive/Negative Correlation (Weak Relationship)
2)	$\rho = 0.30 \text{ To } 0.49 \pm$	Moderate Positive/Negative Correlation (Moderate Relationship)
3)	$\rho = 0.50 \text{ To } 1.00 \pm$	Strong Positive/Negative Correlation (High/Strong Relationship)

Source: Adnan et al. (2023) Adopted from Cohen (1988)

Objective 1: To determine the influence of defining school mission on students' academic achievements at the secondary level of education in district Mardan.

The stated objective was interpreted through regression statistics to determine the influence of defining school mission on students' academic achievement in the stated context.

Table 3
Regression Values showing the influence of DSM on SAA (N=335)

	β /Beta Value	R Square	S.E	Sig.
Defining School Mission				
↓	.89	.805	.015	0.000
Students’ Academic Achievements				

The cited interpretation indicates that the β /Beta value (.89) showed a strong significant relationship between defining school mission and students' academic achievements. This means that when the school mission is communicated clearly, the students' academic achievements rise. The R Square value (.805) indicates the difference among the variables. The values highlighted that the students' achievements can be attributed to the clear communication of the school mission. The Standard Error value (.015) showed an accurate prediction about students' successful achievements, while the significance value (.000) indicates that the defined school mission has a positive impact on students' academic achievements.

Simply, the table’s data indicate a significant relationship between defining school mission and students' academic achievements in the stated context. To verify the stated results further, the researcher utilized Pearson's *r* test to provide in-depth information regarding the relationship between defining school mission (DSM) and students' academic achievements (SAA), which is mentioned in the table below.

Table 4
Correlation between DSM and SAA (N=335)

Variables	DSM	SAA
DSM	1.000	.915**
SAA	.915**	1.000

$\rho^{**} < 0.01$, $\rho^{*} < 0.05$ (Sig: 2-Tailed), ** indicate significance

The indicated values in the table showed the relationship between the variables. The values ($\rho = .915$, $\rho < 0.01$) clearly reflect a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between defining school mission (DSM)

and students' academic achievements (SAA). The statistical interpretation evidently showed that as the school mission is communicated more explicitly, the student's academic success would be highly ensured. The interpretation means that defining the school mission has a significant role in the overall school effectiveness.

The current statistics evidently indicate that our Null Hypothesis (School mission communication has no significant impact on student's academic achievements at the secondary school level in district Mardan) is strongly rejected.

Objective 2: To find out whether the school mission is communicated at the secondary level of education

The stated objective was interpreted through Pearson’s *r* statistic to find out whether the school mission statement is communicated at secondary level education in the stated context.

Table 5
Correlation between DSM and SAA (N=335)

Variables	PI	ER	VE
DSM	0.15**	.0.19**	0.111**

$\rho^{**} < 0.01$, $\rho^{*} < 0.05$ (Sig: 2-Tailed), ** indicate significance

The indicated values in the table showed the relationship between the independent variable (Defining School Mission) and dependent variables (Parental Involvement, Enrollment ratio, Vocational Education). The values ($\rho= 0.15$, $\rho<0.01$) clearly reflect a weak relationship between defining school mission (DSM) and Parental Involvement, defining school mission and enrollment ratio ($\rho= 0.19$, $\rho<0.01$), defining school mission and vocational education ($\rho= 0.111$, $\rho<0.01$).

The cited interpretation clearly indicates that the Null Hypothesis (*School mission is not significantly communicated at the secondary school level*) was not rejected.

Findings

1. The results evidently demonstrate a significant impact of defining the school mission on students' academic achievements. The statistical analysis verifies that both defining the school mission and students' academic achievements have a strong, significant relationship with each other.
2. The results evidently indicate a weak positive relationship between defining school mission and parental involvement, defining school mission and enrollment ratio, and defining school mission and vocational education. The result explicitly confirms that the school mission is poorly or not properly communicated at secondary level education. The statistical interpretation verifies that there is a lack of communication of the school mission in the context.

Discussion

The study clarifies a significant bond between defining school mission and students’ academic achievements. Specifically, this result aligns with findings from other studies (Adnan et al., 2023; Ali, 2017; Mumtaz et al., 2023), which also point to the importance of explicitly communicating the school mission in improving students' academic outcomes. This study is also in agreement with the findings of Sabeena & Muthaiah (2017), which suggest that school mission clarity improves student motivation and academic performance by aligning students with the educational goals of the institution. The study confirmed that when students understand the purpose of the school and the values it upholds, they are more motivated to succeed academically. The present study presents an explicit role of a school's mission in shaping its educational setting and student outcomes. The study's conclusions are consistent with those of Deal & Peterson (2016), who found that a clear and concise school’s mission statement fosters a sense of direction and purpose among students, teachers, parents and stakeholders. A well-defined school's mission is the foundation of a

student's career success. It acts as a guide for all educational decisions and initiatives, directing the efforts of administrators, teachers, parents, and students toward common objectives. Simply, the study indicates that if there is a well-defined school mission, there must be students' academic success.

However, the study also noticed the lack of communication in school missions at the secondary level of education. The data clearly shows that the school mission is not effectively communicated at the secondary education level. The findings are similar to the results of Wilson et al. (2015). The findings are also aligned with the findings of Smith (2019), who noted that secondary-level education fails to integrate the school mission into the routine operations of the school. This finding is closely aligned with our own, where respondents indicated that, although the mission statement existed, it was rarely discussed in staff meetings or integrated into the curriculum. Moreover, the results of this study echo the findings of Martin et al. (2020), who argued that ineffective communication of the school mission can have a negative impact on the school culture, especially at the secondary level.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study highlighted a significant relationship between defining school mission and students' academic achievements at the secondary school level. However, the same study also highlighted a significant gap in the communication of the school mission at the secondary education level. The data clearly indicate that the school mission is not being effectively conveyed to students and staff in the stated context.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that instructional leaders place greater emphasis on effectively communicating the school's mission to both staff members and parents, as this is critical for achieving desired educational outcomes and ensuring student success. Additionally, it is recommended that school leaders actively ensure and closely monitor the implementation of the school's mission.

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