

## **Effect of Teachers' Favoritism on Academic Sabotage: An Empirical Evidence of Elementary Education Students in Pakistan**

Tariq Hussain<sup>\*</sup>, Noreen Rafiq<sup>\*\*</sup> and Misbah Malik<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

---

### **Abstract**

Favoritism is the action of giving preference to one group or individual over others regardless of having same privileges. It is a common practice at most of the educational institutes. This study is an effort to impart insight by measuring the effect of teachers' favoritism on academic sabotage in Pakistan. This causal comparative study was based on the survey method. A sample of 450 students of session 2015-2017 was selected from the department of Elementary Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan by using simple random sampling technique. Scale developed by Aydogan (2008) used to measure the Favoritism. This scale consisted of 28 items under four factors: nature of preference, violation of rules, students' assessment, and terms of communication. Education sabotage was measured through the scale of nine (9) items developed by Harris and Ogbonna in 2006. The items of both scales were revised to fit in the educational context of Pakistan. Descriptive and inferential statistics (t-test, ANOVA, Pearson Correlation, & Regression Analysis) were applied to analyze the data. Results depicted that future teachers' perception about teachers' favoritism was at high level. In addition, there was insignificant difference in the perception of future teachers regarding teachers' favoritism with respect to gender. However, a significant difference was found in the perceptions of students regarding teachers' favoritism on the basis of their marital status. Moreover, a positive moderate relationship was found between favoritism and academic sabotage. It is concluded that the teachers' favoritism had significant effect on academic sabotage. It is suggested that policy makers should develop a transparent system for avoidance of favoritism in order to make educational institutes more effective and productive.

**Keywords:** Favoritism, academic sabotage, elementary education

---

<sup>\*</sup>Assistant Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Email: tariq.ier@pu.edu.pk

<sup>\*\*</sup> Visiting Lecturer, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Email: noreen.rafiq75@gmail.com

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Lecturer, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Email: misbah.ier@pu.edu.pk

## Introduction

Favoritism is the act of treating someone in different manner not because of their abilities and proficiencies at work place but giving preference due to some personal interest even when it is undeserved. Existence of favoritism is dangerous in any organization because it affects other's performance. It damages the performance of workers by developing a sense of injustice among them as the undeserving people take advantage while, intentions good people get no recognition. Now-a-days, favoritism is becoming a part of most educational institutions. Teachers are an important part of the education system. Favoritism by them can be described as the act of giving preference to one group or individual over others regardless of having same privileges. Teachers may prefer one student to other due to personal contacts and interests (Aydogan, 2008). It is like acting as if you only have one student and others do not exist. Showing favoritism to one of the students may have a bad effect on other students because they may lose their respect and start doubting the teacher's competence in handling a class, making the teacher an ineffective one. A dimension of favoritism is nepotism, in which preference is given to the family members (nephews, nieces, in-laws) regardless of their competencies (Arasli & Turner, 2008). Most people do not take favoritism as a serious problem (Nadler & Schulman, 2006) but it actually can destroy relationship, initiative and trust. Similarity in the ideology of teachers and students, economic and social status of students, gender, interaction among students and teachers, physical appearance of students, and blood relations or friendship between the family of students and teachers are the important causes of teachers' favoritism (Aydagon, 2008).

When students face favoritism in their educational institute they take revenge from students who are being favored by teachers through obstructing and reducing educational quality. In this way they try to manage the level of their stress and express annoyance (Lee & Ok, 2014). Although sabotage in many organizations has sought the focus of several researchers and specialists, there is a lack of work or literature in this regard. Shneikat, Abubakar, and Ilkan (2016) aligned service sabotage to academic sabotage in their study. We can take education as a form of service. Sabotage in the workplace is "cheating at work" (Mars, 1982) and "residual rule breaking" (Scheff, 1996). Any type of deviant behavior that can damage the quality of education and reduce the effectiveness of learning process is called academic sabotage. Five causes of service sabotage have been identified such as powerlessness, inequality, frustration, assistance, and monotony in work (Ambrosea, Seabright & Schminke, 2002). However, some of the literature considers sabotage in any organization as a consequence of some reaction shown by a person to atmosphere (Analoui, 1995; Jermier, 1988).

Various researches conducted in different countries have shown the existence of favoritism in educational institutions (Aydogan, 2008, 2009; Okcu & Ucar, 2016; Shneikat, Abubakar, & Ilkan, 2016). Wallace, Hogan, Noone, and Groarke (2019) conducted a study on university academics to investigate the causes and nature of academic sabotage. The results of this study disclosed several behaviors that cause

sabotage namely: non-cooperative behavior, misuse of power, dishonesty in workplace, unconstructiveness, and poor performance. This research also underscored the subsequent causes of sabotage. These are; culture of an organization, unnecessary stress, self-possession, personality traits and personal issues related to the role itself. So, this study provides background, initial framework and theory to conduct further research to investigate the academic sabotage in educational institutes.

Teachers have a very important role to play in educational institutions and their positive behaviours can have lasting impacts on the overall environment and performance (Abdullah & Akhtar, 2016). Existence of favoritism in educational institutes is a blistering concern. To investigate its effect on academic sabotage is necessary in understanding the concept, reasons, and impact of favoritism. No efforts have been made to detect the effect of teachers' favoritism on academic sabotage, based on the perception of students enrolled in teacher education institutes in Pakistan. Therefore, this study is an effort to bridge this gap and enhance the existing literature.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Following objectives were determined to conduct this study:

1. To find out the perception of students about teachers' favoritism at elementary education department.
2. To determine the relationship between teachers' favoritism and academic sabotage of students.
3. To investigate the effect of teachers' favoritism on academic sabotage of students.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. Based on the perception of students, to what extent do the teachers display favoritism?
2. Is there any significant difference between the perception of male and female students about teachers' favoritism?
3. Is there any significant difference in the perception of students about teachers' favoritism on the basis of marital status?
4. Is there any significant relationship between teachers' favoritism and academic sabotage?
5. What is the effect of teachers' favoritism on academic sabotage of students?

### **Methodology**

Quantitative approach and causal comparative research design based on survey method was used to conduct this study. Population of the study consisted of all the students enrolled in two years and four-year degree program offered by Department of Elementary Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore. A sample of 450 students was

selected using simple random sampling technique in which 112 (25%) students were male and 338 (75%) students were female. Majority of the students were single, a total of 11% students were married. Perception of students about favoritism was assessed through a scale developed by Aydogan (2008), which consisted of 28 items under four factors: nature of preference, rules violation, and assessment of students, and terms of communication while, the education sabotage was measured through a scale of nine (9) items, developed by Harris and Ogbonna (2006). The items of both scales were revised to fit in the educational context of Pakistan. The items of both instruments were rated on a five point Likert type scale, ranging from strongly disagree "1" to strongly agree "5". The reliability of teachers' favoritism scale was high ( $\alpha = .88$ ). The scale used to measure academic sabotage also showed good reliability value ( $\alpha = .86$ ). Both these values are considered good in survey type studies (Abdullah, 2019). Descriptive and inferential statistics (t-test, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, & Regression Analysis) were applied to answer the research questions.

## Results

Table 1

Summary Statistics of Perception of Students about Teachers' Favoritism

Variables	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Nature of Preference	26.00	35.00	31.48	2.68
Violation of Rules	28.00	34.00	30.78	1.81
Students' Assessment	28.00	35.00	31.32	2.82
Terms of Communication	27.00	35.00	29.92	2.54
Total of Favoritism scale	110.00	133.00	123.41	7.47

Table 1 represents the mean score of students' perception about teachers' favoritism. It indicates mean scores of two sub-scales of favoritism "nature of preference" and "students' assessment" was greater ( $M=31.48$ ,  $SD =2.68$ ;  $M=31.32$ ,  $SD =2.82$ ) than the subscales "violation of rules" and "terms of communication" ( $M=30.78$ ,  $SD =1.81$ ;  $M=29.92$ ,  $SD =2.54$ ). Overall, the students perceive that favoritism exist at teacher education institute ( $M=123.41$ ,  $SD =7.47$ ). It may be inferred that "nature of preference" and students' assessment" are the dominant factors of teachers' favoritism followed by "violation of rules." Furthermore, "terms of communication" is also a prominent contributing factor.

Table 2

Comparison of Male and Female Students' Perception about Favoritism Sub-Scales

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Nature of Preference	31.13	2.75	31.59	2.64	-2.58	448	.05
Violation of Rules	30.55	1.89	30.85	1.81	-2.83	448	.03
Students' Assessment	31.26	2.78	31.34	2.83	-0.26	448	.71

Terms of Communication	30.06	2.51	30.88	2.53	0.66	448	.51
Total	123.01	7.73	124.66	7.38	-0.71	448	.43

Table 2 depicts that the mean score of female students' perception was greater in all sub-scales of teachers' favoritism ( $M = 31.59$ ,  $SD = 2.64$ ;  $M = 30.85$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ;  $M = 31.34$ ,  $SD = 2.83$ ;  $M = 30.88$ ,  $SD = 2.53$ ) than the male students ( $M = 31.13$ ,  $SD = 2.75$ ;  $M = 30.55$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ;  $M = 31.26$ ,  $SD = 2.78$ ;  $M = 30.06$ ,  $SD = 2.51$ ). Overall, the mean score for female students' perception about teachers' favoritism was greater ( $M = 124.66$ ,  $SD = 7.38$ ) than the male students ( $M = 123.01$ ,  $SD = 7.73$ ). Results also indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between the perception of male and female students in two subscales "nature of preference" and "violation of rules" ( $t(448) = -1.58$ ,  $p = .05$ ;  $t(448) = -1.43$ ,  $p = .03$ ). On the other hand, there was no significant difference between the perception of male and female students in remaining two sub-scales ( $t(448) = -.26$ ,  $p = .71$ ;  $t(448) = .66$ ,  $p = .51$ ). Overall, there was no significant difference between the scores for male and female students' perception about favoritism ( $t(448) = -.71$ ,  $p = .43$ ).

Table 3

*Analysis of Variance Summary Table for Perception of Students about Teachers' Favoritism in Terms of Marital Status*

	Groups	df	f	P
Nature of Preference	Between Groups	2	1.07	.03
	Within Groups	447		
	Total	449		
Violation of Rules	Between Groups	2	0.17	.84
	Within Groups	447		
	Total	449		
Students' Assessment	Between Groups	2	1.94	.15
	Within Groups	447		
	Total	449		
Terms of Communication	Between Groups	2	1.42	.04
	Within Groups	447		
	Total	449		
Total of Favouritism Scale	Between Groups	2	0.73	.05
	Within Groups	447		
	Total	449		

Table 3 depicts that there was statistically significant difference at the  $p < 0.05$  level of significance in the scores of "nature of preference" as  $f(2, 447) = 1.07$ ,  $p = .03$  and terms of communication as  $f(2, 447) = 1.42$ ,  $p = .04$  regarding the students' marital status. However, there was statistically no significant difference at the  $p > 0.05$  level of significance in the scores of "violation of rules" as  $f(2, 447) = 0.17$ ,  $p = .84$  and students' assessment as  $f(2, 447) = 1.94$ ,  $p = .15$ . Overall, there was a significant difference in the perception of students about teachers' favoritism  $f(2, 447) = 0.73$ ,  $p = .05$  in terms of

their marital status. Hence, it was concluded that the married and divorced students experience more injustice than the single students.

Table 4

*Relationship between Teachers' Favoritism and Academic Sabotage*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Academic Sabotage	-	.66**	-.15*	.38*	-.18**	.22*
2 Nature of Preference		-	.74***	.58***	.06	.78***
3 Violation of Rules			-	.57***	.22***	.81***
4 Students' Assessment				-	.38***	.86***
5 Terms of Communication					-	.56***
6 Total of Favoritism Scale						-

The results of correlation analysis revealed that based on the perception of the students, the subscales of teachers' favoritism "nature of preference" and "students' assessment" are positively correlated with academic sabotage ( $r = .66, p < 0.01$ ;  $r = .38, p < .05$ ). Nonetheless, other two sub-scales "violation of rules" and "terms of communication" are negatively associated with academic sabotage ( $r = -.15, p < .05$ ;  $r = -.18, p < 0.01$ ). The results also revealed that based on the perception of the students, overall teachers' favoritism is positively and moderately correlated with academic sabotage ( $r = .22, p \leq .05$ ). Furthermore, all the teachers' favoritism subscales (nature of preference, rules violation, assessment of students, and terms of communication) showed positive and significant relationship with each other.

Table 5

*Regression Analysis for the effect of Teachers' Favouritism on Academic Sabotage*

Variables	Academic Sabotage		
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Nature of Preference	-.58 R= .58, R <sup>2</sup> = .34, F(1-448)= 1.41	-2.22	.04
Violation of Rules	-.38 R= .38, R <sup>2</sup> = .144, F(1-448)= .66	-.81	.00
Students' Assessment	-.56 R= .55, R <sup>2</sup> = .302, F(1-448)= 1.34	-1.16	.03
Terms of Communication	-.18 R= .18, R <sup>2</sup> = .03, F(1-448) = .147	-.38	.00

Table 5 depicts that the sub-dimensions of teachers' favoritism; nature of preference, violation of rules, students' assessment and terms of communication had significant effect on academic sabotage as  $R = .058, R^2 = .003, f = 1.41, p \leq .01$ ;  $R = .038, R^2 = .001, f = .66, p \leq .01$ ;  $R = .055, R^2 = .003, f = 1.34, p \leq .01$ ;  $R = .018, R^2 = .00, f = .147, p \leq .01$ . Together with the mentioned variable "nature of preference" explained 34% of the total variance, "violation of rules" explained 14% of the total variance, "students' assessment" explained 30%, and "terms of communication" explained 3% of the total

variance. It may be inferred that based on the perception of the students, teachers' favoritism is a cause of academic sabotage in teacher training institutes.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study carried out, it was concluded that the teachers' favoritism was at high level according to the students' perception. It was concluded that majority of teachers give preference to female students over male students. Results of this study further revealed that the teachers also show favoritism in giving marks to students in assignments and exams. According to the perception of students, teachers also give favor to some students due to their similar ideologies and family relations. There was no significant difference in perception of students about teachers' favoritism in terms of gender. However, a significant difference was found in the perception of students based on marital status. Hence, it is concluded that the married and divorced students experience more injustice than single students. Moreover, a positive moderate relationship was determined between favoritism and academic sabotage. In other words, it can be said that the teachers' favoritism is a cause of academic sabotage.

### **Discussion**

This study attempted to determine the effect of teachers' favoritism on academic sabotage, based on the perception of prospective elementary education teachers. The results of this study illustrate that the perception of students regarding the teachers' favoritism is at "intensely high" level and teachers prefer socially well-placed, good looking, related, and ideologically close students. These findings are in line with the results of the studies carried out by Aydogan (2008), Okcu and Ucar (2016), and Shneikat, Abubakar and Ilkan (2016).

Findings of this study further revealed that there was no difference in the perception of students about favoritism based on gender. However, a significant difference was found in the perception of students regarding favoritism on the basis of marital status. These findings parallel the results of the researches conducted by Aydogan (2009), and Shneikat, Abubakar and Ilkan, (2016). Correlation analysis carried out in the research showed a positive moderate relationship between teachers' favoritism and academic sabotage. Moreover, teachers' favoritism is one of the causes of academic sabotage in teachers training institute. This result of the present study is in contradiction with the findings of the study conducted by Shneikat, Abubakar, and Ilkan (2016).

### **Recommendations and Future Study Directions**

This study has several recommendations and suggestions for future studies:

1. Teachers should treat every student fairly. They may not be promoted on the basis of their looks, gender, financial or marital status.
2. More effective regulations and panel sanctions should be introduced to eliminate favoritism in the educational institutions.

3. Teachers should balance their behavior and emotions regarding students so they may treat their students fairly.
4. Students should improve themselves without concerning themselves with the behavior of teachers. This may be helpful to reduce academic sabotage.
5. Policymakers in Pakistan may develop legislation to prevent favoritism in order to make educational institutes more effective and productive.
6. Future studies should examine other factors that have a tendency to result in academic sabotage.
7. Researchers may conduct further studies to advance the understanding of sabotage in academia.

## References

- Abdullah, N. A. (2019). Teachers' satisfaction of principal's perceived leadership at elementary level. *Journal of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Research*, 8(1), 21-28.
- Abdullah, N. A. & Akhtar, M. M. S. (2016). Job satisfaction through organizational citizenship behaviour: A case of university teacher of Pakistan. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 62(2), 134-149.
- Ambrosea, M., Seabright, M., & Schminke, M. (2002). Sabotage in the workplace: The role of organizational injustice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 89(1), 947-965.
- Analoui, F. (1995). Workplace Sabotage: its styles, motives and management. *Journal of Management Development*, 14(7), 48-65.
- Arasli, H., & Turner, M. (2008). Nepotism, favoritism and cronyism: A study of their effects on job stress and job satisfaction in the banking industry of north Cyprus. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 36(9), 1237-1250.
- Aydogan, I. (2008). Favoritism in the classroom: A study on Turkish schools. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 35(2), 159-167.
- Jermier, J. (1988). Sabotage at work: The rational view. In S. B. Bachrach (Ed.), *Research in the sociology of organizations* (pp. 101-134). Greenwich: 6J AI Press.
- Lee, J., & Ok, C. (2014). Understanding hotel employees' service sabotage: Emotional labor perspective based on conservation of resources theory. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 36, 176-187.
- Mars, G. (1982). *Cheat at work: An anthropology of work place crime*. London: Counter Point.

- Nadler, J. & M. Schulman. (2006). Favoritism, cronyism, and nepotism. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 37(3), 202-210.
- Okçu, V., & Uçar, A. (2016). Effect of school principals' favouritism behaviors and attitudes on teachers' organizational commitment, based on the perceptions of primary and secondary school teachers. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 13(3), 5901.
- Scheff, T. (1966). *Being Mentally Ill*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing.
- Shneikat, B., Abubakar, M. A., & Ilkan, M. (2016). Impact of favoritism/nepotism on emotional exhaustion and education sabotage: the moderating role of gender. *Harvard Academic Forum*, 9(1), 38-49.
- Wallace, E., Hogan, M., Noone, C., & Groarke, J. (2019). Investigating components and causes of sabotage by academics using collective intelligence analysis. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(12), 2113-2131.